Abstracts

Research Study II - Ecology, Extraction, City: The Making and Unmaking of Kolkata and Its Hinterland by Shatabdi Das, Samaresh Guchhait and Ranabir Samaddar

This research primarily binds together the factors that have gone into the making and unmaking of Kolkata, how activities and economic processes acted as controls for the evolution of the port city and its growth at the cost of ecological damages to the wetland ecosystem constituting the deltaic land that has been shaping the city's attributes; and finally the river basins including the coalfields connected by railways and roadways acting as nodes of development of the secondary urban agglomerations. The paper analyses the impacts of expanding industrial complexes, real estate, infrastructure and concrete constructions into the East Calcutta Wetlands at the cost of pollution and loss of ecosystem services. The future of the wetlands, livelihood and issues of ecological protection draw attention to the emerging legal debates of environmental conservation and economic development in Kolkata together with policies aimed at environmental protection yet those that further trigger destruction of land. The research focuses on the planning area serving as the hinterland of Kolkata port, also a bustling industrial-urban corridor in the western part of Bengal that houses iron and steel industries, coalfields, and big cities along with medium-sized towns based on industrial production and extractive economy. The struggles of development to cope with environmental damages is one key aspect that the closing segment of the study looks into, along with the unceasing yet imbalanced (at times) efforts of environmental protection in the coal mining, industrial-urban corridor thriving in a river basin, raising the question of an unceasing process of making and unmaking of cities and their relentless implications that continue to transform the landscape.

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