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"Co-Location, Socioeconomic Status and Perceptions of Environmental Change in the Indian Sundarbans"

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Research on determinants of collective action in the commons generally focuses on interest-group heterogeneity, implicitly assuming that groups perceive the same problems but have different priorities. This paper changes the focus to the role played by perceptions themselves. Within localities, collective action may be easier if elite and non-elite households have similar assessments of environmental risks. Regionally, collective action may be aided by common assessments among local elites who communicate across village lines. This paper uses regression analysis to explore variations in environmental risk assessments across socioeconomic classes and localities, using new survey data from the Indian Sundarbans. We find that assessments vary significantly across localities. At the same time, assessments among elite households vary significantly more than assessments among non-elite households. Our results, therefore, favour locally-oriented collective action in the region, along with local governance that promotes non-elite participation. (Article abstract)

2020 Susmita Dasgupta, Basari Guha, and David Wheeler.

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