

## INSEE LECTURE SERIES

### The Politics of Urban Waters

by

**Dr. Karen Coelho**  
Associate Professor,  
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Chaired By

**Prof. Kanchan Chopra**  
Ex-Director and Professor (Retd.),  
Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi

In waterbodies and waterways, in scarcity (drought) and in surfeit (floods), waters produce and inscribe social difference and indifference. This talk employs empirical material from studies in Chennai to explore the politics of urban waters. It draws on the framework of Urban Political Ecology which understands urban nature as historically produced through socio-natural processes marked by relations of power. The talk aims to highlight typically overlooked social aspects of water that account for what is emerging as “the tragedy of eco-restoration” across cities in India.

[Link to full paper](#)

### About the Speaker

**Dr. Karen Coelho** is an Associate Professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS) based in Chennai, India. Her Ph.D. (in socio-cultural anthropology from the University of Arizona at Tucson in 2004) was an ethnographic study of Chennai’s municipal water service. She has researched the city of Chennai for nearly twenty years, focusing on critical examinations of urban infrastructure projects (including housing and resettlement schemes), mobilities of working class households, and urban ecologies. She has written and published articles on the politics of eco-restoration of rivers, canals and tanks in Chennai. She has co-edited a book called *Participolis: Consent and Contention in Neoliberal Urban India*, (2013, Routledge India) has several journal publications and book chapters on the above themes. She serves on the Editorial Advisory Board of the Review of Urban Affairs of the Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) of India. She teaches modules on History of Development Thought and Ethnographic and Qualitative Methods at MIDS.

### About the Chair

**Prof. Kanchan Chopra** was Director and Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi till 2009. An acknowledged expert in the area of environment and development, she has published extensively and her latest book is titled “Development and Environmental Policy in India: the last few decades”. (Springer, 2017). She is Co-Editor of “Ecology, Economy and Society: the Journal of the Indian Society for Ecological Economics” Kanchan Chopra is Fellow of the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, Stockholm and of the South Asian Network on Development and Environmental Economics. In 2011, she was elected Fellow of the Third World Academy of Sciences. In 2016, she was recipient of the Boulding Award, conferred by the International Society for Ecological Economics. She has been on several advisory committees of the Government of India, most recently the Kasturirangan Committee on the Western Ghats and the Partha Dasgupta Committee on Green National Income Accounting. She also chaired the Supreme Court appointed committee on “Valuation of Forests” in 2005-06.

### Important information

**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020

**Time:** 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

[Zoom Meeting Link](#)