



Tropentag, October 9-11, 2007, Witzenhausen

“Utilisation of diversity in land use systems:
Sustainable and organic approaches to meet human needs”

Governing the (Ab)Use of a Dwindling Resource: The Water of Hyderabad, India

AARON LEOPOLD

University of Kassel, Department of Development Economics and Agricultural Policy, Germany

Abstract

Departing from the traditional rural focus of Tropentag, this presentation/poster aims to explore an urban phenomenon, the disappearance of water in Hyderabad, India- a megacity-to-be. The increasing importance of cities in the global economy has turned Hyderabad into a migratory magnet: the current population of over six million is expected to more than double in the next 15 years. Already however, the rapid urbanisation to date has forced drastic land use changes in and around the city, which have culminated in a crisis stage water shortage today.

The foci of my contribution will be threefold: first, to discuss Hyderabad's urban encroachment of water sources (filling in/drying out/and polluting to extinction) and rural outlying areas (primarily constructing on and polluting farmland) as primary causes of this problem- which, taken together, amount to the very opposite of land use diversity. Secondly, the resulting social (primarily health and gender issues) and environmental impacts (loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, heat waves, etc.) will be explored. The final section will be an elaboration of how improved communication, interaction and respect between the principal actors involved in Hyderabad's water issues have the potential to drastically benefit the city by lowering per capita water consumption and revitalizing the sinking water table.

Taking a very multidisciplinary approach, this analysis is one which draws upon literature from a variety of different fields including: governance theory, urban poverty, Indian cultural and governmental history, environmental management, urban planning, participatory democracy, and citizen engagement studies. Of particular importance will be the idea of participatory governance, which will be used throughout my analysis to tease out root causes as well as non-tech and low-tech solutions to the immense water issues facing Hyderabad today.

Precisely because I conclude that Hyderabad's current water crisis is largely the result of political mismanagement and rent seeking activities, I believe that these mostly low public cost solutions, revolving around a more equitable distribution of decision making and higher levels of responsibility amongst stakeholding members of society, can significantly slow down and hopefully reduce the severity of this problem in the future.

Keywords: Encroachment, governance, resource depletion, stakeholder participation, water scarcity