

Class 1: Planning from Above v. Planning from Below

by

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Planning from above v. Planning from below

- Planning in the Rest is fundamentally different in many ways from planning in the West
- Planning and its relation to the grand project of development, understood as the move from culture & tradition to rational modernity
- Critics of this move – Gandhi to Jane Jacobs to Habermas to Friedman to Scott to Escobar
- The rise of social movements, the redefinition and expansion of democracy and the stasis of the state
- Disparate and severe impact of planning along ethnic, racial and national lines

Planning from above

- Rational modernist planning – perspective
- State but also other actors including IO's, private sector and NGOs, depending on the method
- Tools – expertise
- Utilitarian approach – greater common good, national interest, etc
- Power as the heart of planning

Friedman and planning from below

- Central to social mobilization tradition is human emancipation and structural change through action from below
- Focus of the critique was industrialization
- Non institutional politics and alternatives to development
- Issues: spontaneity versus formal organization; people versus elites; ‘for’ or ‘against’ organizing; forms of struggle – violence versus non violence
- “Planning is not, in principle, exclusively a function of the State”
- Radical planning and social learning

Background to the project and current status - I

- Dams as Temples of modern India
- Socio-environmental Location
- Inter-state politics
- Adjudication of water disputes and the 1979 ruling
- World Bank and other donor involvement
- 30 big dams, 135 medium dams and 3000 small dams
- Who is 'project-affected' (excluding the canal oustees, fisherpeople, landless laborers, casual laborers)
- Question of land ownership and titles and their link to resettlement and rehabilitation – impact of colonial land laws and caste discrimination

Background to the project and current status - II

- Evolution of planning from above and below – planning and resistance dialectic
- Victory of the global campaign?
- Key moments of planning from below
- Judicial role and 2000 judgment
- Recent events – 2005 judgment and the CoM report
- Role of movement insiders v. outsiders and the problem of representation

Problems with Planning from above

- Institutions and Power

- Water disputes jurisdiction and inter-state structure
- Weak Central government
- Ineffective and unaccountable specialized agencies like the NCA, GRA
- Very weak or absent local government
- Failure of the judiciary
- Unaccountable international institutions
- Lack of available land for R&R

Problems with Planning from above

- Democracy

- What is the 'demos' here – unit of democracy?
- Is democracy simply a mechanism for aggregation of collective preferences from a rational choice perspective?
- The utilitarian idea of 'national interest' as collective welfare
- Question of trust in governance

Problems with Planning from above

- Technocracy

- hydrology and engineering - the question of availability of water in the river
- WCD - 30-70% of dams worldwide not viable on technical and financial grounds
- Planning on paper v. planning in action – the lack of good faith, deceitful behavior, and gross negligence
- Where is the benefit-cost analysis and post-project evaluation?
- Lack of interest in alternatives to large dams – why?
- Expertise – does it lead to flattening of difference, centralization of power and forced social change?

Planning from below

- Planning from below as non-institutional politics
- Both forms of politics co-exist in development planning - Friedman
- NBA as a social movement - distinction between NGO, SM and civil society, state, market – planning from below as a ‘subaltern’ activity
- Key role of protest – what Tarrow calls ‘conventions of contention’
- Alternative development or alternatives to development?
- Hegemonic v. counter-hegemonic planning from below

Planning from below as a radical critique of democracy

- Nature of India's democracy – problem of extreme inequality (class, caste and gender) co-existing with political equality
- Loss of moral credibility and Crisis of the State in the 1970s including emergency
- The rise of social movements – new v. old movements and deepening of democracy – NBA as a movement
- Strong development = weak democracy?
- What is the institutional program of planning from below?

Planning from below as a radical critique of technocracy

- As a critique of a specific kind of ‘authoritarian choiceless technocracy’
- Technocracy as a language of power expressed through rationality and communicative action
- Indigenous knowledge, local technology and public speech through protest – are they enough?
- Critique of technocracy and centralization (Roy’s critique of Single Authority)
- What is the goal of technocracy – is it development and if so, who defines it and how?

Planning from below - a radical critique of modernity and other dilemmas

- How to be modern and different (Calderon)
- Small scale alternatives to dams and refocus on the politics of human development (e.g., jeevanshalas)
- Political ethics of elite and non-elite alliances – Role of Roy
- The role of foreign NGOs and foreign funding
- Gujarati nationalism
- How to evaluate 'success' of planning from below?

Problems with Planning from Below

- Lack of adequate public opinion support
- Lack of access to institutional tools to operationalize alternatives to the dams, such as regulatory authority and access to finance
- Lack of international leverage after 1993b
- David v. Goliath?