

CONTESTED SOVEREIGNTIES ON THE KERALA COAST

POPULAR PROTESTS AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE VIZHINJAM
INTERNATIONAL DEEPWATER MULTIPURPOSE SEAPORT

A Lecture by

Dr. Filippo Osella

Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, School of Global Studies, University of Sussex

Friday, October 31 | 13:10 hrs

Bonatzbau, Schulungsraum B004

Universitätsbibliothek, Wilhelmstr. 32, Tübingen

Reflecting on the artisanal fishers' recent protests against the construction of a new container port, he explores the unfolding of multiple modalities of sovereignty in Kerala (India). Built in Vizhinjam as a public-private partnership by the Adani Group, the construction of the port has been opposed by coastal communities. As the protest gathered pace, the ruling Left Democratic Front government sided with Adani Group, refusing to address fishers' demands. On the contrary, they orchestrated a campaign accusing fishers of violence against police, initiating penal actions against protesters and protest leaders. Whilst the presence amongst the latter of prominent Church leaders underscores the historical role of the Latin Catholic Church in mediating between coastal communities and the state, the government branded the protest as antithetical to the avowedly secular politics of the state, dismissing fishers for their apparent submission to Church hierarchies. The state government appealed to imperatives of modernisation and development to assert its political will over the interests of coastal communities. And yet such an assertion of state sovereignty is fraught with tensions, simultaneously enabled and undermined by market forces. In this tourney of concomitant sovereignties—of Church, state, and market—fishers appear as losers but the protest also demonstrates their capacity to exercise forms of sovereignty from below and to express autonomous political will.

This lecture is held as part of the PhD Workshop titled

Research Dialogues on Kerala: Malayali Worlds in Focus.

Due to limited seating, we encourage you to register at your earliest convenience at
keralaworkshop Tuebingen@gmail.com.

This workshop is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science as part of the Excellence Strategy of the German Federal and State Governments.

Asien-Orient-Institut | Abteilung für Indologie



With funding from the:



Federal Ministry
of Research, Technology
and Space



Baden-Württemberg
Ministry of Science,
Research and the Arts