

Grasping onto land: the emotional political ecology of land on the Tonle Sap Lake Wetlands

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ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

This article examines the socio-ecological disruptions faced by floating communities on Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia, due to environmental changes and state interventions. Through the lens of emotional political ecology, we draw on multidisciplinary research methods, including participatory mapping, photovoice, and ethnography, to study people's relationships with changing waterscapes and their desire for land. As a response to discussions of 'land grabbing', we introduce the concept of land 'grasping'—attempting to secure land amid increasing precarity—to highlight the emotional dimensions of land politics. This study reveals how grasping for land results in significant costs, including debt and exposure to violence. © 2025 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.