

The other-than-human affective relationalities: Camels, mangroves, and saltwater intrusion in the Indus Delta of Pakistan.

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Paper short abstract:

This paper explores the role of other-than-humans (camel and mangrove) affective relationalities in the conservation politics in the Indus Delta of Pakistan. These relationalities shape the deltascape and are important in cosmopolitical ecologies and conservation politics.

Paper long abstract:

The Indus Delta in Pakistan is degrading due to hydroelectric dams and irrigation infrastructures upstream on the Indus River that have altered the flow of the Indus River towards the delta. This causes saltwater intrusion, inundating the deltaic lands - villages, mangroves forests, and agricultural fields, among others. Governance institutions are planting and conserving the mangroves to impede saltwater intrusion. And of many challenges that governance institutions say they are facing; one is to keep the camels away from grazing on mangroves. However, the camel grazers argue that their camels have been grazing on Tamer (*Avicennia marina*) for centuries, which constitutes 97% of mangrove forest in the delta. As camels do not eat other types of mangroves, they have developed an affective relationality with the Tamer. The reason when camel grazers left their villages and mangrove landscapes as saltwater intrusion engulfed those landscapes, they spread and planted Tamer seeds, where they go, throughout the delta. Based on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, in this paper, I explore the affective relationality between other-than-humans (camels and mangroves) in the ontologically complex landscapes of the delta, and ask, how such an affective relationality informs and shapes the politics of conservation in the Indus Delta? The conservation practices located within the colonial and western paradigm leave other-than-human affective relationalities behind, the relationalities which engender a different kind of practices of care, and play important role in Indigenous conservation practices, however, require an ontological space of their own.