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Digital Technologies and Pastoral Lifeworlds – Locating place-making strategies of Van Gujjar pastoralists in Uttarakhand, India using GIS tools

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Live Stream Available @ www.icgc.umn.edu

Over the last decade, the forestry discourses in India have utilized digital technologies to enable fortress conservation policies as well as surveil forest dwellers on caste, class, and religious lines (Simlai and Sandbrook, 2021). However, the growing awareness around the Forest Rights Act, 2006 has stimulated the urge to engage in documenting indigenous place-making strategies and engage in mapping their day-to-day land use practices. This talk hopes to highlight how assertion of land tenure for Van Gujjar pastoralists through use of digital technologies must be perceived as an aspirational citizenship claim within the forests of Uttarakhand. Through an ethnographic reveal, it hopes to highlight the opportunities, risks and challenges for the Van Gujjars while engaging in such place-making strategies. Whether such technologies become another mode of negotiating lifeworlds whilst co-constituting forestry discourses or reinforce dominant notions of spatiality is yet to be seen. Nonetheless, such strategies of place making by the Van Gujjars depict a possible re-articulation of subaltern claim-making and resistance in India today.

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