

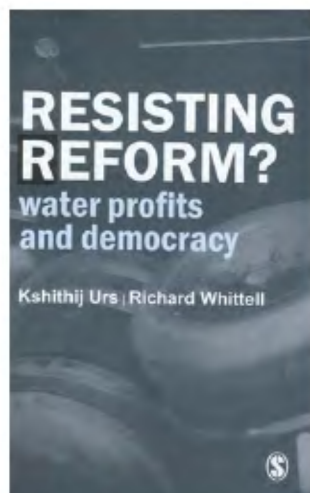
many of the pathogens of greatest concern (*E. coli* O157: H7, *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Cyclospora cayetanensis*) were not even recognized as a cause of food-borne illness. In this regard, the role of FoodNet (food-borne diseases active surveillance network) started by CDC in 1996 is laudable.

Section III (Analytic Methods) has seven parts. Part X (Analytic methods) is an account of STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology). It gives a checklist of 22 items for conducting cohort studies, case-control studies and cross-sectional studies. This is a monumental work and would go a long way in standardizing the practice of epidemiology. In view of its all-pervading importance, this chapter is also available on the websites of *Annals of Internal Medicine* ([www.annals.org](http://www.annals.org)) and *Epidemiology* and *PLoS Medicine*. For details on further use, it would be advisable to access STROBE website ([www.strobe.statement.org](http://www.strobe.statement.org)). The remaining parts of this section deal with different approaches to examine bias in infectious disease epidemiology, assessing surveillance methods, understanding results and using computers to improve validity of data collection. Much of these have been discussed using actual data published in the literature.

This book is an absorbing account of various facets of infectious disease epidemiology including critical concepts and real-world examples. The language is extremely simple and lucid. There is no jargon usually associated with epidemiology texts. Exercises given at the end would be very helpful in knowing the skills developed and understanding of the subject by the readers. This book is a must for medical microbiologists, epidemiologists, public health professionals and infectious disease experts.

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**Resisting Reforms? Water Profits and Democracy.** Kshithij Urs and Richard Whittell. SAGE Publication India Pvt Ltd, B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044. 2009. ISBN: 9788178298740 (HB). x + 170 pp. Price: Rs 395.

Among all the natural resources water has always stayed on the forefront of concerns about its scarcity. The situation is acutely alarming. With the increasing urbanization the pressure on drinking water sources has considerably amplified. There is more than sufficient water on the planet, but its use-patterns dictate the availability as well as scarcity. Several agencies and intellectuals including civil society organizations indicated numerous alternatives to resolve the problem with rare successes. On one hand there are suggestions to reform the situation through economically pricing water or privatizing the resource and on the other there is a strong group arguing for the state responsibility to provide safe drinking water. The book under review is an attempt to demystify the reform arguments and advocate the case of water as a public good. It is focused on Karnataka particularly on Bangalore, let alone those remote water starved areas of the state where even today clean tap water is a distant dream. Even though the book is written by and argued for the urban people, it provides general discussions on: (a) access to water as a fundamental right of people, (b) responsibility of the state to supply of water free of cost and (c) privatization of water supply having disastrous implication for urban poor and violates the fundamental rights given in the constitution of India to its citizens. It

is not a well researched book, but a document written by an activist for the activists with a straight jacket pre-decided opinion.

The book is organized in six poetically titled chapters. The authors begin with 'Reforms for sale' and at the outset make clear intentions of their analysis. No reader is expected to look for any impartial analysis and the subjectivity is clear from the first sentence. First, the authors set before the readers the canvass of their arguments. They have focused on the recent attempts of policy makers to convert water as a market commodity and handing over the responsibility of water supply to some private agencies (multinationals). Objectively understood, any reforms in organization and delivery mechanism of a resource provide only one of the solutions, where, the state responsibility is not a solution but it perpetuates the existing problems. It is quite another issue to see if any reform measure is equitable in its content or otherwise and that challenges the need for fresh thinking. Equity can be accommodated and fundamentally ensured by tailoring the reform measure, but the authors keep that option out of their discussions. In the process of arguments the authors disparage the justification given for private sector participation in water supply and management. They argue the case seemingly logically, leaving wide gaps in their sequencing of arguments and generalizations; it is a poor research. They explain the implications of management of water supply by multinational private companies (on the basis of cost recovery and profit incentives) on the poor of the cities, assuming probably that the poor will be made to pay, and if yes the poor will also comply to do so.

Under the title 'Neutering democracy', the authors bring out how different organizations (state departments, semi-government organizations, NGOs, International Institutions such as World Bank, DFID, AusAid, UASAI and private companies) involved in different phases of development projects bypass the democratic processes. They mean here the public participation in decision-making, planning and implementation by those actively engaged (local people and people's representatives) in the projects. The authors call this an attempt to sterilize the democracy by these institutions – a piece of class ignorance by the authors – who feign ignorance of the functioning of the Indian administrative and demo-

cratic institutions. We are yet to see a legislation being thoroughly discussed with the stakeholders in this country except those vehemently argued (logically or otherwise) in the democratic portals.

Authors' arguments through third chapter (Privatisation: the global hydra!) and fourth chapter (Insidious institutions: reform stakeholders in Bangalore) are in the same line. The authors cannot hide the fact that they tried to build the arguments more against *Jangraha* (one of the urban voluntary organizations) than focusing on the issue. In the hurry of their acidic attack, the authors lost track of arguments and got into several self-contradictions and therefore, this book is not an academic piece.

It is argued how the multinational institutions, so called parastatals are pushing ahead reforms agenda with underlying motives to enhance profits or make money from water market, albeit without any proof. The authors explain that the current efforts of privatization of water supply in Bangalore city are part of global and national agenda in which multinationals foresee a huge potential of making substantial profit from water market. As a consequence, poor will suffer due to their weak bargaining power.

In the fifth chapter (Misplaced compassion), the authors explain how NGOs, researchers and institutions having concerns and compassion for the upliftment of urban poor end up substantiating commodification of water supply and portraying illusionary participative democracy. Their entire focus is on critically looking at another NGO and they spare no efforts to carp. The authors highlight the bypassing of the process and procedures as the decisions are taken without any consultations with locals. In the last chapter, the authors explain how water reforms in Bangalore city failed mainly due to opposition by the poor.

The constitutional rights of the citizen, failure of the government to supply water to the poor, ills of privatization, profit motives of the private companies and their increasing weight of opinion in policy formulation are seen or observed, but economic dimensions of the problems, economic concerns of the state, public resources (since they are also scarce) management and state regulation have been completely ignored. The portrayal of political system as near defunct and powerful 'parastatal institutions' could be the major criticism as one would not

imagine the success of the resistance to water supply reform from the poor without any support of political parties. Moreover, neglecting the state regulation of economic activities could be subsequent criticism, as our historical understanding indicates quite contrary to this. As we know after the independence, we found role of the state critical for promoting welfare of all sections of the societies. In the process, ideology of welfare state took centre stage in policy formulations dealing with production, distribution and regulations of both private and state goods and services.

If we look back and assess economic reforms, it is not difficult to find that the major beneficiaries of the reforms are the middle and elite classes. They witnessed significant growth in their income, standard of living and other opportunities. However, these could not happen in the case of the poor due to lack of skills required for the market as well as the development of the market itself. In the present scenario, privatization of water supply (given effective state regulation) is economically viable, if implemented for middle and elite classes as that will help to tide over the problem. It is certainly not advisable for the urban poor largely due to their low-income base and informal nature of employment. But even if one thinks of implementing it for the urban poor, it will be an infeasible and quixotic attempt. Resistance from the poor to the reform agenda for privatizing water supply is likely to continue ahead as former two groups show tendency of having strong influence on policy formulation. Hence, at the first place the urban elites (including middle class) who are the bulk consumers of the urban water supply will not allow this to happen either by their influence on policy or through the urban NGO protest route. Second, it is only imaginary to ask the urban poor to pay for water; such attempt may not sustain more than a month in any of the poor localities in Bangalore. The authors are blissfully unaware of the ground situations.

The book is written for a singular purpose best known to the authors, as it only tells one side of the story. It is devoid of any logic and objectivity in arguments; therefore, not a research reading and also academically very weak. It takes the reader not on a journey of the issue but feeds only one squabble with force. Above all it is not tightly woven, though

it presents some loose framework, wherein, principal elements in reform agenda play their key roles from the formulation to implementation of projects meant for development of cities.

The authors chose a language that keeps the book away from intended audience. To some extent the book tries to make case against water supply privatization in the view of significant poor population inhabiting and migrating in the slums, but fails to provide full justice to the question it raises in favour of the poor in cities like Bangalore. It fails to answer why market forces (privatization of water supply) or its current format affects different groups of the poor differently or what are its implications for the poor in different sets of political and economic system-like structure of market, political environment and government regulation. Many inconsistencies in arguments could be noticed, but that is always a hallmark of any publicity literature. While making case against private companies, the authors show public water delivery system much better than the former and most efficient in managing them; however, while focusing on the state of public delivery system, the same is painted as corrupt, inefficient and unsympathetic towards poor. Moreover, in the light of resistance to water supply privatization witnessed from the poor in Bangalore, one would have expected important details on role of different groups of poor inhabiting slums and political economy shaping the process of reforms. Unfortunately, the book lacks these details. What is observed, seen and felt has been successfully written by the authors, but what has not been observed (a large spectrum) could be major criticism over the work.

The theme is well intended and argued, but looks at the issue partially and not in a holistic manner. The book is meant only for that class of Bangaloreans who are worried about privatization of water supply, their water bills and their lush green bungalow lawns, but want to voice their concerns with the help of the hapless urban poor. This is an excellent attempt of firing salvos from top of the shoulders of the weak and meek.

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