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Title:	FERAL ECOLOGIES OF A RIVER: POLITICS OF INFRASTRUCTURE, POLLUTION, AND WATER FLOWS OF THE GODAVARI RIVER IN NASHIK, INDIA
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Abstract:	<p>Attempts to re-engineer the Godavari River to empower particular configurations of the socio-cultural, religious, political, and economic facets of Nashik city are imposing a series of infrastructure projects in the riverscape. People live with the river – (re)shaping each other – but sometimes the rivers defy social control and transgress planned paths. Infrastructures allow societies to interact and engage with the river but do not necessarily align with the everyday ways of societal engagements. Derived from ethnographic fieldwork in Nashik, a tier II, religiously significant, and rapidly urbanizing city in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, this dissertation focuses on these moments when the assemblage of river and infrastructure produce friction and ruptures in the society. The dissertation destabilizes the narrative of environmental politics by bringing the inherent fluidity and multiple materialities of the river into a social analysis. The Godavari is undergoing unprecedented changes – like episodes of the spread of water weeds, algal bloom, drying, and flooding – emerging at the interstices of the people, ecologies, and infrastructure. These transformations are local as well as pieces of new planetary accounts that are markers of climate change and Anthropocene. Examining ecological uncertainties as feral ecologies encouraged by human-built infrastructure, I construct the political trajectories of the infrastructuring of Godavari. The dissertation focuses on the wastewater management and hydraulic infrastructures implemented to manage the excess and scarcity of water flow in Nashik. Taking the Kumbh Mela (an age-old Hindu pilgrimage festival) of 2015 and ecological uncertainties surging before and after the event as a threshold, in the dissertation, I examine the processes and ways through which people live with and make sense of the volatilities of the Godavari in Nashik. The ecological uncertainties, here, not only invokes the degrading river ecology but a condition of new ecologies that engender new possibilities and have the agency to (re)produce political and environmental subjectivities. In the process, I argue, the river becomes an active site of engagement where other beings, including humans, thrive and wither, encounter multiple ways of knowing and defining what the river is, what it should be, and how one should dwell with it. Through the case of feral ecologies of Godavari, I develop an analytical framework that I call anthropology of rivers in Anthropocene.</p>
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