



# Pipe Politics, Contested Waters: Embedded Infrastructures of Millennial Mumbai

*Lisa Björkman*

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**Pipe Politics, Contested Waters: Embedded Infrastructures of Millennial Mumbai** Lisa Björkman  
Winner, 2014 Joseph W. Elder Prize in the Indian Social Sciences

Despite Mumbai's position as India's financial, economic, and cultural capital, water is chronically unavailable for rich and poor alike. Mumbai's dry taps are puzzling, given that the city does not lack for either water or financial resources. In *Pipe Politics, Contested Waters*, Lisa Björkman shows how an elite dream to transform Mumbai into a "world class" business center has wreaked havoc on the city's water pipes. In rich ethnographic detail, *Pipe Politics* explores how the everyday work of getting water animates and inhabits a penumbra of infrastructural activity—of business, brokerage, secondary markets, and sociopolitical networks—whose workings are reconfiguring and rescaling political authority in the city. Mumbai's increasingly illegible and volatile hydrologies, Björkman argues, are lending infrastructures increasing political salience just as actual control over pipes and flows becomes contingent on dispersed and intimate assemblages of knowledge, power, and material authority. These new arenas of contestation reveal the illusory and precarious nature of the project to remake Mumbai in the image of Shanghai or Singapore and gesture instead toward the highly contested futures and democratic possibilities of the actually existing city.

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