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"Imperilled Waterscapes: The Social-Ecological Transformation of Lakes in Bengaluru"

Sen, Amrita, Hita Unnikrishnan, and Harini Nagendra

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This paper examines the historical waterscapes of Bengaluru, now imperilled by development. Earlier a garden city, the agrarian landscape of Bengaluru was formerly supplied with water from an interconnected lake system. This system has since been fragmented due to urbanization and changes in land cover, impacting local institutions and livelihoods dependent on the lakes. In this paper, we use the case of the city's largest lake, Bellandur, to demonstrate the transformation of the waterscape from an open semi-arid landscape pre-dating the city into an agrarian water-dependent landscape characterized by flows of water in pre-colonial and colonial Bengaluru, and finally into a concretized landscape and the individualization of lakes in the "modern" city. Claims to and associations with the lake ecosystem have altered through changing hydrological, institutional, and social relations, leading to shifts in imaginations of the lake as well. (Abstract)

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