

CONVERSATIONS 1: Water Governance

Emerging Knowledge Should Prevail in Water Governance

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Water governance has become a complex problem. Water professionals in most parts of the world have used new knowledge and perceptions to address this growing problem. The Conversation makes it clear that such a transition is yet to arrive in formal water governance in India. I had in an article earlier (Bandyopadhyay 2012) described this situation in India as ‘hydrological obscurantism’.

In this Conversation, Ghosh makes a strong case for such a transition based on new water science, and Shah actually provides a road map for such a transition, articulating the legislative and institutional transitions needed. Steps for realizing such a transition are, unfortunately, not to be seen and the ‘obscurantism’ remains in practice. Arthington relates the global degradation of aquatic ecosystems like streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, groundwater-dependent ecosystems, etc. to large water storage and transfer projects. Her articulation of and stress on the need for protection of the aquatic ecosystems by taking a scientific and holistic approach to ‘environmental flows’ is crucial. This is very much needed in the case of India.

The Conversation actually makes it clear that in addressing the grave challenges in water governance in India, replacement of the obscure perception of water governance as practised by a more informed and holistic one is the need of the hour. The initial direction of such a transition is already available, as Shah and Ghosh have described.

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