Puttenahalli Lake as Urban Commons
Bangalore, India

Geographical Context
Bangalore is located at an altitude of 920 mld due to which the natural flow of water is away from the city and into the valleys surrounding. Each valley at the ridge top gives birth to small streams which cascade down to form major streams. (Bangalore City sits on two river basins, the Beemud and Deccan plateau basins) The rainwater is collected by the Kankarli and the Dakshino Pinnakin lakes. 300mm of rain over 60 rainy days every year Lakes and Tanks: Over 200

Historical Background
Most of Bangalore's lakes are actually irrigation tanks, built over the course of many centuries, starting with the Gaganas, the Chokas and the Hossas who built tanks with high bunds to store water. In the 16th Century, Kempegowda built tanks and irrigation wells as well. Traditionally interconnected through a chain or 'cascade' system, this ensured water was not wasted. Several Rulers and Empires such as the Hoysalas, Vijayanagaras, Marathas, Tipu Sultans, Haider Ali, Wodeyers have all been patrons of lakes and tanks.

Urban Development Framework
Development Plans indicate the rapid urbanisation around Bangalore between 1975 and 2019. This massive growth has resulted in the gradual depletion of significant urban ecology including the takeover of a large number of lake systems for a variety of uses, prominent amongst which are governmental acquisition such lands for large infrastructure works - stadiums, transport interchanges, market places, etc. This process of conversion of lake land into recreational and other developmental uses started in the colonial era, when dikes up lake lands were taken over for use for games of Polo, by British officers, a practice that resurges in urban middle class perceptions of lake lands as recreational spaces today. This has been paralleled with a concurrent process of governmental administrative takeovers of erstwhile revenue / afforested land, originally allotted to members of communities historically for the maintenance and upkeep of lakes and forests in lieu of the service. As the city has grown rapidly and exponentially, this growing disconnect between the traditional custodians of these lands and numerous governmental agencies that administer these lands today, has resulted in a dysfunctional, inefficient and non-niceable developmental framework.

Urban Planning Context - Yelahanka
The Comprehensive Development Plan for 2031 continues to indicate a dominant heavy industrial land use (purple) alongside large growing residential zones. This continues to place enormous pressure on the lake system as high GHG emissions, high pollutants from a blast furnace and lit up night skies from these industrial areas continue to disturb the sensitive eco systems around the lakes including the bird sanctuary at Puttenahalli.

The 'Cascade' system

Depletion of the Puttenahalli Lake Cascade
Satellite images (Google Earth) indicate the 'cascade' Lake System and the radical changes to this connected system resulting in gradual depletion of individual upstream and downstream sections of the system. It is generally agreed that the prime reason for the depletion of lakes in Bangalore is largely the disenchantment & erosion of a sense of ownership of traditional community users. Other reasons include, usage of erstwhile lake land as dumping grounds.

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PROJECT TEAM: Gopi, Meenakshi, Vinay, Dr. M. Swetha

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A Strong Regional Lingual & Visual Urban vocabulary -
(In favour of Sustainable Community Participation)

Kere - Lake
Gundupettogola - Afforested Area / Sacred Grove, serve as podiums for bird watching /Splashwading
Kund / Kondaine - Storied Congregational Shift
Ashwath Matha - A cultural reference attached to older, tree-dwelling temples that people continue to worship prominently. It is housed in the river
Ragapetale - Historical Storm water Drainage options

The Revival in progress

>> A rich & growing Bio-Diversity space

The Urban Design framework -
Placemaking & Alternative Mobility proposals for inclusive access

The project has initiated conversations between various stakeholders including the traditional custodians of the lake lands - farming & fishing communities (who apart from living off the lake, alsovisited the lake traditionally), grazing communities, communities who lived off these systems and created places of social confluence (local pathways), the sacred groves and religious places of worship. An evolving process, the Lake has been partially rejuvenated through the efforts of local community groups, the YPLRCT (community lake trust) and now is a thriving bio-diversity space, with a notified bird sanctuary. The twin threats of sewage flows into the lake and increasingly reduced rainfall periods are being addressed to some extent, by the installation of adequate sized STPs that has ensured a constant supply of treated water for the lakes, in turn promoting avian and aquatic life and in turn a resurgence of bio-diversity.

FUNDERS:
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PARTNERS:

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