



Drivers of water crises in Mexico

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Mexico harbors apparent contradictions, like water stressed regions with a great water access to its population and water abundant regions with as much as a quarter of its population without water access. A country of great contrasts and inequalities is facing a crossroads in ways of bringing about water security, as the most developed regions ward-off water scarcity with contested infrastructural schemes like dams and water transfers, while the least developed regions are forsaken or undergo the detrimental effects of such infrastructures. The paper examines the apparent drivers of water crises acknowledged by the government, along with unchecked drivers of water crises, as the government focuses on palliative temporal solutions for water scarcity. The usual suspect for driver of water crisis is the rapid population growth, however, it does not have enough explanatory capacity to explain water scarcity alone, as this growth, coupled with the chaotic urban sprawl, which is prevalent in Mexico, strains the water resources and the feeble water utilities' capacities to distribute water efficiently and then properly treat it to avoid pollution. Instead of investing on demand management, the official solution is supply augmentation, which is prone to social unrest and conflicts. Second, despite the water law promotes IWRM tenets, all water users remain uncoordinated, while public participation is furtively hindered by the central water authority, who is incapable of dealing with the increasing divide of water users between high and low economic power, the former effectively hoarding and consuming gargantuan volumes of water through legal loopholes, corruption or desperate water users willing to sell their water rights. Although agriculture still consumes most available water, it is a new kind of agriculture, based on cash crops destined for foreign markets that are pressuring both surface and underground water resources. Unless the country deals with its inherent inequality, numerous water crises will spur across the country, threatening the social fabric.