

# Sustainable Urban Development and Climate Change in India: Discourse Profiles, Conflicts, and Coalitions

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## Research Context and Objectives

This study on climate change discourses in India is part of a BMBF funded joint Research and Development (R&D) project that looks at transformation processes of the emerging Megacity Hyderabad.



### Aims of the overall project:

- Evaluate consumption and lifestyle changes and dynamics
- Understand their effect on energy use and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions
- Stimulate lifestyle changes towards sustainability and low emissions
- Increase adaptive capacity with respect to climate change

### Aims of the related climate change discourse analysis:

- Assess the quality and depth of the climate change discourse
- Understand how experts and decision makers on national and local level see climate change and its relevance vis-à-vis other social problems
- Learn about discussed options for climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Discover typical argumentation patterns (discourse profiles) and conflict lines
- Identify major actors and discourse coalitions

## Approach

### Definition of Climate Change Discourses (CCD) (Reusswig et al. 2009)

*Thematically focused and coupled sequence of publicly visible arguments* related to climate change issues (existence, causes, consequences, adaptation, and mitigation) in various contexts (or framings) that different *social actors* are engaged in order to *influence* one another as well as the boundary conditions of their action (e.g. policies, mass media) so that the resource basis, the interests and the worldviews of the speaking actors have a higher chance to prevail in the (legitimate) social interpretation and individual or collective decision making processes.

This definition combines elements of the Foucault tradition with sociological theories that focus on social action (Keller 2005) in the climate debate context (Weingart et al. 2002).

## Methods

- Desktop analysis of written documents (e.g. the National Action Plan on Climate Change)
- Expert interviews
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of English speaking Indian daily newspapers (*The Hindu*, left-leaning, *The Times of India*, conservative) from January 2008 to February 2009



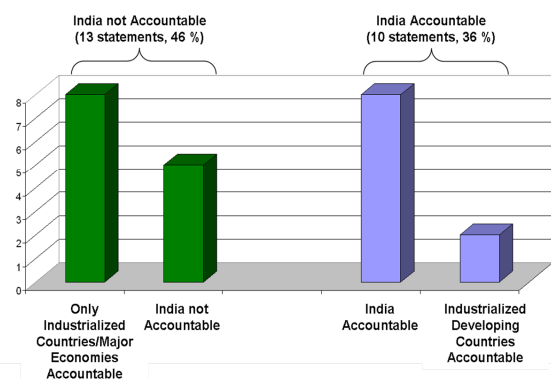
## Results

- The coverage of climate change in India's (English speaking) media landscape is rather high, and the quality (complexity, depth of issue...) comparable to Western newspapers.
- India will most probably be hit hard by climate change. Despite this fact, impacts and adaptation issues are less prominent than mitigation issues.



- Most actors reject any internationally binding mitigation goals. This is based on the argument of India's low per capita emissions, global equity concerns, as well as India's economic development and poverty alleviation goals.
- At the same time, many actions are taken in order to improve energy efficiency and to reduce GHG emissions. Based on India's (growing) total emissions there seems to be a major cleavage between those actors holding India accountable (36 %) for climate change mitigation and those who are not (46 %).

### Accountability for Climate Change and Mitigation



- Often, mitigation activities are framed as 'sustainable development', not as 'climate policy'. Scientific studies support this dual framing option, which is important for a policy dialogue with India, based upon the recognition of internal development needs.
- The official CCD of the government does refer to sustainable development and poverty alleviation, but sometimes conflates 'economic growth' with 'sustainable development' and 'poverty alleviation'.

## Upcoming Research Questions

- Are certain actors in the Indian CCD seeing climate change mitigation as a necessary consequence of its rapid industrialization and its reputation as the emerging world power?
- Do these reactions represent a subliminal stream of late anti-colonialism?
- Is there a tension between India's democratic, inclusive political institutions and the interests/views of the emerging middle class?
- How does this translate into different views on climate change by certain social groups of the Indian society?

## Literature

- Keller, Reiner (2005): Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse: Grundlegung eines Forschungsprogramms. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Reusswig, F., Otto, A., Meyer-Ohlendorf, L., Anders, U. 2009. Climate Change Discourse in India. An Analysis of Press Articles. Berlin/Potsdam: Sustainable Hyderabad Project, Additional Study.
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