

Main finding 1:

As knowledge of environmental hazard is diffused in the region, the impetus for conflict resolution will grow

Governments of the South China Sea region have only lately come to see that the marine environment in the region is under threat. Environmental ministries are now in place, environmental laws and regulations are being formulated, environmental NGOs and IGOs undertake numerous projects, and environmental experts meet on a free basis across borders.

However, even though governments portray themselves as environment-friendly, marine environmental problems are still not dealt with efficiently. The fishing fleets continue their unsustainable fishing. Coral reefs and mangroves are destroyed. Pollution from traffic at sea, from land based industries and from the growing cities of the region keep flowing untreated into coastal waters. Narrow state interests and power politics continue to characterise state interaction, while co-operation and the influence of environmental groups remain inconsequential. The influence of science and non-governmental actors is limited to agenda setting and the framing of issues raised for discussion.

Recently, though, marine scientists have been influential in attracting the interest and attention of governments and decision makers through the work of UNEP's regional seas programme and through the "Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea Workshops". A UNEP Strategic Action Plan for the South China Sea has been endorsed by all ASEAN members as well as the PRC, and GEF funding will secure a comprehensive package of marine environmental research and projects that will build human and institutional capacity. Thus, it may seem as if the concern for the environment can gradually bring the countries of the South China Sea closer together as they discover their common heritage and its importance as a source of animal protein for the growing coastal populations.

Relevant publications from the project

- **Tom Næss**
«[Epistemic Communities and Environmental Co-operation in the South China Sea](#)» in Knut Snildal (Comp.): Perspectives on the Conflict in the South China Sea, SUM Workshop Proceedings, August 1999
- **Tom Næss:**
[Environment and Security in the South China Sea Region: The Role of Experts, Non-Governmental Actors and Governments in Regime Building Processes](#) A thesis for the Cand. Polit. degree at the Department of Political Science, University of Oslo, December 1999. Published in the SUM Dissertations & Thesis series as No. 1/2000 (ISSN 0806-475X)
- **Tom Næss**
The paper "[Environmental co-operation around the South China Sea? The experience of the South China Sea Workshops and the United Nations Environment Programme's Strategic Action Programme](#)" was presented under panel 1: The Environment, Energy

and Maritime Affairs at the conference "Human and Regional Security around the South China Sea", Oslo 2-4 June 2000

- **Karin Dokken**

The paper "[Environment, Security and Regionalism in the Asia Pacific: Is Environmental Security a Useful Concept?](#)" was presented under panel 1: The Environment, Energy and Maritime Affairs at the conference "Human and Regional Security around the South China Sea", Oslo 2-4 June 2000