

GRANTEE EXPERIENCE REPORT

Indo-German Centre for Sustainability (IGCS)
IGCS Research Exchange, Grant Period 2024

scholarship report

Geethanjali R V



IGCS Grantee

Geethanjali R V

Home Institute

Dept of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras, Chennai

Home Supervisor

Dr. Christoph Woiwode

Host Institute

Chair of Development Studies, University of Passau, Passau

Host Supervisor

Dr. Martina Padmanabhan

Research Topic

Analysing the ecological interventions in the Thamirabharani river using a political ecology discourse analysis

Focus Area

Water Management

Starting/End date of the student exchange period

15/05/2024 – 30/07/2024



The poster features a smiling woman with a backpack against a dark red background with a white mandala pattern. The IGCS logo is in the top right corner. The text reads: 'Grants For Students and Researchers', 'Conduct Research on sustainability topics in India or Germany', 'APPLICATION OPEN', and 'Floating deadline for the year 2024'. A URL for more information is provided at the bottom right.

IGCS
INDO-GERMAN Centre
for SUSTAINABILITY

Grants For Students and Researchers
Conduct Research on sustainability topics in India or Germany

APPLICATION OPEN
Floating deadline for the year 2024

For more information: <https://www.igcs-chennai.org/grants/>

Funded by

DAAD
Department of Science and Technology
Federal Ministry of Education and Research

In association with

RWTH AACHEN UNIVERSITY
CIAU
TU9

As a beneficiary of the IGCS research exchange scholarship, the grantee has committed to share the outcome of their stay in the host institution. This report is containing a detailed summary of their work, findings and expected outcomes:

Part I: Research Brief

The Thamirabarani river is the only perennial river in Tamil Nadu comprising of 8 Anicuts, 11 main channels and 186 tanks . The river has been the primary source of irrigation directly benefitting the locals of Tirunelveli, and Thoothukudi. The river is also the main reason for keeping the underground water table intact. However in the last decade, due to several issues like urbanization and religious beliefs and practices, the quality of the water is degrading, and has already been reduced to Class- B (outdoor bathing) and Class -C (Drinking water source with conventional treatment followed by disinfection) . Since 2011, following the initiation of the Smart City plan in Tirunelveli, several projects have been taken up by the government and individual environmental activists to restore the river water quality. One of them is the beautification of the Thamirabharani river bank, with a total budget of INR 11.48 crores.³ In 2021, the district administration of Tirunelveli started the 'Nellai Neervalam' project, a local community driven initiative to protect the river, by conducting citizen-driven cleaning of water bodies and biodiversity mapping. However, the river pollution is still persisting degrading the quality of the river. The 2023 December floods in Tirunelveli were a wake-up call, as it also drew into light the encroachments and the effects of sand-mining along the banks of the river. According to a report by The Times of India, the flooding of the Thamirabharani river killed 10 people and damaged around 500 houses in Tirunelveli district. On the aftermath of the flooding, the Government of Tamilnadu in its latest budget allotted a total of INR 5 crores to 'rehabilitate' the rivers of Noyyal, Kaveri, Vaigai, and Thamirabharani. The flooding of the river has brought back conversations about the restoration of the river, focusing on the pollution that the river is going through in different forms like encroachments, sand mining, waste water disposal and domestic water use. During my field visit to Tirunelveli in early 2024, I observed that all major conversations with stakeholders revolved around river restoration. 'Restoration', however, meant different things to each of the participants involved but the one thread that connected all of these conversations is that they indirectly meant the 'cleanliness' of the river. This varying 'knowledge' and the struggle between 'knowledge' and the 'performativity of knowledge' will be the major question in my thesis, which is aimed to be answered through discourse analysis and discursive spaces.

Part II: Digital Media

Grantees are invited to share their experiences in digital media, encompassing photographs, illustrations, or graphics within the context of the IGCS scholarship.

