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"Fluid Epistemologies: The Social Saga of Sediments in Bengal"

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By using the term "fluid," this article critically interrogates western ontologies of "solid" (land) and "liquid" (flowing waters), which were transplanted in colonial South Asia and transmitted in post-Independence river/water policies and actions with severe socio-ecological implications. Drawing lessons from recent environmental history and political ecology of water ("hydrosocial") literature that shed light on liminal scapes beyond the mainstream land/water binary in hydrological studies, this study conceptualizes "fluidscapes" by drawing on field research in the river islands (chars) of Lower Bengal. By capturing snippets of livelihoods in the chars of the Malda and Murshidabad districts, West Bengal, situated upstream and downstream of the Farakka Barrage respectively, this article advances why and how it is imperative to rethink sediment beyond its physical-geomorphological existence and to see it as social sites of interactions. It unravels avenues through which chars can be perceived as not only emblems of uncertainty but also as zones of possibility bestowed with rich ecosystem services and the collective resilience of *choruas*. (Abstract)

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