

# Concrete Dreams in a Marshy Landscape: Transformations of the Environment in Pančevački Rit under Yugoslav Socialism

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**Abstract:** This presentation examines landscape transformation in Pančevački Rit, a peri-urban area in metropolitan Belgrade, Serbia. Before the twentieth century, this area was a sparsely inhabited marshy floodplain of the Danube. Its transformation began after WWI and intensified in the socialist period, when infrastructural development for the sake of intensifying agro-industrial production shaped new socialist subjects. Yugoslav socialist self-management, collective life in planned settlements, and a growing reliance on machinery and expert knowledge gave rise to new technoscientific approaches to nature. Over time, the aesthetic aspects of nature became increasingly important in the decisions over the future development of the settlements and productive facilities. Yet reappearing wetland aspects of the landscape and the increasing problem of pollution tested the narrative of control over nature. I argue that studying landscape transformations in the context of socialist modernity can supplement the predominant focus in anthropology on capitalism and colonialism as the drivers of environmental change.

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