Abstract:
A thorough phenomenological exploration of the human—environment relationship and delineating its import for environmental ethics, are the primary objectives of my PhD dissertation. I argue that it is highly necessary to comprehend how human beings behave in relation to their environment for formulating moral and ethical guidelines to moderate our relationship with the environment. Following the motto of phenomenology, I conducted a field study in the Sundarbans in order to obtain a first-person insight into the relations between human beings and their environment. By employing Interpretive Phenomenological Research Methodology, I gathered environmental narratives of islanders inhabiting one of the so-called vulnerable islands of the Sundarbans concerning climate change. Through the analysis of the narratives, I demonstrate, how in their everyday activities these islanders engage with various environmental phenomena. These experiential accounts offer a new way of interpreting the notion of environment in terms of one’s relation to it. This exploration captures how a place with its quickly changing environmental phenomena can appear differently to an outsider than an individual who dwells in it. It also illustrates how an individual’s intentions and motives shape his or her engagements to the surroundings. By taking recourse to the theoretical framework developed by Heidegger in his magnum opus *Sein und Zeit* [Being and Time]—which begins with an explication of the hermeneutic structure of human existence—I demonstrate, in my specific context, how the occurrence of the environment as a meaningful phenomenon solely depends on the possibilities that urge themselves into one’s concrete existence. I also extend my argument and establish that this fundamental process of the occurrence of the environment as a meaningful phenomenon plays a crucial role in the very acknowledging of environmental changes and an individual’s response to the same. Basically, drawing extensively from Heidegger’s philosophy, the primary aim of the dissertation is to expound on the human side of the human—environment relationship, making it possible to question the conventional ways in which this relationship has been conceived.