FLOODING TO VISIONING: SHAPING TOGETHER A SUSTAINABLE MAJULI

WATER AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

IHE DELFT Institute for Water Education under the auspices of UNESCO

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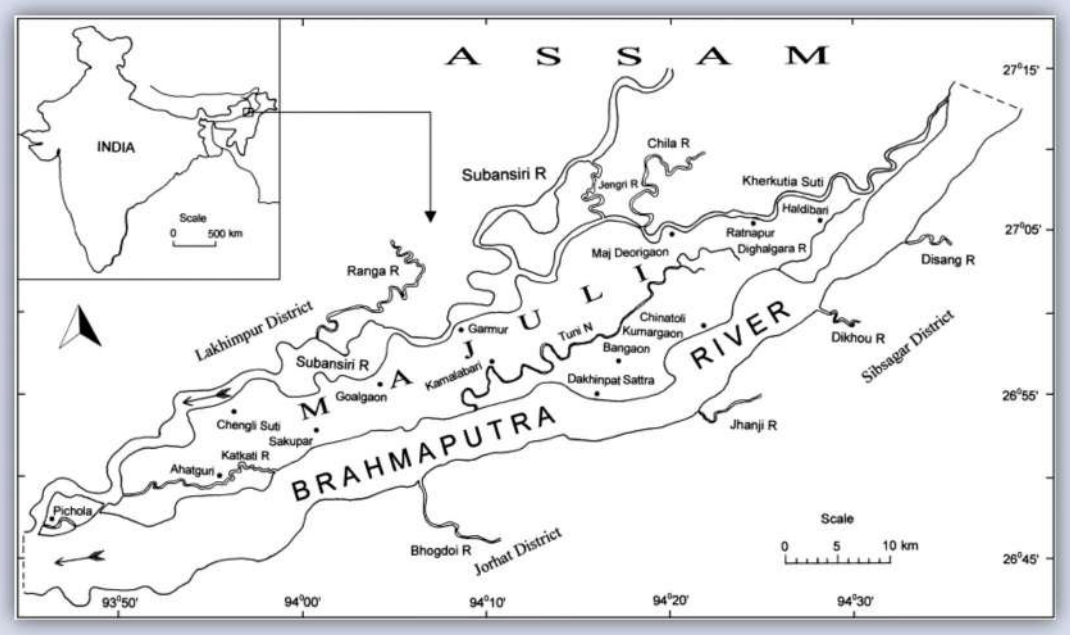
CONTENTS

ABOUT MAJULI....2
PROJECT TEAM....5
OBJECTIVE....6
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS....7
STEP BY STEP PROCESS OF THE LIVING LAB....8
Step 1: Introduction & Briefing about the Living Lab....8
Step 2: Participatory Mapping- Identifying flood affected areas in relation to mobility...9
Step 3: Visioning Majuli....10
Step 4: Open Discussion....10
LIFEWORLD IN MAJULI....11
NARRATIVES & DISCOURSES ON CONNECTIVITY....13
OPEN DISCUSSION: WE NEED THE BRIDGE OR NOT?....16
FUTURE PROSPECTS OF MAJULI....19
CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS....20
REFERENCES....21

ABOUT MAJULI

Majuli is a large island in the Brahmaputra River in Assam, India. It was initially known as "Majoli" (a small stretch of land between two parallel rivers). The island was created as a result of the river splitting into two different channels, one flowed along the original river and the other started flowing along the Burhi Dihing channel (Borborah et al., 2016).



Picture 1 Majuli district of Assam (Sarma & Phukan, 2004)

According to Guinness World Records, it is the world's largest river island, with a total area of 352 square kilometres as of 2014. It is the first island district in India, created in 2016. Majuli is inhabited by various ethnic groups, mainly the Mising, Deori, Kaibarta, Sonowal Kachari, Koch, Ahom, Sutiya, Kalita, Brahmin, Sut, and Nath (yogi) communities.Majuli is one of the most backward districts of Assam in terms of socio-economic development. It faces several challenges, such as frequent floods and erosion, poor infrastructure and connectivity, lack of health and education facilities, and environmental degradation (Government of Assam, India). According to the 2011 census, Majuli had a population of 167,304, with a sex ration of 947 females per 1000 males and a literacy rate of 75.6%. The main languages spoken in Majuli are Assamese, Mising and Deori.

Majuli is the cultural capital of Assam and was nominated for the UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2004 (UNESCO, 2004). Majuli is the birthplace and the seat of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement, initiated by Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciples in the 15th and

16th centuries. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement was a socio-religious reform movement that aimed to create a casteless and egalitarian society based on devotion to Lord Krishna. The movement also created a rich and diverse cultural legacy comprising literature, music, dance, drama, art, and architecture. Sankardeva and his followers composed various literary works in Assamese, Brajavali, and Sanskrit, such as Kirtan Ghosha, Gunamala, Bhakti Ratnakara, and Naam Ghosha.

Picture 2 The sanctum sanctorum of the Auniati Satra (one of the oldest and most important Satra of Majuli)

Picture 3 The big art forms of Samaguri Satra on display.

They also created various musical forms such as borgeet, ankiya gaan, and bhatima They also developed various dance forms such as satriya, ojapali, and jhumur. They are the creators of staged dramas or ankiya naat, such as Chihna Yatra, Rukmini Haran, and Parijat Haran. They created various art forms such as mask-making, painting, and wood carving. In March 2024, Majuli received the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the government of India, acknowledging its traditional art of mask-making and manuscript paintings (Times of India, 2024).

Majuli's exceptional biodiversity stems directly from its unique geography. Situated at the confluence of the Brahmaputra and Subansiri rivers, these waterways have profoundly shaped the island's character. Beyond its status as a river island, Majuli boasts an abundance of wetlands called beels[1] and vast stretches of grasslands known as chaporis. The island has various types of forests, such as semi-evergreen, moist deciduous, bamboo, and

Picture 4 Natural beauty of Majuli

[1] wetland or large aquatic body in Assamese language

grasslands. The island is home to the Molai forest, a man-made forest created by Jadav Payeng, who single-handedly planted over 1400 acres of trees since 1979 (Pareek, 2014).

Picture 5 Lesser Adjutant Stork spotted in Majuli

Various factors, such as frequent floods and erosion, climate change, deforestation, pollution, overexploitation, and invasive species threaten the ecology of Majuli. Several conservation efforts have been undertaken by the government, NGOs, and local communities to protect and restore the island's ecology. Some of the initiatives include afforestation, bioengineering, community-based natural resource management, ecotourism, and environmental education (Das, 2016; Ramachandran, 2022).

PROJECT TEAM

The Force That Made This Happen!

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OBJECTIVE

Co-produce policy-relevant knowledge for sustainable livelihoods in Majuli

The Trans Path: Water Transformation Pathways Planning project is funded by DUPC (The Water and Development Partnership Programme) and supported by the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education. It spans eight countries—India, Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Vietnam, Mexico, and the Netherlands—and focuses on achieving sustainable and inclusive water management through transformative planning approaches. The project aims to develop tools, methods, and participatory processes to guide water- related transformations towards sustainable, equitable, and adaptive pathways. By integrating science, policy, and practice, it seeks to address global water challenges while fostering inclusive, participatory decision-making in water governance. Additionally, the project aims to establish a global network of researchers and practitioners to facilitate joint learning and policy innovations.

The Majuli island is prone to annual floods which causes river bank erosion and threats the geomorphology. Inland Water Transport (IWT) remains the primary mode of transportation for most of the people, albeit fraught with significant limitations. The dwindling scenario of recurring floods and poor connectivity poses enormous challenges to the traditional livelihoods. For example, the field insights suggest that the poor connectivity hinder the opportunities to enhance livelihoods around pottery and weaving. The communities residing in the *chaporis* have to shift places with the seasonal course of the river and river bank erosion besides their minimum livelihood opportunities.

At present, two key developments taking place are pivotal in shaping the island's future: the rise of cross-border tourism and the construction of the bridge connecting Majuli to Jorhat (nearest major town). At this critical juncture, it is crucial to reimagine Majuli's identity as an island, examining how the local community perceives these developments. There are not yet any deliberation on what these development means to the future of Majuli and livelihood of local communities. The local communities were not involved in shaping these crucial initiatives and there are no existing platforms for them to voice their concerns or tailor the development according to the local needs.

In this context, "Living Lab" for Majuli is conceived as a safe space where local communities and government representatives can come together to openly discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with these transformative developments in Majuli. This initiative envisions to pave the way for a collaborative and inclusive approach to shaping development initiatives on the island.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Sl. No.	Name	Institution/Designation
	Facilitator	
	Sushanta Talukdar	Editor, NE Zine
	Stakeholder List	
1	Ratul Ch. Tamuli	Junior Engineer, Assam Inland Water Transport Department
2	Shantanu Barooah	Executive Engineer, Public Works Roads Dept (Retired)
3	Hirupam Doley	Forest Ranger, Assam Forest Department
4	Nabin	Village Head
5	Troilokya Pamegam	Mising Autonomous Council Member
6	Prasanta Saikia	Professor, Department of Geography, Majuli College
7	Karabi Payeng	School Teacher
8	Dipika Payeng	Weaver
9	Indukalpa Bharali	Homestay Owner, Niribili Homestay
10	Purnima Saikia	Pot Maker
11	Nitumoni Saikia	College Student
12	Madhab Das	Tourism Development Officer
13	Chitra Ranjan Payeng	Farmer

STEP BY STEP PROCESS OF THE LIVING LAB

Date: 18 May 2025, Sunday
Venue: Niribili Homestay, Kamalabari, Majuli
Time: 10:00-13:00 hrs.
Facilitator: Mr. Sushanta Talukdar (Editor, NE Zine)

Step 1: Introduction and Briefing about the Living Lab

The session began with a welcome note from Anamika Barua of IIT Guwahati, who provided a brief overview of the Trans-Path Project and outlined the objectives of the Living Lab for the participants. She then introduced the facilitator, who delivered the opening remarks. This was followed by a round of introductions from all participants. Subsequently, the participants were divided into four groups, ensuring a mix of representatives from both government bodies and local communities.

Group 1 members- Homestay Owner, Village Head, College Professor

Group 2 members- Tourism Development Officer, Farmer and Veena

Group 3 members- Pot Maker, College Student, IWT Representative, Forest Ranger

Group 4 members- Weaver, School teacher, PWD representative, Sumanta

Step 2: Participatory Mapping- Identifying flood affected areas in relation to mobility

This activity was intended to bring out unexplored flood affected areas and what it means for last mile connectivity. The IITG team distributed a map of Majuli to the participants. A total of 15-mintues was allotted to all groups to discuss and identify flood affected areas of Majuli from the map in light of the concerns around mobility. For example, flood affected roads,

connectivity to IWT. The outputs from this activity helped to move to the next step of visioning different mobility situations in Majuli.

Step 3: Visioning Majuli

The facilitator explained 4 different situations of connectivity in Majuli to 4 Groups. The visioning exercise intended to understand the perspectives to coproduce scientific and policy relevant knowledge for the future of Majuli.

a) Majuli with a well-functioning IWT
b) Majuli with only Bridge connectivity
c) Majuli with IWT and Bridge
d) Majuli without any connectivity

The groups were to visualize the scenario as the individual residents of Majuli and express their perspectives in any form of their choice. *e.g.* drawing, writing down points.

Picture 9: The facilitator explained 4 different situations of connectivity in Majuli to 4 Groups

Step 4: Open Discussion

The IITG team synthesized the key points and the facilitator presented this to the participants. This was followed by an open discussion amongst the participants. The open discussion was moderated by the facilitator. The event was concluded with the reflections from Prof. Anamika Barua and Mr. Sumanta Biswas from CUTS.

LIFEWORLD IN MAJULI

The lives and livelihoods of islanders is tied with the course of river in many ways. The populations residing on the banks and chars or chaporis[2] are the indigenous communities, vis-a-vis, mostly Mising and Rabha, otherwise the Assamese communities are settled in the core of the island. Most of the population is engaged in subsistence farming, with rice, mustard, pulses, sugarcane, and vegetables as the main crops. Agricultural productivity is low due to erratic rainfall, soil erosion, and lack of irrigation and modern technology. The agrarian labourers belong to households that have lost their lands to flood erosion and can no longer be rehabilitated on the island due to a shortage of available land (Das, 2014; Das, 2017; Borah, 2020; Sahay, 2022). Fishing is another important source of livelihood for the people of Majuli, especially the Mising and Kaibarta communities. They use traditional methods such as bamboo traps, nets, and hooks to catch fish from the rivers, channels, and wetlands. However, fish resources are declining due to overexploitation, pollution, and habitat loss (Sahay, 2022).

Weaving is a traditional industry in Majuli, practised mainly by the women of the Mising and Deori communities. They use handlooms to weave cotton and silk fabrics with colourful designs and motifs. The weavers face problems such as low income, lack of market access, and competition from machine-made products (Banerjee & Buhroy, 2020). Pottery is another traditional craft in Majuli, practised mainly by the Kumar community. They use clay from the riverbanks to make earthen pots, utensils, and toys. The potters face problems such as low demand, lack of innovation, and high transportation costs. Boat making is a traditional occupation in Majuli, practised mainly by the Mising and Kaibarta communities. They use wood, bamboo, and iron to make boats such as bhut-bhuti, chalani, and ghorai. The people residing in the chaporis generally lack permanent housing, as they have to shift places with the seasonal course of the river, causing them an added inconvenience besides their already minimal income/wages.

The interplay of periodically flooded wetlands, enriched by silt deposits, and grasslands fosters a fascinating diversity of plant and animal life. It harbours many rare and endangered species including migratory birds that arrive in the winter season (Social Forestry Division, Government of Assam, 2022). The island also supports a rich diversity of aquatic life, such as the critically endangered Gangetic River dolphin, the golden mahseer, and various species of turtles and fish.

However, tourism is an emerging sector and a potential source of income and employment for the people of Majuli. The island attracts tourists from all over the world for its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique lifestyle. The main tourist attractions in Majuli are the satras, the Mising and Deori villages, the Molai forest, bird-watching sites, and the festivals. The tourism sector faces challenges such as lack of infrastructure, connectivity,

[2] https://dircad.assam.gov.in/about-us/history-0

accommodation, and promotion (Jha, 2014; Konwar & Chakraborty, 2015 Hazarika, 2016; Goswami & Mousumi, 2020).

Given this socio-economic context, IWT is the lifeline of connecting islanders to other areas. The initial discussions pointed out to current Challenges in Connectivity and Tourism. For example, Inland Water Transport (IWT) issues span from irregular ferry services to lack of maintenance. Three major problems were pointed out a) No technicians available during emergencies. B) Night travel is impossible due to the absence of navigation systems. c) Seasonal disruptions during events like Monsoon and flood further isolate the island.

The connectivity issues reflected in putting forth various challenges in the tourism sector. While Majuli attracts global tourists (including Europeans), spending is low due to many hurdles.: Lack of guided services poor promotion of eco-tourism with limited tourism infrastructure. The other threat to the local lives is the concerns around ecology. Different concerns were raised about the future of ecology of Majuli. For example, Majuli has already lost nearly 50% of its landmass (from 920 sq. km) due to river erosion. It calls future infrastructure development must avoid accelerating erosion and ecological degradation. For example, Kamalabari is too much flood affected Kamalabari ghat is not directly affected by flood but faces flash flood, after 2-3 downpour they face this issue- so they want govt to look into why this situation is occurring. Therefore, any construction plan should include environmental impact assessments (EIA) and community participation in decision making.

NARRATIVES & DISCOURSES ON CONNECTIVITY

The critical component of the Living Lab activity was to vision the future of Majuli under four scenarios. The group activity brought insights into the discourses around connectivity in Majuli.

Group 1: Majuli with IWT and Bridge

Both IWT and bridge is essential for the development of Majuli because foreign tourists prefer water transport than land transport to enjoy the beauty of small islands. The water transport is
closed during floods and emergency services or night travels are difficult through IWT. A bridge will solve these connectivity issues while entry pass/regulation should be provided in the gateway of Majuli to protect and conserve the cultural heritage of Majuli in future. For
export of agricultural products and other finished goods from char areas to others IWT is essential, because most of the chaporis is not well connected by land transport Without coordination nothing is possible, so it is need for well-functioning. For pottery industry face much cost through road, so they depend on boat for least transportation cost, so they get max

profit from IWT.IWT is closed during flood or night service then bridge will help.

Picture 10: Group 1 and the facilitator engaging in discussion

Group 2: **Majuli with only Bridge connectivity**

There will be 24hrs connectivity to Jorhat which will offer cheaper transportation with reduced travel time. The bridge will enhance the connectivity in the case of medical emergencies and flood. The bridge will play an important role in trade and tourism activities in Majuli which will help to boost the traditional livelihoods. However, a complete shift to

Picture 11: Group 4 members expressing their perspective

the bridge may invite adverse impacts such as Loss of livelihood for private operators- but can find opportunity in river tourism.

Group 3: Majuli with a well-functioning IWT

Majuli being a group of small islands and only if boat service was there then it would have been possible to go everywhere at low price. Boat services are accessible for all and riverine communities will be able to trade and support their livelihood, with a reduced logistics cost. The livelihood is very much tied with water transport which acts as a lifeline for riverine communities. For example, people will be able to collect wood logs and others that generally float to the surface and they can use them. Fishermen could easily catch fish and sell directly for daily sustenance. Additionally, water transport is crucial in bringing tourism opportunities.

On the other hand, many problems were pointed out if only IWT is there. For instance, safety issue prevails with carrying the fear of boat crashes as no facilities for repairing and maintenance. In such a situation, no connectivity to nearby towns and communication will be only limited till daytime. The island without road connectivity will be saved from crowd and pollution and with a good law and order are in place including low crime rate.

A well-functioning IWT will open up immense opportunities in the tourism sector. The uniqueness of Majuli can be experienced through boat only, which connects all small islands. In dry season, tourist is there but in off-season they face commute problems, fooding lodging problems during off-season (flood season) can be addressed through a well-functioning IWT only.

What is development for Majuli? It can be tapping the local economic potential for enhancing local livelihoods. For example, agriculture, jaggery production is high which is sold to nearby towns. Majuli economy will get a boost if the local production is promoted. The local production needs to be supported with adequate marketing activities. Traditional mising dress marketing faces issue, they are unable to sell outside due to lack of encouragement, they just sell locally but do not sell outside, so they should be provided incentives or development to boost the marketing opportunities. Fish production/ aquaculture/ fish culture can progress if done scientifically in a large scale. Majuli is far away from realising these potentials for development.

Group 4: Majuli without any connectivity

Solar energy has to be used in case of no connectivity. Since no connectivity, islanders will have to use traditional style boat, but this will include high labour cost. Traditional ways of living such as fisheries, agriculture dependence will increase as older days of Majuli. Education opportunities of the islanders will be affected. We will be isolated from other parts, now Majuli people will become conscious and active and will not depend on nearby towns

and live for self-sustenance.

Picture 12: Participants engaging in the open discussion

OPEN DISUCSSION: WE NEED THE BRIDGE OR NOT?

"Whatever difficulty we have faced we have faced, bridge construction has started and will be completed in coming years, but what matters most is the scenario in the coming future". We have to address pertinent questions such as what will be the future of Majuli, what difficulties or opportunities that what matters most now. Majuli is not a single island, it is made of multiple islands, so we should not forget about their connectivity or facilities or inclusion.

Why we need a bridge?

It was highlighted that basic facilities for education and healthcare are absent in Majuli, in cases on medical emergencies they have to go to the nearest town**.** They will be able to access better facilities in nearby towns faster if bridge increases the connectivity. The islanders face restricted opportunities due to limited connectivity through IWT. It was pointed out that many goods and commodities are very expensive in Majuli as compared to nearest town. The life becomes more difficult and expensive in rainy season due to cut off or inaccessibility of nearby towns.

It is also important to address local dreams, so the dream of Majuli now and after 25 years (after the bridge comes), both will be different, first economy sector will boost by 10x, standard of living will also increase from the current, so in future many positive points are there, many things which are not possible now, will be possible then. As the home stay owner opined "*I want the bridge right now as soon as possible, I have faced difficulty in the past for his business due to less connectivity and less opportunities, which I do not want my children to face*". But there should be a point of regulation through entry pass to ensure safety and the protection of Majuli island through conservation efforts.

Concerns over bridge

The primary concern is when bridge will come Majuli will lose its identity, because the politeness or hospitality that currently exists but after the bridge then the people of Majuli will loss that essence, Majuli will lose that essence, the heritage will wear off if the bridge comes because there will be too much crowd, rush, that calmness will disappear, it will be chaotic. For instance, in the Dakhinpat Satra museum, safety and accessibility are currently assured due to a low crime rate, and the area is well-protected. However, the construction of a bridge could compromise Majuli's safety and security with an influx of outsiders. If a bridge is built, regulations will need to be put in place to address these concerns. The arrival of more visitors poses a risk of introducing invasive species that could disrupt Majuli's natural beauty and endemic wildlife. We must consider the carrying capacity of Majuli, a particularly vulnerable and sensitive area. If we don't implement stricter regulations, we risk repeating

the fate of Kaziranga, where unregulated development has led to destruction due to over-tourism and industrialization.

Although there are proposals to declare Majuli a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the initiative is at a critical stage due to some existing loopholes. The satradhikars and members of the indigenous community must be actively engaged to address these issues. While skill development programs are in place, they often do not reach the more isolated areas of the island. Instead of focusing on bridge construction, efforts should prioritize development in these interior locations. Even without a bridge, the residents of Majuli are educated and capable of sustaining their peaceful way of life. Night navigation is already established by IWT but is halted during the monsoon due to risks from floating logs and debris. Improvements in ferry services and additional ghats from the north to the south bank should be prioritized. After the bridge is completed, achieving meaningful development may still remain a distant dream, likely taking 25 years to fully realize, during which time Majuli could lose its tranquillity and unique identity as the world's largest river island.

Rather than relying solely on a bridge, we should enhance inland water transport (IWT), implement radar-assisted night navigation using solar technology, and conduct scientific research to optimize services. If ferries can provide reliable and efficient transport, the need for a bridge diminishes significantly. While the bridge construction has already begun and is irreversible, we must ensure that development does not overshadow what makes Majuli special—its serene natural beauty. Development is necessary, but there are times when isolation is also beneficial. For instance, Majuli remained largely unaffected during the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrating how isolation can be advantageous. If the bridge does proceed, we must enforce regulations to safeguard Majuli's heritage and environment. However, with development inevitably comes some destruction, such as tree cutting for construction. We will need to plan for compensatory reforestation efforts. Change is unavoidable, but what matters is how we manage it to maintain Majuli's culture and integrity. The bridge will improve connectivity with other parts of the state, but cultural preservation must be a priority. While all these considerations are significant, we should recognize that a bridge may not have been necessary if we had invested in first-class IWT.

Picture 13: The facilitator summarizing the discussion

FUTURE PROSPECTUS OF MAJULI

There are suggestions for shaping the future of Majuli emerged from the discussions during the Living Lab event. There is certain economic significance of Majuli. One of the products of Majuli, sugarcane is a major cash crop supplying the entire Northeast. There is significant potential in developing Handloom and Pottery sectors which carries cultural trademarks providing livelihoods to many. Another significant sector in Majuli is fisheries with high untapped potential. There is a significant gap in the packaging industry in Majuli, particularly with the potential for developing bamboo-based packaging products.

One interrelated aspect of tourism development is the importance of conservation. For instance, Molai forest is also potential for conservation and tourism provided a full IWT operation. We need to work on erosion, conservation and protection of land area should be prioritised. Along with tourism, handloom, we should also discuss about conservation. Because tourism is a by-product of the conservation efforts.

There are various suggestions to improve the livelihood opportunities around tourism which has room for eco- and cultural development. For example, Bird Watching: A high-value niche tourism activity without organized promotion. Elephant safari can be promoted for Majuli.The Salmora mask-making workshop can be promoted to enhance livelihood opportunities, particularly if hostels and lodges are established to accommodate visitors. The Samuguri theatre culture (bhaona) is not performed frequently; wealthier individuals have the freedom to attend at their convenience, so increasing the frequency of these performances would allow more people to watch whenever it suits them. Charaichung, marked on the map, is excellent for bird watching, with over 320 species of birds and a variety of butterflies. Efforts are underway to declare it a wetland/grassland, pending awareness campaigns. While the infrastructure for tourism in Majuli is in place, concerns about erosion pose many uncertainties. Four spars have been constructed between Salmora and Aphalamukh, but additional government-supported spars in Kamalabari could further enhance the situation.

Opportunities for tourism development include creating riverfront viewpoints and parks. To promote Majuli effectively, word of mouth through college students, pamphlets, and interactive videos could be utilized. Historically, Majuli attracted numerous birds, but the current state of the wetlands (beels) has diminished this, necessitating efforts to restore them to support fish biodiversity. Developing the fisheries sector alongside tourism could elevate Majuli's profile. Bhakat Chapori is a unique area where a variety of agricultural products, such as herbs and jaggery, are found; however, market access is limited, leading to waste. Establishing a cold storage facility in Majuli could support food processing industries, enabling small enterprises to thrive. Overall, these suggestions aim to shape a more inclusive and sustainable future for Majuli. The following points could be incorporated to address current shortcomings.

1) **Balanced Connectivity Plan:**

There are ways to address the connectivity issues of the island keeping the uniqueness. The ongoing construction of the bridge should follow environmental safeguards. Since Majuli comprises of many small islands, the issues can be addressed by simultaneously upgrading IWT services with proper ferry maintenance involving skilled technicians. The suggestion to improve IWT includes Emergency response systems and introduce night navigation systems.

2) **Tourism Development**

Train local youth to become certified tour guides. Promote eco-friendly tourism initiatives, including cycling trails, homestays, and nature walks. Develop adequate infrastructure for bird-watching and establish a local guide service. There are numerous activities with great potential: bird watching (with over 300 species identified), cycling tours, and water sports. There is an increasing need for trained local tour guides, particularly for foreign visitors. This presents an opportunity to empower local youth by involving them in the tourism sector.

3) **Enhance Traditional Livelihoods**

Create direct market linkages for handloom, pottery, and fisheries. Integrate local products into tourism experiences. Disaster preparedness and ferry services: Equip ferries with safety measures and onboard communication. Train local staff in emergency response and basic technical repair.

4) **Community-Participation**

Ther are different suggestions to increase community involvement in the development process. Ensure any developmental decision such as infrastructural development is preceded by meaningful community engagement. They have discussed all these potentials with government authorities at various point of time. If government provided subsidies or incentives to these small enterprises or small-scale weave-person or pot makers, then they would have got better livelihood options.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Anamika concluded that while there may be several arguments both for and against the bridge, her understanding is that the primary reason people support its construction is the poor waterway connectivity to Majuli. She cited example of Netherlands which have similar islands like Majuli and have 24 hrs ferry service. Various anxieties were expressed about the bridge being built without adequate regulations in place. Participants emphasized the importance of protecting Majuli's unique character, noting concerns such as the potential for increased crime rates and the influx of industries that local businesses may be unable to compete with. This raised key questions: What tangible benefits will the bridge bring? How can the environment, cultural identity, and local industries be safeguarded? And how can development ensure benefits for local residents rather than outsiders?

Picture 14: Anamika concluding the Living Lab

It was suggested that these concerns should be addressed through locally led initiatives. In this context, the next living lab could focus on anticipating the changes the bridge might bring, and collectively discussing whether to accept, adapt to, or oppose such changes. Potential initiatives could include petitions from local communities to secure formal protection measures for Majuli, as well as exposure visits to similar regions worldwide where conservation has successfully coexisted with tourism—allowing Majuli to adopt models that

Picture 15: Participants of the living lab and the project team members pose for a photo after the concluding session

balance preservation with development.

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