



**Green Economy and Sustainable Development:
Bringing Back the Social Dimension
CONFERENCE**

**Economic Growth, Social Divides and
Sustainable Development: Making Development
Work, Lessons from the Indian Experience**

**Payal Banerjee^a and Atul Sood^b
Smith College^a and Jawaharlal Nehru University^b**

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United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
Palais des Nations Geneva 10 Switzerland

Structure of the Paper

- Operative Framework for policy in India
 - The specifics of land, water and forest policy
 - Case study: Juxtapose 'Green Mission' with Hydro Power Project Dams
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Policy or Absence of Strategic Goal?

- ❑ Much of the policy initiatives in India either feed in to the ongoing reform process or have been reactive (crisis management)
 - ❑ Currently - belief only in iterative nature of the reform process; absence of any other strategic objective
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Orientation of Policy Making

- Current policy approach privileges a privatized method of development and problem-solving while ignoring and aggravating social inequalities
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Characterising India's 'Sustainable Growth'

The Story of Water, Forests and Land

- ❑ National Water Policy (1987 & 2002)
 - ❑ The Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act of 2006
 - ❑ The Draft National Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill 2011
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Background to Legislative Changes

- High growth has accentuated pressure on water, forest and land. Numerous conflicts as a result of an aggressive strategy of the 'iconic' ten percent growth-rate
 - The response of the state to challenges and conflicts - propose legislative changes and use its coercive apparatus to suppress protests and conflicts.
 - Paper is on the nature and content of these legislative responses (Acts) and what in essence 'informs' these legislative changes?
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National Water Policy

- National Water Policy 1987 and 2002.
 - Objectives: water resources planning; reorient existing institutions; establishing water allocation priorities; groundwater development; Fixing water charges to cover maintenance and operation costs; treatment of effluents; and promoting water conservation
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Elements of Water Policy

- ❑ Encourage private sector participation in planning, development and management of water resources and bring corporate management to improve service efficiency. Promote public private partnership and participatory approach in water resources management (e.g., *Jal Abhiyan* Programmes)
- ❑ Belief - water is provided cheaply or free of charge by public utilities, users do not use water as a resource economically
- ❑ Establish water regulation authorities at state level, that would elevate the state role more towards a facilitator and a regulator from the present role of operator and crisis manager.

Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act of 2006

- Act meant to recognize and vest the forest rights to forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations
 - Primary power to determine forest rights to the village assembly, invoking for the first time, the use of oral evidence as proof of occupation – doing away with the tyranny of incomplete forest and land records maintained by a rent seeking bureaucracy
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What has FRA achieved?

- Finding of the Committee - implementation of the FRA has been poor, and its potential for livelihood security, changes in forest governance and forest conservation, has hardly been achieved
 - On the specific issue of FRA and development projects - forests and forest land are being diverted for mines, power plants, irrigation, dams, roads, etc. leading to displacement and adversely affecting livelihoods of forest dependent communities. Need to introduce village assembly consent
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Where do we stand on Forest Rights?

- The failure the new legislative process to deliver has so far not compelled a fresh debate in India for either a new legislative regime or about the contradictory dynamics of growth and needs of forest dwellers
 - The institutional path in the new policy regimes, to deliver rights through like Joint Forest Management (JFM), has 'outsourced' some of the conflict to villagers themselves – protect forest from people!
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Draft National Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill

- ❑ Bill focuses on process of land acquisition, compensation for land acquired and R&R process, package and conditions
 - ❑ Moves from 'who acquires land' to 'why land is acquired'
 - ❑ Facilitates acquiring land, including commons, under the pretext of an unstated public purpose for infrastructure development
 - ❑ Bill connects land acquisition with real estate development
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Land in the Land Act?

- ❑ **Bill perceives land simply as a commodity, whose value is influenced by market processes and principles. 'Economic value' of land and commons, of rivers and ponds could be very different for the tribal's, marginal and small farmers and land developers vis-à-vis land mafia. Bill ignores such concerns.**
 - ❑ **Bill proposes to monetizes land as free marketable property, along with already introduced changes in land use patterns, and zoning regulations, in the name of 'growth' and 'market'. Within this new legitimizing principle concepts like rights, justice, equity are no longer useful points of entry**
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What Informs these Legislations?

- Three Acts provide an interesting entry into the methods used by the state to resolve the contradictory impulses of growth and sustainability.
 - What the Indian state appears to be looking for is something that does not restrict the propulsion of growth while at the same time provides legitimacy to the ongoing strategy of growth.
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Defense of Growth

- The legislative changes along with new principles of governance like decentralized decision-making, public private partnership, and stakeholder consultations for the Indian state, together provide a defense for 'growth'.
 - Implicit idea of legislative change - adequate response to the widespread discontentment of a population distressed with methods of land acquisition, underemployment, food insecurity, limited benefits of growth, poverty, poor infrastructure in terms of water, public health, sanitation, housing, education and food etc. is to build to highways, bridges, dams, malls, supermarkets, condominiums, gated communities, airports, parks, private cities and so on.
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Growth or Social Welfare?

- In this neoliberal phase 'growth' is the legitimizing principle that the state uses to rationalize its actions in comparison to 'social welfare' in the earlier years. The regulatory changes are made to meet this challenge and not the challenges of water scarcity, loss of habitat and livelihood for the forest dwellers or displacement and dislocation of rural poor from their lands.
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Challenges and Questions

- The idea of 'public interest' postulated in these legislations is often in opposition to the interest of the poor, marginalised, Dalit and tribals.
 - Has public interest become a euphemism that stands as a proxy for the interests of national and global capital?
 - Are democratic decentralization and stakeholder claims the institution and process through which this 'public interest' reworks itself?
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Sikkim



Green Mission & Hydroelectric (HEP) Power Projects in Sikkim, India

Green Mission

Eco-tourism

Protecting Forests

Organic Agriculture

Public Awareness Campaign

Partnerships: Schools, Media, & Companies

HEPs and Dams on River Teesta

“Future Powerhouse”: 37 % percent of India’s river waters are in the northeastern region

About 30 projects in Sikkim

Dam-related Socio-economic Displacements

Land Disputes

Damage to Wildlife

Landslides

Compensation Problems

Activism: **Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT)**
