Water – progress and poverty

1. Water and society constitute each other
2. Water use creates wealth, functionings and capabilities that we value
3. Uneven development creates inequalities (capitalism + differentiation) which generate deprivation
4. Nonetheless, water use can open pathways out of poverty
Waters create wealth and capabilities

Water and society make each other:

1. Irrigation enables more productive agriculture and jobs
2. The defeat of water borne disease vectors lengthens human life
3. Household water supply frees time from water collection and expands capabilities

Tuareg man draws water from a well to irrigate crops, Niger, 1998. (AP Photo)
Water and society

Generative

• Water and society – mutually constitutive
• Water use generating wealth and capabilities

Differentiating

• Social differentiation inherent to pre-history of capitalism, male bias, ethnic and other exclusions
• Thus, complex forms of differentiation associated with water and sanitation access and use

• Nonetheless – possible pathways out of poverty through imaginative water use
Equitable water governance

- Inequalities in water are comparable to inequalities in income, land and wealth
- Water brings wealth and poverty, health and disease
- Thus equitable water governance is a matter of public concern.
## Injustice -> justice

### Nodes of inequitable governance

- Allocation and distribution
  - farmers with and without pumps
- Inequitable norms and practices
  - Girls kept out of school by water collection
  - Missed work to get water
- Authority and laws
  - Existing practice / law subordinated to national law
- Discourse
  - Techno-scientific exclusions

### Pathways to equity

1. **Water democracy and justice**
   a) Contestation at multiple nodes, repurposing reform
   b) Dialog beyond experts, politicians, landed, elites
   c) Citizen investigation and protest

2. **Beyond safe drinking water**

3. **Creative state-citizen relations in low income urban areas**
Movements for water justice

Water justice movements
1. Maharashtra – landless labor and toiling peasants movement – expanded water distribution
2. Andes – Peru, Equador and Bolivia – contest mining injustices
3. Honduras, Venezuela – creative democratic governance
4. Urban India – contestation of citizenship through water payments
Broader equity and inclusive agendas

Equity and democracy
• Allocation and distribution
  – Equity within uses, fairness between uses
• Cultural recognition
• Political participation
• Democratic rights and citizenship
  – Urban inequalities symptoms of broader set of exclusions

Starting with the bottom
Equity in multiple waters requires setting agendas and opening discussion beyond communities defined by:
  – expertise
  – political influence,
  – substantial income, wealth and land ownership,
  – gender and ethnicity.

Should frequently start with, those at the bottom, not those at the top.