



Session 01

Can Pre-colonial Water Practices Save Ghana's Polluted Rivers? A waterscape analysis of the water-mining nexus

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Some political ecologists argue that the construction of water in cultural meanings and values, in most cases, trump water values embedded in materiality,¹ as demonstrated in the various cases where indigenous populations employ customary foundations to fight for water rights and control.^{2,3} Ghana's surface water bodies have undergone pollution and deterioration at the hands of illegal gold mining in recent years. However, the state's technocratic efforts have failed to curtail pollution, bringing back the debate on the efficacy of cultural and pre-colonial water norms in safeguarding surface water bodies.⁴ The paper is part of a bigger ethnographic research project investigating the political ecology of the water-mining nexus. In this paper, I analyse existing pre-colonial norms in a mining community, questioning this dominant narrative surrounding past water norms and values. It further explores how the 'past' is constructed in discursive and competing manners to exploit water and gold resources today. The paper contributes to socio-hydrologists' understanding of how politics, discursive practices, culture, and socio-technical objects are perpetually reproducing the waterscapes

References

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