

Book Review

Politics, Policy and People: Irrigation Governance in a South Indian State

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The Andhra Pradesh irrigation reform programme started in the second half of the 1990s acquired 'model' status at the international irrigation water/policy level within two years after it its kick off - it had barely taken off. Its success was declared before there had been an opportunity to seriously research the reform's process and impact. This is the point where the relevance of this book comes in: it takes a close look at the implementation process of the Andhra Pradesh irrigation reform. Rather than glorifying or vilifying it, it seeks to establish through grounded fieldwork (conducted while the reform was ongoing) what actually happened, taking a large scale irrigation system for which 'success' had been claimed as its primary case study. The reality found proved to be complex and contradictory. Readers will be interested in the analysis of the 'social construction of data' - that is the way statistics on irrigation reform achievements are constructed, as well as the analysis of the complex relationships between Irrigation, Revenue and Agriculture Department in their joint activities in irrigation reform. *The important theoretical contribution the book makes is that it introduces a 'policy as process' and 'politics of policy' approach to policy analysis into Indian water and development studies. The book documents in detail in what ways policy is 'contested', in its different aspects and phases, and by an array of 'stakeholders' using diverse strategies and resources. This is also a methodological contribution as such analysis implies intensive fieldwork, well beyond a set of semi-structured interviews with policy actors. It can be hoped that other researchers take this approach as an example and that we can look forward to more such grounded analysis of actually existing water policy and politics in India and South Asia more broadly.*



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