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Political Economy, Power Relations, and Water Security: An Ethnography of the Mahadevsthan-Matatirtha Water Supply System in Chandrgiri Municipality, Kathmandu

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Abstract: This paper is based on ethnographic data and institutional records collected during my fieldwork for the PhD research in anthropology. I studied the Mahadevsthan-Matatirtha water supply system from June to July 2025 and employed tools such as key informant interviews, informal discussions, participant observation, and case study to collect data. The study discusses how the community-managed water supply system, comprising 4783 households, experiences a power tussle between water-related stakeholders and mutually contending views, such as water as a social good or a commodity. The water supply system possesses larger management and infrastructure, adequate human resources, systematic tariff collection, and expansion of infrastructure to address water scarcity. The differential cost of household tap installation for old residents and migrants shows asymmetrical power relations between them. The mechanism of discount and penalty regarding payment of water tariff shows both social responsibility and market orientation. The gradual decline of public taps shows the primacy of household taps and the emergence of a commodification culture. Water scarcity in this system is addressed through the installation of deep-boring systems, whereas people envisage the need for groundwater recharge. The water supply system combines community management and a market approach. The system is not free from conflicts that visibly shape water security. This study gives insights into the micro-level political economy of water in a neo-liberal context.

Index Terms: Governance; Market; Power relations; Security; Tariff

1. INTRODUCTION

Located in the Kathmandu Valley, Chandragiri Municipality possesses a diversity of water supply concerning water production and people's access to water. For example, the Matatirtha and Khanglan areas are rich in water, whereas the Naikap and Teenthana areas continue to suffer from water shortage. The rapid expansion of physical infrastructures such as roads and buildings, and the influx of population, shaped water supply across people and places and overall water security. Traditional Kuwas, stone spouts, spring water, dug wells, and deep boring systems are common water infrastructures within the Municipality. People collectively conserved the traditional infrastructures, such as Kuwas and stone spouts, through a community-managed system, while water and sanitation-related users committee and tanker water and jar water operators supply water using springs and deep-boring systems. The individual households installed dug wells to complement the water deficit. There is a tussle between water-rich and water-poor places and old residents and migrants, regarding control of water resources.

Field discussion revealed that a total of 36 water supply systems exist within the Municipality. These range from smaller and legally non-registered to the larger and registered, like the Mahadevsthan-Mahatirtha water supply system. The Water Supply and Sanitation Users Committee (WSSUC) leads this system, which possesses typical features such as a relatively established institutional arrangement, a wider service area, a systematic tariff collection system, strong financial condition, and firm organizational governance in the Municipality's context. The WSSUC supplies water in Ward Nos. 5, 6, and 7 of the Municipality, and the people within these Wards do not use water from the tanker supply. So, they claim that the WSSUC is rich in water.

I conducted the study within the water supply system as an ethnographic site. The water supply system possesses a community-based approach, while at the same time, it adopts the market logic to collect tariffs, expand infrastructures, and achieve the sustainability of the system. It is the largest water supply system within the Municipality and possesses spring and groundwater sources, an established management system, a systematic tariff collection mechanism, and expanding water infrastructures. This diversity enriched ethnographic data and helped generate knowledge about the relationship between people and water in the urban context through anthropological perspectives.

2. Context of the Paper

People recognize the Municipality as a water-rich area in terms of its water production to fulfill water demand within the Municipality. Despite this common recognition, water scarcity exists in a place where water is abundant (Gurung et al., 2019). The state of water scarcity is further aggravated by the loss of indigenous water systems in the Valley with the expansion of modern infrastructures [2]. At a broader regional context, literature reveals that water scarcity, uneven power relations, elite control, and differential access to water feature the peri-urban context of South Asia [3]. Similarly, urban poor in developing countries spend a higher portion of their income on water [4].

At the local level, for example, some water supply systems of the Municipality face water scarcity even though the Madevsthan-Matatirtha supply system is endowed with adequate springs and groundwater reserves at present. This resonates the need of the redistribution approach for equitable distribution of water across people and places within the Municipality. Therefore, water scarcity in some places is not physical scarcity, but the water governance crisis shapes it. This has an implication on water security, which impacts equity on water scarcity in urban areas [5]. This context triggered me to conduct the study and produce knowledge.

3. Objectives

Given this context, this paper refers to the Mahadevsthan-Matatirtha water supply system and discusses how political economy and power relations between water-related stakeholders structure the water supply system and how the WSSUC's organizational structure, norms, and perspectives shape equity and water security in a neoliberal context. Equally, the paper discusses water's problematic position considering its features such as social good and commodity, and the contending relationship between water-related stakeholders.

4. Research Methods

The study is based on ethnographic data and institutional records collected in connection with my field work for the PhD research in anthropology. I studied the Mahadevsthan-Matatirtha water supply system from June to July 2025. The water supply system is the universe of the study, which has used both qualitative and quantitative data. I employed tools such as key informant interviews, informal discussions, participant observation, and case study to collect data.

Key informants included officials and executive committee members of the Mahadevsthan-Matatirtha WSSUC, members of Shree Gumalchoki Sachet Mahila Samudayik Ban (SGSMSB), and officials of the forest office and Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN). I participated in a discussion between the executive committee members of the WSSUC and the Forest Users Group (FUG).

I also considered my sense organs in seeing and hearing while observing the water-related phenomenon. In this regard, I collected the narration of the executive committee members of the WSSUC, people, and stakeholders, and the relevant case. I ensured informed consent before discussing with people and taking their data and photographs. I organized the data thematically and analyzed them, following descriptive and analytical methods in anthropological scholarship.

5. Theoretical Perspectives

This paper adopts the perspective of political economy, governmentality, and agency. The political-economic perspectives show the water scarcity as a byproduct of inequalities related to water in terms of class and gender [6] and power dynamics and structural inequalities [7]. This perspective discusses that the co-production of water as scarce and abundant in urban areas is a political process [8]. Foucault views government as the conduct of conduct and rationalities and technologies to guide human beings [9]. The concept of governmentality denotes the method of governing through which people govern and produce themselves as governable subjects [10]. It entails the process of subjectification from the state's bureaucratic control to citizens' self-control [11]. The agency is the capability inherent in the power to act [12], which is socially and linguistically constructed and embedded in power [13]. Similarly, agency is the culturally mediated capacity of action, though it is not free will detached from socio-cultural context. Both language and agency are interlinked since the former guides social action [14]. For example, political-economic lenses show the way global, national, and local policy frameworks shape water supply, governmentality discloses the exercise of power, and agency reveals how people have responded to power to manage their water in everyday lives in the changing landscape of politics, economy, and environmental conditions in the ethnographic site.

6. Field Findings and Analysis

6.1 Mechanism of Governance

Table 1 shows that the Mahadevsthan-Matatrtha WSSUC was established in 2063 BS and was registered in the District Water Resource Committee in 2064 BS, which spans its history of nearly two decades. The piped water supply from this system also has a history of more than a decade.

Table 1: Features of the Governance of the WSSUC

SN	Features	Data
1.	Commencement of service	2063 BS
2.	Registration in the District Water Resource Committee	2064 BS
3.	Distribution of individual households taps	2068 BS
4.	Composition of the executive committee	9 Males and 3Females
5.	Woman in a key position	Treasures
6.	Inclusion of the disadvantaged groups	No
7.	Chairperson selection	Election
8.	Annual General Meeting	Held regularly
9.	Annual account audit and reporting	Audited and produced a report
10.	Number of staff	4 Administrative and 24 field staff
11.	Means of information disclosure	SMS, Facebook page, and Mobile Apps

Source: Field Study, 2025

The leadership of the WSSUC is formalized through legal and formal processes of periodic election, which reveals a democratic and participatory system of governance. Field study shows that periodic elections are held in capital-intensive and infrastructure-led water supply systems within the Municipality. The composition of the WSSUC's executive committee is asymmetrical from a gender perspective since a female's role is limited to the treasurer. The WSSUC is male-dominated, and female participation seems symbolic. It has not ensured the representation of socially disadvantaged groups in the executive committee. So, this composition remains feeble to influence inclusive and participatory decision-making. In addition, the considerable number of staff in the community-managed water supply system is one of the core features of higher household coverage and a relatively stronger institutional mechanism. Likewise, the application of modern information technology is a basis of efficiency, transparency, and accountability. These are the building blocks of good governance, although it depends on people's digital literacy.

6.2 Motivation for Leading WSSUC

Field study shows the lived experiences of what motivated people to serve as executive committee members of the WSSUC. For example, the members of the WSSUC have been serving for their social recognition. They are united for water in a collaborative way, even if they belong to different political ideologies, for an equitable and sustainable water supply. For example, the then Pradhan Pancha worked hard to supply piped water, engaging socially and politically active persons. Besides, WSSUC works as a platform for the future political careers of its executive committee members. In addition, residents insist on serving in the WSSUC even in the case of their refusal.

For them, the affiliation with WSSUC became a passion and even habitus [15] in the long run. Thus, feelings of high social standing, prospects, social and moral pressure, and the habitus caused their engagement with WSSUC. The local political economy, revealed as an opportunity to exercise formal power, is another element of motivation. However, people complain to the WSSUC if it fails for the supply of adequate and reliable water supply, and if the billing amount becomes higher. This shows people's agentive action.

6.3 Service Delivery and Financial Status

According to Table 2, the WSSUC serves 4783 households, which is the highest number among other water-related user committees within the Municipality. This water supply system is rich in water production as it supplies water 24 hours a day for some 7 months.

Table 2: Service Delivery and Financial Status

SN	Aspects of Analysis	Data
1.	Households served	4783
2.	Daily water supply time and frequency	24 hours (except Chaitra-Shrawan Months)
3.	Households within the minimum charge	200
4.	Payment behavior and enforcement	Online payment
5.	Bank balance	Rs. 8,00,00,000

Source: Field Study, 2025

Field study revealed that nearly 4 percent of households belong to the minimum units of water consumption. This reflects the hierarchical socio-economic condition of people within the supply system. The high water consumption by the majority of households shows their better financial conditions, a high water consumption culture, or both. The executive committee members of the WSSUC said that it offers a 25 percent discount for timely payment of the water tariff and the penalty to late payers, which shaped people's payment behaviors.

As shared by them, its financial status is relatively stronger. The WSSUC possesses a bank balance of Rs. 8, 00, 00,000. The level of savings of the WSSUC shows its financial sustainability and bargaining power in water-related negotiations with the government and stakeholders. The financial condition also becomes the basis of implementing its proposed co-financing projects, rehabilitation or upgrading of existing projects, and mitigating the consequences of climate variability and disasters. However, the saving is dependent on a sustainable water supply for meeting people's increasing demands.

The systematic tariff collection, using discounts and penalties for early payers and late payers respectively, reinforced its financial condition. It is a form of WSSUC's governmentality [16] that compels even marginal populations to pay for it and shapes their access to or deprivation of water, which is a political economy of water. The executive committee members of the WSSUC claimed that they are not a water vendor as it provides water at a mere 25 paisa per liter, which water vendors sell in Rs. 25. They question, can WSSUC be labelled as a vendor?

6.4 Micro Politics over Old Residents and Migrants

Like other water-related user committees within the Municipality, the WSSUC has set differential costs for households' tap installation for old residents and migrants. According to Table 3, the cost for old residents and migrants is Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 30,100, respectively.

Table 3: Tap Installation Cost and Basis of the Cost Determination

SN	Cost	Basis of Cost Determination
1.	Old residents	20,000
2.	Migrants	30,100
3.	Basis of determination	Recognition of the past contribution of the old residents. The new residents lack an affinity and affection for the place.

Source: Field Study, 2025

The people's historical belongingness to a place, coupled with their past contribution to constructing the water supply system, is the basis of the determination of the cost. This determined their social legitimacy to access water at a subsidized cost compared to the migrants. This shows the WSSUC's governmentality since it functions like a state authority and categorizes people as old residents and migrants concerning tap installation cost. This blurs the boundary between the jurisdiction of the state and community-level institutions and creates disadvantages to low-income migrants and tenants.

Further, people and executive committee members of WSSUC viewed that migrants are profit-oriented; they leave the place at any time if they receive profit from the sale of their property, and do not have an affection for the place. However, this happens due to micro-politics. It could be argued that this differential cost is an alternative strategy of WSSUC to strengthen their financial capacity, even from within the margin of their confined water users. However, the subsidy approach stands on contending grounds because the national policies and legal frameworks on water supply, which are guided by the neoliberal regime, focus on the cost recovery principle. Governed by these frameworks, the WSSUC expands infrastructure on water supply and collects tap installation charges and tariffs to sustain the water supply system.

6.5 Water Source, Water Loss, Treatment, and Adequacy

The data in Table 4 shows that the WSSUC possesses two sources, one brought from Matatirtha and 10 boring units located in different sites within the Municipality. The existing water production is adequate to meet people's current demand, so people of Ward Nos. 5, 6, and 7 do not use tanker water. The higher dependence on groundwater signals the inadequacy of both spring and traditional water sources like Kuwas.

Table 4: Water Source, Safety, and Adequacy

SN	Features	Data
1.	Water sources	1 Spring source from Matatirtha and 10 deep boring systems in multiple sites
2.	Water treatment practice	2 Treatment units, and the water is treated with bleaching powder.
3.	Leakage status	Nominal
4.	Water adequacy and users' access	Adequate at present and future demand may cause a shortage

Source: Field Study, 2025

The executive committee members of the WSSUC are cautious about the water crisis in the future since the earthquake of 2072 BS damaged the path of underground water flow and water yields in existing sources. The provision of treatment plants shows the need for maintenance of water quality and the WSSUC's compliance with the state's national drinking water quality standard. People critiqued that the over-extraction of groundwater gradually caused water scarcity even in water-rich areas, which could be partly attributed to people's changing water consumption patterns triggered by urban culture. On the other hand, they appreciated the Municipality's plan for the construction of big reservoirs, groundwater recharging, and enforcing household recharging systems during the approval of the design of house construction.

6.6 Collaborating Agencies

The co-financing project of the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage Management, and the then Central Regional Monitoring and Supervision Office, Kathmandu, supported the WSSUC to implement the water supply projects. In this context, the role of the then Pradhan Pancha became crucial in approaching the water-related authorities. The WSSUC has collaborated with the Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users, Nepal (FEDWASUN). This partnership eased horizontal networks and negotiation, but there is no other agency working in WSSUC's service area. The executive committee members of the WSSUC stated that FEDWASUN supported them in filing the case in the Supreme Court of Nepal when the Municipality tried to dissolve the water-related user committees within its administrative area. The Municipality has not yet supported the WSSUC financially, though it invites executive committee members of the WSSUC to some program activities. This reflects the existing state of WSSUC's social negotiation and politics for water, which differs from the politics of water, since the executive committee members of the WSSUC blame politicians for doing politics of water by treating people for their electoral purposes mainly, leaving the crucial agenda of equitable water supply unattended.

6.7 Challenges and Prospects for Equitable Water

People's lived experiences show how water governance within the WSSUC's service area faced challenges. People focused on mapping potential water sources, adoption of alternative sources of water, and expansion of the service area as crucial steps for resolving water scarcity. Further, the WSSUC has supplied 2 taps of water to the Rhodendron Boarding School and adequate water to the Transportation Office. There are some 50 public taps under the WSSUC's service area. However, it has become a challenge for their effective operation. Considering these contexts, the WSSUC is going to promote a water recharge system and run its water supply under a cooperative model, which becomes an innovative water governance model within the Municipality.

Meanwhile, people and executive committee members of the WSSUC argued that the growing water scarcity within the Kathmandu Valley could be resolved using the water from the Melamchi water supply system, although it has become a business in the name of water supply service and contains several stories of bribery and vested political interests. In this context, the supply of water to the Municipality from these systems becomes challenging.

This signals the instrumental role of water-related user committees as water utility operators for peri-urban areas in Kathmandu Valley and the Municipality, as well as the need for deep-boring systems. For this reason, the executive committee members of the WSSUC see the necessity of water recharge in streams for the continuity of user committee-led water governance. On the one hand, people seem concerned about the haphazard extraction of groundwater and the future of the groundwater reserve; on the other hand, they see the groundwater as the only option to address growing water demand within the Municipality. This shows their ambivalence. For this reason, water given and taken between Wards could fulfill the water deficit. However, people criticized that water source owners from water-rich areas possess a selfish attitude, engage in the politics of water, and remain reluctant to supply it. Yet, people strongly argued for pooling water, which is a common property regime [17], as a proper alternative to the water from the Melamchi water supply system. In addition, the merger of water-related user committees could reinforce their bargaining power for the redistribution of water under the Municipality-wide planning.

Field study shows that it seems tough to happen due to asymmetrical bargaining power between water-rich and water poor Wards. Further, reuse of wastewater is shadowed due to the culture and stigma associated with it, although it seems a reliable alternative for water security. For example, wastewater could be optimally utilized for other competing areas like irrigation, concrete ring factories, and brick kilns after its treatment. These instances reveal that clean water becomes a priority agenda of people and WSSUC, but no one bothers about the proper utilization of both waste and wastewater to fulfil water deficit within the Municipality.

7. A Case of Social Negotiation and Tussle between WSSUC and FUG

I visited the office of the Mahadevsthan-Matatirtha WSSUC in Ward No. 5 at 10.30 am on the 15th of Ashad 2082 BS. The WSSUC members advised me to join their discussion to be held with people related to the members of the SGSMSB, which is understood as the FUG locally, in the forest office located nearby. I entered the meeting hall around 11.00 am. Some 60 participants, with 50 percent women, were discussing the WSSUC's attempt to install a deep boring near the football ground. They were in a mood of tussle. With anger and confidence, an adult woman expressed that they protected the forest using their optimum labor for years, so the haphazard installation of the deep boring system within the forest area has hurt them. Members of the FUG argued that the right to the forest is conferred to the local community, so they deserve legitimacy to oppose the deep boring. They criticized that the expansion of deep boring has declined springs, dug wells, and groundwater, and is likely to cause disaster in this area. They added that some households receive water 24 hours a day, while others do not, which shows the WSSUC's lack of concern for equal water distribution.

The chief of the forest office, who took a seat on the Dias, was accompanied by the chairperson of Ward No.5, officials of the forest office, and a representative of FECOFUN. She asked for my introduction as I was a stranger to her. I introduced myself as a researcher at the Tribhuvan University pursuing a PhD in anthropology on drinking water governance. The people representing the FUG took their seats facing each other. I took a seat in the row of the FUG. The representative of FECOFUN facilitated the discussion and requested that executive committee members of the WSSUC focus on the issue and proceed with the discussion. The vice-chair of the WSSUC stated that it possesses 2 deep boring systems, one installed 14 years ago and the other 8 years ago, and added that the deep boring system lasts only for 5-7 years. According to him, a deep boring system failed to function for 10 days and caused extreme difficulties in supplying water. However, the people representing FUG charged that WSSUC pretended the non-functionality of the boring system to justify the installation of a new one.

The chair of the WSSUC stated that the WSSUC had shared its hardship with the chairperson of the Ward and planned to install a new deep-boring system near the football ground as a proper alternative for water. The Municipality council made an official decision to proceed with drilling work. People near the drilling site did not oppose it on the first day, but they protested it the next day and compelled the WSSUC to stop the work. The WSSUC members firmly argued that they commenced the drilling work considering the people's pressing water needs. Following the WSSUC's argument, a woman representing the FUG blamed WSSUC for not sharing any information with the FUG and the forest office before commencing the drilling work. She asked WSSUC, "Is it good to drill in the sensitive forest land by notifying the Ward and Municipality offices only?" They also blamed the Ward office for not coordinating with FUG.

They further asked, "Why did WSSUC boycott the forest office for this sensitive issue? At that time, a FUG-related person claimed that it is not WSSUCC, which produces water, but it is the forest that contributes to generating water. They questioned how many deep-boring systems do you install near the playground in the name of water supply service? For them, it is the climax of a forced action. An official of Madan Bhandari Rangashala Football Ground Committee became furious and added that the state has spent a significant budget for the Rangashala, so drilling the hole and damaging it is not only unethical but also illegal. As water is solely a natural resource, WSSUC can't be a community's legitimate entity for water since it works as a vendor. People asked, "Don't you need to formally ask FUG before commencing the drilling work?"

In this way, the FUG-related people strongly protested the deep boring work. This conversation shows a lack of social negotiation and consideration of urban planning perspectives in both WSSUC and FUG-led infrastructures. Followed by the hot discussion, the chairperson of the Ward opined that it's not an issue to be so serious because both WSSUC and FUG are working for the welfare of people. Water is a sensitive issue, and the legal instrument alone can't fulfill people's growing water demands. So, officials of Ward and WSSUC had discussed with him many times about this issue before commencing the drilling work with the support of a Made entrepreneur.

He argued that people live and sustain life in coexistence, so there is no need to tussle. According to him, the WSSUC had provided Rs. 70,000 for forest conservation. With agony, he asked the WSSUC to identify the new deep boring site within its service area if the football ground solely belongs to forest land. The vice-chair of WSSUC informed that there was a meeting between the chairperson of 4 Ward offices and 4 FUGs, and WSSUC has allocated a sum of Rs 1, 20, 000@Rs.30. 000 per FUG annually.

However, the WSSUC officials did not accept FUG's behavior and their weakness in coordination, and they stressed that the proposed deep boring site is the only alternative to serve the communities in Wards No. 5, 6, and 7. In contrast, the FUG members blamed the WSSUC for avoiding proper coordination and negotiation with them. This case shows that both sides are firmly engaged in collective bargaining in favor of the natural resources they are engaged with. In the meantime, a representative of FECOFUN stated that forests and forest land are the state's property that can't be commodified at all. Likewise, the issue of water supply is not incorporated in the Community Forestry Operational Plan of SGSMSB, and the WSSUC lacked relevant documents and a proper decision-making process. In the meantime, the forest officer mentioned that there exists a feeble coordination between WSSUC and FUG, and poor documentation of the drilling process. She advised the WSSUC to immediately stop the drilling work and follow due process as per the Community Forestry Operational Plan and the government's rules. However, the WSSUC members firmly emphasized that it must resume the drilling work on time in the disputed site for the noble purpose of water supply to people.

The meeting concluded in an inconclusive way. The discussion revealed that WSSUC influenced the drilling work using the authority of the Municipality and Ward, while FUG opposed it, applying the institutional backing of the forest office. This shows a power tussle not only between WSSUC and FUG but equally between the Municipality and the forest office. The dispute between WSSUC and FUG is governed by the latter's claim on socio-historical legitimacy over the forest resources. On the other hand, the WSSUC's stance is guided by its social obligation to fulfill people's urgent need for the water supply at any cost. In this sense, the football ground stood as a socio-political and physical field where FUG and WSSUC contested to establish their control over their respective natural resources and appropriate benefits accordingly. In this sense, the ground parallels Bourdieu's concept of field [15]. It seems that this dispute is less about their physical control of the land, but it is more about establishing the identity and legitimacy to retain socio-political hold.

8. Discussion

The paper reveals that the water supply of Mahadevsthan-Matatirtha WSSUC is not only a technical issue, but it entails the complexity of water-related stakeholders' power, legitimacy, and contending claims over natural resources such as water and forest. The theoretical perspective of political economy, governmentality, and agency shows that governance of the WSSUC and uneven power relations shape water scarcity and security. For example, the political-economic perspective shows that access to water is not due to its physical shortage, but rather resulted as a consequence of migration status, possession of property, and organizational governance of the WSSUC. The stronger financial condition of the WSSUC has established it in a better negotiation position with the government and other water-related stakeholders, enforcing a reward and punishment mechanism, and expanding infrastructures on water to meet the people's increasing water demand. For example, it could persuade the Ward office to conduct a deep boring work in the contested site and discuss with the FUG-related people. The differential cost of tap installation for old residents and migrants shows micro-level political economy, while monetization of water is an indication of the influence of neo-liberal political economy. Thus, the WSSUC lies in its contending role of social service and water distribution through the market logic of tariff collection. The hierarchical access to water within the water supply system shows that water scarcity and abundance co-exist, though water is a naturally endowed community resource. From the governmentality perspective, the WSSUC functions like a government authority. For example, the establishment of differential costs for tap installation, a systematic tariff payment system, and the application of digital technology shape governance of the water supply system. Likewise, the presence of the WSSUC, FUG, forest office, and FECOFUN represents a plurality of governance or governmentality with social negotiation governing water as part of the collective community resource. Equally, the concept of agency applies to view the phenomenon around the water. The WSSUC's negotiation and hot discussion with the FUG shows collective agential action of their members to have control over the football ground, which offered as a contending space both physically and symbolically.

9. Conclusion

As the largest water supply system of the Municipality, the WSSUC shows some typical features. Water is negotiated through both inter-and intra-water sector stakeholders. Currently, the Mahadevsthan-Matatirtha water supply system possesses adequate water, whereas the executive committee members of the WSSUC are cautious about the sustainability of water. So, they emphasized recharging water and seeking other alternatives for meeting future water demands. The disputes regarding the installation of deep boring systems in the forest area indicates implication of political economy, power, and water scarcity. Importantly, the institutional legitimacy of both WSSUC and FUG sparked the dispute. The WSSUC's unequal treatment of old residents and migrants is a socio-political issue rather than financial. In this sense, the WSSUC is not only fulfilling its social responsibility of water supply but also playing the role of a political institution. For example, it deserves the power to govern the people as a community-based governmentality. Thus, these instances reveal that the water supply system is not free from conflict, which is one of the core elements of water security in the changing landscape of water in the urbanizing context of the Municipality.

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