



Urban Environmental Issues in India and Switzerland

Environment and Society

René Véron – ISJRP Seminar Bangalore, 10.09.2014

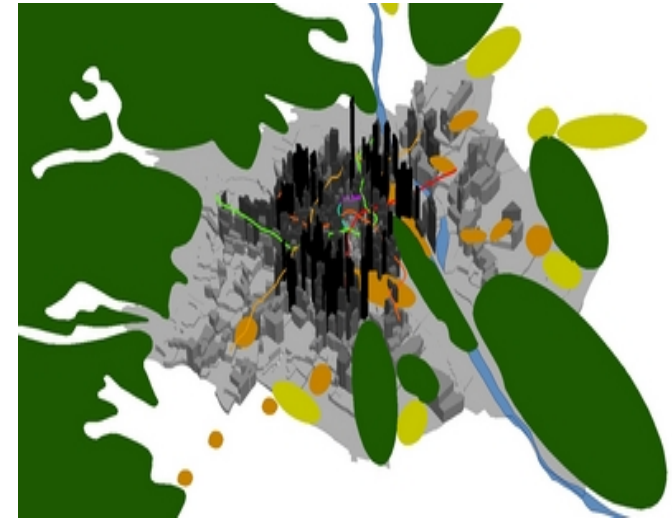
Overview

- ▶ Preliminary thoughts
- ▶ Urban environmental concerns: a juxtaposition
 - ▶ National imaginaries
 - ▶ Basic figures on urbanization
 - ▶ Policy and research foci
- ▶ Own research: environmental urban governance
 - ▶ Illustration I: History of urban water governance in Switzerland (Paola Rattu)
 - ▶ Illustration II: Micro-politics and access to urban ponds in West Bengal (part of SNF project on small cities in India)



Preliminary thoughts on «Environment & the City»

- ▶ «Ecological footprint» of cities
 - ▶ Capture of resources (often from elsewhere)
 - ▶ Metabolic transformations and pollution (often to elsewhere)
- ▶ Links to social well-being
 - ▶ Unequal access to resources (within and without the city)
 - ▶ Environmental / public health
- ▶ Mutual relationships between urban environmental and social processes
 - ▶ Urban environment → Social well-being
 - ▶ Society (incl. political economy) → urban metabolism/environment
- ▶ Are cities inherently bad for the environment?
 - ▶ Form of «second nature» or «socio-nature»
 - ▶ Compact settlement pattern
 - ▶ Potential for efficient resource uses



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Urban environmental concerns: a juxtaposition – national imaginaries



«The soul of India lives in its villages.» (M.K. Gandhi)



Urban environmental concerns: a juxtaposition – some basic figures

	India	Switzerland
Urban population (% of total) (2011)	31.1%	73.7%
Urban population (2011)	377m	5.86m
Annual rate of urbanization	2.76% (2001-2011)	0.49% (2010-2015 est.)
Definition of «urban»	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ > 5,000 pop.➤ > 400 pop./km²➤ > 75% non-agr.	> 10,000 pop.

Source: Census of India, 2011; Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2011



Urban environmental concerns: a juxtaposition – policy and research foci (CH)

- ▶ Urban densification
 - ▶ from «urban sprawl» toward «compact cities»)
- ▶ «Green neighbourhoods»
 - ▶ mixed functions, energy and resource efficiency and toward self-sufficiency
- ▶ «Soft mobility» (walkability, cycability)
 - ▶ to reduce pollution and CO₂ emissions
- ▶ → **Relative emphasis on «green agenda issues»**



Urban environmental concerns: a juxtaposition – policy and research foci (India)



- ▶ Housing and slums
- ▶ Water and sanitation
- ▶ Solid waste management
- ▶ → Relative emphasis on «brown agenda issues»



Park in Mehsana, Gujarat: PPP project on previously «encroached» land and dumping site

- ▶ «Smart cities»
 - ▶ www.smartindia.gov.in to be up and running soon
- ▶ Large urban transport infrastructures
 - ▶ cf. JNNURM
- ▶ Urban «green» aesthetics
 - ▶ Driven by urban middle classes
 - ▶ Can lead to socio-environmental marginalization (e.g., slum removals)



Own research on urban environmental governance

- ▶ Theoretical framework: Urban Political Ecology
 - ▶ Urban metabolism
 - ▶ Cities as second nature
 - ▶ Mutual relationships between urban environmental and social processes
 - ▶ Attention to political-economical processes (e.g., neoliberalization) and micro-politics



History of urban water governance in Switzerland (Paola Rattu)

- ▶ Large-scale water capture by municipalities and private companies; distribution through public fountains in 1850-1870s
 - ▶ Fast economic and urban growth in mid-19th century
- ▶ Municipal and private piped-water networks emerge rapidly from 1860s-1900s
 - ▶ Water-related epidemics (typhoid) in 1860s-1890s
 - ▶ Hygienists project to install water toilets to keep working class healthy
 - ▶ Competing water companies in same cities: «splintering urbanism»?
 - ▶ Debate not on whether networks needed but on how to finance
- ▶ Municipalization of piped-water networks in 1900s-1920s
 - ▶ Political debates on whether semi-autonomous public water utilities («para-statal»), municipal water departments or private sector
 - ▶ Different models in different Swiss cities
 - ▶ Principle of economic efficiency applied
 - ▶ Self-responsibilization through water meters
- ▶ Withstood privatization attempts in 1980s and 1990s promoted by OECD, etc.



Micro-politics and access to urban ponds in West Bengal

(part of FNS project on small cities with Natasha Cornea and Anna Zimmer)

- ▶ **Ponds: a multi-layered resource**
 - ▶ Alternative source of water for slum dwellers (bathing, washing)
 - ▶ Source of livelihood (fishing)
 - ▶ Space for religious activities
 - ▶ Dumping ground
 - ▶ «Land», untapped real estate value
- ▶ **Formal framework of governance**
 - ▶ Fisheries Act: ban on filling, pollution
 - ▶ Property rights: public and private
 - ▶ Leases/Licences for fishing
- ▶ **Informal «actual» governance**
 - ▶ Private pond → becomes target of public «slum infrastructure» scheme in City Development Plan
 - ▶ Private pond owner forced to give fishing licence to neighbourhood club at preferential rate
 - ▶ Formal fishing licence-holder powerless against illegal fishing by «party boys»
 - ▶ Etc.



Thank you

