

ASEAN COASTAL MANAGEMENT: PARADOX EMERGING FROM THE PHILOSOPHY OF NEED

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There is at present, and for various intents, an upsurge of interest in the marine environment in the ASEAN region. This interest had elicited sectoral behavioral responses which ultimately manifested themselves as activities linking individual private interests with marine environmental issues. Hence, the ASEAN marine habitat remains a dismal scenario of innumerable failures and half-successes in marine resource management. Coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangrove forests, the major life-support ecosystems of the ASEAN coasts, have recently undergone extensive alterations. This is partly because people of its nations continue to require wood and products from mangroves, fish from reefs, and disposal of their waste in nearby vegetated waters. More importantly, these resources are fast disappearing due largely to biased policy decisions of government which put higher premium on the transitory economic benefits, rather than on the long-term ecological integrity of the environment.

While it is true that biological and physical features constitute the natural framework of the human environment, its ethical, social, cultural and economic dimensions also play significant roles in determining the lines of approach and the means whereby people may understand and make better use of natural resources in meeting their basic needs. Along this line, I propose the following in the study of current marine environmental problems and in searching for their applicable solutions:

- Public information advancement;
- Environmental integration in the social sciences;
- Growth of environmental activism collaborating with formal education.

Dr. **Miguel Dino Fortes** holds a Ph.D. in Marine Plant Ecology from the University of the Philippines, where he is currently Associate Professor of Marine Science. He has directed numerous national, regional and international field projects, conducted environmental impact studies and published numerous articles on a variety of topics involving the aquatic environment. A member of the International Phycological Society, Dr. Fortes specialises in the establishment of a database on the ecological basis of national and ASEAN marine plant resources, and is actively involved in coastal restoration and rehabilitation projects.