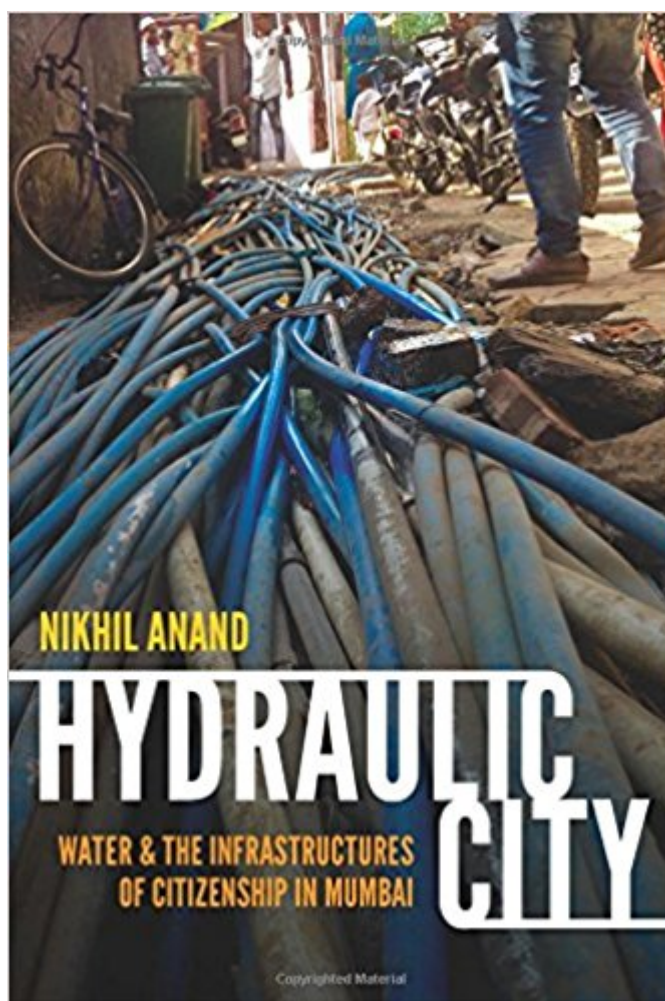


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Hydraulic City: Water And The Infrastructures Of Citizenship In Mumbai



Synopsis

In *Hydraulic City* Nikhil Anand explores the politics of Mumbai's water infrastructure to demonstrate how citizenship emerges through the continuous efforts to control, maintain, and manage the city's water. Through extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Mumbai's settlements, Anand found that Mumbai's water flows, not through a static collection of pipes and valves, but through a dynamic infrastructure built on the relations between residents, plumbers, politicians, engineers, and the 3,000 miles of pipe that bind them. In addition to distributing water, the public water network often reinforces social identities and the exclusion of marginalized groups, as only those actively recognized by city agencies receive legitimate water services. This form of recognition—what Anand calls "hydraulic citizenship"—is incremental, intermittent, and reversible. It provides residents an important access point through which they can make demands on the state for other public services such as sanitation and education. Tying the ways Mumbai's poorer residents are seen by the state to their historic, political, and material relations with water pipes, the book highlights the critical role infrastructures play in consolidating civic and social belonging in the city.

Book Information

Paperback: 312 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (March 17, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822362694

ISBN-13: 978-0822362692

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #423,478 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #421 in Books > History > Asia > India #920 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Globalization #1014 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Urban

Customer Reviews

"Hydraulic City provides a riveting account of what water pipes do to political assertion, social identity, and individual life-worlds in a charismatic metropolis. Mumbai is a crowded cityscape for urban research, but this work finds a fresh-washed window for looking at the production and contestation of the liberal city. Pellucid writing makes a sparkling stream of this book where

erudition, eloquence, and empathy combine for wonderful results: a landmark contribution to social anthropology and South Asian studies." (K. Sivaramakrishnan, Yale University)"This beautifully written book is a major contribution to the growing scholarship on infrastructure, materiality, and humanity in anthropology and adjacent fields. Its major argument, which is anchored in the idea of hydraulic citizenship, will be most valuable for scholars of neoliberal and postcolonial states, of the maximum cities of the poorer parts of the world, and of the entanglement of technology and sociality in human life." (Arjun Appadurai, author of *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*)

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The author has taken great pains to expose the politics and the nitty gritty of obtaining a water connection in the slums of Mumbai which extend over vast areas of the city on illegally occupied private and government land. These lands have been occupied by squatters (encroaches) who pay no taxes but yet the author feels they have a right to the water that flows past them in municipal mains. As seen on the cover, massive amounts of city's water supply is siphoned away by slum dwellers which reduces the supply and pressure to the legitimate and water bills-paying inhabitants of the city. Clearly the city of hundreds of thousands has ballooned into a megalopolis of 50 million, if the suburbs are to be counted. Having said that, the author's research and data obtained by actually living with the subjects of his study is to be admired. The study is detailed and full of useful information one would not find anywhere else. If one is an anthropologist, like the author, the book would provide pointers to studies of this nature in other cities all over the world where such hydraulic problems exist. The book is a must read for urban and city planners. After over a 150 years, when the large lakes outside the city were constructed and 24 hours water supply was made available at adequate pressure to all, but those staying on third story or higher floors, the city is back to a little more than square one. There is hardly any water pressure in the city's fire hydrants, and the most efficient and well-trained Mumbai fire brigade has to depend on water they themselves carry inside their engines. Whenever there is a major fire, we read in the city newspapers that the fire brigade had to stand idle as there was no water in the fire hydrants. The author has shown pictures of slum dwellers self-supplying water from the mains with plastic pipes (see cover), but he should have also shown the same people tapping the 6-foot water mains coming directly from the lakes at several points thus reducing the pressure and flow for the rest of city down the line. The fact now is that water is supplied for a very few hours with just enough pressure to fill ground or partially

underground tanks in each legitimate dwelling. Don't the other citizens of Mumbai including the middle-class also deserve to get clean water? Or is the city's water supply only for the subjects of the author's study?

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