

Gist of EPW July Week 2, 2020

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Towards More Inclusive Water Management

Context:

The article focuses on different interdisciplinary approaches that should be adopted for better management of water as a public good.

Why is an interdisciplinary system required for water management?

- Following points make the interdisciplinary approach necessary for water management:
 - Water management needs to be analyzed through different lenses as several factors govern the developmental decisions such as social, economic and environmental factors.
 - The interaction between water, land use and sanitation should be kept in mind while formulating the policies for water management.
 - Finally, the interactions between actions taken at different scales - local, national and international - also need to be understood.
- However, the sector is currently managed in silos by institutions.

Critical thinking in Water Resource Planning

Ideas of some critical sociological thinkers can contribute to the more inclusive management of our water resources and truly ensure water for all.

- Critical thinking develops a questioning perspective on the systems at hand.
- It enables us to recognize how problems-riddled current systems are and how to improve prevailing practices.

Problems analyzed by the critical sociological thinkers in the existing practices:

1. **Dominance of Engineering and Economic Approaches**

1. Bias towards engineering and economic approaches can be found in modern water management.
2. Water resource departments in most of the Indian states recruit only civil and mechanical engineers.
 1. They mainly focus on the cost-benefit analysis and often neglect the consultation of other stakeholders.
 2. The stakeholders of a hydropower project typically include Panchayats, non-governmental organizations, community welfare groups (that include farmers, users of irrigation facilities, women welfare groups, self-help groups, and village youth welfare groups), hydropower developers and the state energy department.
 3. Despite the presence of welfare groups, communities on the ground remain sidelined by the latter two stakeholders that unilaterally drive decisions to serve their interests in earning revenues from energy generation.

2. **Ignorance of the important issues such as equity, ecology, power and justice**

The idea of profit maximization dominates the current water management institutions due to which certain important aspects are often neglected.

1. **Equity gets hampered**

1. There is neither benefit-sharing with locals nor their inclusion in decision-making around sustainability concerns.
2. For instance, locals often find out about a life-altering hydropower project only after the arrival of machinery and workers in the area.
3. This develops a feeling of exclusion among the communities which are displaced by these projects.

2. **Ecological concerns**

1. Rivers are not human artifacts; they are natural phenomena, integral components of ecological systems, and inextricable parts of the cultural, social, economic and spiritual lives of the communities concerned.
2. They are not pipelines to be cut, turned around, welded and rejoined.

3. **Power**

1. More preference to the engineering and economic approaches leads to the supremacy of certain powerful classes over others.

4. **Justice**

1. Under the reductionist approach, water is often seen as a resource to be exploited for various water services and not as a resource that has certain basic economic, cultural, social and environmental value.
2. The current uses of water reflect only scientific and economic sense. This “scientism” serves the political and economic motives of the powerful.

Other concerns

- Modern-day planning ignores the plurality of knowledge and realities.
 - The domination of research and policy by powerful castes, classes, and gender recognizes only their knowledge.
 - Water projects based on colonial designs and heavy infrastructure reflect the masculine, centralization-focused identities that designed these systems.
- According to some researchers, modern-day practices prefer certain knowledge systems over others and lead to unequal distribution of power.
 - For example, the [Green Revolution](#) which is characterized by high-yielding variety crops, intensive use of inputs and market-oriented farming, dominates the other agricultural practices.
 - This has led to investments in large hydropower projects for irrigation at the cost of land that communities relied on for generations.
 - This practice successfully served the objectives of the World Bank but has worsened the condition of marginalized vulnerable agricultural groups by providing privilege to certain knowledge.

Solutions

1. **"Praxis"**

1. Some researchers have developed the idea of “praxis” which focuses on participatory thinking and engagement with communities on the ground.
 1. This method is adopted by recent participatory practices. These methods can be used to integrate local people into development initiatives and enhance their control over the resource allocation and decision-making processes.
 2. It will enable the stakeholders to share their opinion in the important projects.

2. “Strategic Purposive Action” and “Commutative Action”

1. Another method suggested by researchers is “strategic purposive action” and “communicative action”. The objective of this method is to act in coordination with others and go beyond the egocentric approach.
 1. This approach is beneficial in water resource planning particularly in the situation of conflicts.
 2. It will help to maximize collective welfare and eradicate conflicts.

3. “Standpoint theory”

1. It enables them to think and act in favor of the disadvantaged.
2. The Standpoint Theory will help to develop empathy among engineers, planners and policymakers towards the hardships and aspirations of the marginalized communities.

Conclusion

- Ultimately, engaging with the social sciences can ground us to the contexts we live and work in, create a sense of humility in our abilities, and inculcate a consciousness towards those on whom we have an impact.
- It is of greater importance to employ critical theories to constructively reflect on current water management practices and improve these systems.
- Expanding the range of approaches that inform water governance in India can go a long way in making the system more just, inclusive, and efficient.

Procedural Rationality in the time of COVID-19

Context:

- This article focuses on the importance of procedural rationality amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:

- Apart from the flu pandemic of 1918, no pandemic has ever come close to COVID-19 in the last 100 years.
- The responses of nations have been varied starting from total denial to imposing complete lockdown putting economy and life at standstill.
- We are now entering a transition phase where different countries are contemplating reopening their economies partially, fully, or in stages.
 - India, for example, had introduced nationwide colour-coded activity zones, where red zones were extremely restrictive and green zones were attempting a return to normalcy.
 - Now we have most sectors operating with rules and regulations put in place by the Government.
 - The USA has delegated the authority to its states, without adhering to a single coordinated nationwide criterion.
- However, these steps are like shooting in the dark without any promising antidote.

Uncertainty created due to COVID-19:

The pandemic has created three levels of uncertainty:

1. **Biological uncertainty:**

- It arises from the fact that we are unsure of treatment drugs and do not have a clear time span for a vaccine.
- Furthermore, we have very limited knowledge of COVID-19 and Sars-Cov-2.
- However, social distancing has partially provided some relief by flattening the new infections curve but, reopening will again trigger the situation.
- Most countries are facing challenges in the monitoring of asymptomatic patients and there is a lack of protective equipment for frontline workers, medical staff, doctors and nurses.
- Not only these, but countries are also lacking medical necessities such as hospital beds, ventilators, etc. for the patients.

2. Economic uncertainty:

- With economic activities coming to a halt, the pandemic has created a situation of economic uncertainty.
- For instance, without a termination point, it is simply not possible to do dynamic optimisation, that is, optimal decisions over multiple time periods are not feasible.
 - Due to this, businesses, large and small, will defer investment decisions no matter how cheap loans become.
 - Production planning is also made difficult by the fact that supply chains are now global, subject to vulnerabilities outside a firm's control.
- Add to that the substantial uncertainty on the demand side, which is harder to predict even under normal circumstances. Job loss, falling wages and movement of labour across regions are going to affect demand on an unprecedented global scale.

3. Uncertainty due to the interaction between biological and economic uncertainty

- The third type of uncertainty has turned out due to the interaction between biological and economic uncertainties.
- Coupled with individual-specific uncertainty, it will develop a variety of individual responses making it more difficult to offer clear solutions.

Concept of Procedural Rationality

- Economists while making decisions or formulating any policy, always quantify all the possible outcomes.
- But, under a situation of ambiguity like the current global crisis, it is not possible to predict all the possible outcomes because we don't know what the different states of the world might be and/or their associated probability distribution.
- Some economists suggest that in such a complex situation, "we should shift our focus from the outcomes of the process to the process itself".
- They suggest that our goal should be to have a method for making decisions that satisfy consistency in a way that suggests and leads to "reasonably good" outcomes. They termed it as "procedural rationality."

Procedural rationality at work

To see how the evidence stacks up in favour of procedural rationality in the current crisis, we need to examine the pandemic responses in light of exposure to other such phenomena in the past, particularly exposure to SARS.

- SARS cases were first found in the Guangdong province of China in November 2002.
- The disease spread to 26 countries over the next several months causing 774 deaths. Countries with the highest deaths from SARS were: China (349), Hong Kong (299), Taiwan (37), Canada (43), and

Singapore (33). With the exception of Canada and France, the Western world did not suffer any casualties.

D) Analysis of country-wise response to the current crisis:

Taiwan's Response:

- In response to the SARS crisis, Taiwan had established the National Health Command Centre in 2004 with the objective to prevent the spread of any such pandemic in the future. As a result, in response to the current COVID crisis, it immediately started screening passengers coming from Wuhan.
- Further, Taiwan merged its national health insurance and immigration and customs database and started using the travel history and clinical symptoms to identify the suspects of the coronavirus disease.
- Taiwan centralized the services such as production and distribution of masks and important healthcare guidelines were passed on to the general public on a priority basis.

Singapore's Response:

- Singapore placed travel restrictions on people coming from China, against the [World Health Organization's](#) advice, along with aggressive testing and tracking right away.
- In addition to this, Singapore also provided free testing and quarantine allowance.

Hong Kong's Response:

- Hong Kong promptly sealed all the borders connected to China and made 14 days quarantine mandatory for the people coming from China.
- Schools, universities and public places were closed and people were encouraged to work from home in order to prevent the outbreak of the disease.

United States' response:

- In contrast to the above countries, the US, even after being warned about the pandemic in January 2020, did not take any measures till the third week of March.
- In the third week of March 2020, the US issued guidelines urging people to stay at home, avoid travel and gatherings of more than 10 people at public places, bars and restaurants.

Canada's Response:

- Canada aggressively focused on more and more testing and ensured the availability of testing kits and protection equipment.
- Due to prior experience of the SARS disease, the health agencies at different levels were able to coordinate effectively.

Other European Countries:

- In Europe, Italy, once the epicentre of COVID-19, refused to take strict measures until the situation got out of hand.
 - Initially, the Italian government imposed partial lockdown only in certain “red zones.”
- The story of the UK is not different from Italy. It was not until the third week of March 2020, that any strict measures were taken.
- The late response can be seen in the case of many other European countries and some of them have not imposed lockdown yet.

- One explanation for such a response could be that the Western world in general has not faced catastrophic events of such proportions since World War II.
- Except for Canada, the Western world cumulatively had fewer than 100 SARS cases.

It can be said from the gathered evidence that developing countries like India, which are facing various challenges, have responded better than the developed countries to the current pandemic.

II) Analysis of sectoral performance

Let us examine the performance of the different sectors of the economy:

(i) Industrial Sector:

- The airline industry and the hotel industry have been affected severely due to the current pandemic because they totally depend on travel. But the hotel industry claims that its recovery is faster than the airline industry because its franchise depends on a diverse set of owners.
- It is believed that the low-cost airlines in the US will do better than their counterparts in Europe because of tougher competition.
- Sectors of an industry that are constantly innovating or face more competition and adversity seem to be doing better and preparing better.

(ii) Education Sector:

- The education sector with a significant proportion of higher education immediately adapted itself to online teaching because they are constantly dealing with new technologies.

(iii) Agriculture:

- Agriculture is probably the sector that is always dealing with some type of uncertainty. It is subject to economic uncertainty because an individual farmer or country has little control over the global output or agricultural policies followed in other countries.
- We can take the example of the Indian agricultural sector here. Despite facing adverse uncertainties such as demonetization, several droughts, anti-inflationary practices, and the current pandemic, the Indian agricultural sector is able to make decisions and adapt faster than the other sectors of the economy due to its experience with adversity.
- India is facing the problem of hunger but not starving, at least, not for the time being because of our public distribution system and pro-poor food distribution-related efforts in different states.

III) Analysis of risk taking behaviour

- Finally, the procedural rationality suggests that the experience of this pandemic is likely to influence future behaviour as well, and these changes could persist long after the pandemic is over.
- According to procedural rationality, those who have experienced certain economic and non-economic events, which are severe in impacts, are more risk-averse.
- The experience of a large macroeconomic shock, such as the Great Depression, exposure to war during childhood, and the experience of a natural disaster can cause people to become more risk-averse.
 - For example, individuals who experienced the Great Depression tend to be less active in the stock market.
 - Similar effects on risk-taking behaviour have been observed for individuals who were exposed to wars.
 - For instance, adults who were exposed to World War II as children show greater risk aversion, are less likely to invest in stocks and more likely to have life insurance.

- Ultimately, individual behavior tends to encompass a wide variety of experiences and can, therefore, be more individual-specific.
- It would not be surprising to see people maintaining social distance, washing hands, wearing masks in public places, and taking other precautionary measures long after this pandemic is over.
- Their risk attitudes and their beliefs about the recurrence of a pandemic are likely to reduce activities that might expose them to strangers, such as traveling by plane, eating out at restaurants, or shopping at malls, affecting such sectors more adversely than others.

Conclusion

- We cannot predict what is going to happen in the future, but we can rely on procedural rationality.
- We should hope that things get better sooner than later.
- In the meantime, the outcomes for countries, sectors of the economy, and individuals will vary based on their experiences and decision criteria.

India That Is Bharat

The Politics of a National Name

Context

- Recently a petition has been filed in the Supreme Court requesting the renaming of India as Bharat.
- This article analyses the political and historical legacy of naming the Indian mainland.

A petition filed in the Supreme Court to change the name of the country from India to Bharat

- In June, the Supreme Court of India heard a petition on removing the name India from Article 1 of the Indian Constitution.
 - Article 1 in the Indian Constitution states that “India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.”
- It is argued by the petitioner that the name India was given during the colonial rule and hence, characterized as the symbol of slavery.
- As a legal principle, [Article 21](#) is suggested by the petitioner which is concerned with the fundamental right to life and personal liberty.
 - He used this Article to argue that the perpetual exercise of such colonial relic disregarded the rights of the individual to call their nation by its rightful name, Bharat.
- The petition also added that Bharat is favourably associated with the legacy of the anti-colonial resistance, and was therefore preferable.
- The petitioner requested the amendment of Article 1 to remove the name “India”. However, the petition was dismissed by the Supreme Court with the advice that it be treated as a representation by the appropriate Ministry.

Past efforts to change the National Name

- Various efforts have been made in the past to change the national name.
- Three [private members’ bills](#) were moved to the Parliament in 2010, 2012 and 2014, seeking the amendment of Article 1.

Naik bills

- Shantaram Naik, a member of Parliament, moved the bills of 2010 and 2012. However, both of them lapsed.
- The distinction between territorial expression contained in India and the emotive nationalist power of Bharat was made by the Naik bills and found that the name Bharat is more desirable.

2014 Bill

- Yogi Adityanath, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, moved the 2014 bill. It sought the replacement of the name India with Hindustan so that Article 1 once reordered read “Bharat, that is Hindustan ...” and echoed both the “traditional names” of the country.
- It is interesting to know that the bill moved by Adityanath is attached in support of the recent petition.

2015 Petition and judgment of the Supreme Court

- A similar petition has been heard by the Supreme Court in 2015 by a bench headed by the then Chief Justice of India H L Dattu.
- A response from the government had been sought on this topic by the bench but it was dismissed by the successor Chief Justice of India T S Thakur in 2016.
- Also, the advocate of the petitioner was strongly criticized by T S Thakur for incorrectly using the forum meant for the poor.
- The brief history of these petitions is enough for the court to not waste its precious judicial time.
- It is because of the constitutional structure which provides the right to the citizens to represent their will, the petitions were listed and heard in the court.
 - However, there are other curiosities that bypass the petition.
- The identity of the petitioner “Namaha” and their motivation behind approaching the court are not clear and not specified in the petition.

Three Names for the country

- In the [Constituent Assembly](#), many names were proposed for the country. These included Aryavarta, Hind, and Bharatavarsha besides India and Bharat.
 - However, another name ‘Hindustan’ which was vernacularly dominant, was also in consideration. Eventually, the name Bharat was preferred along with India.
- Many reasons have been given for choosing Bharat over others. In Puranas, Bharat used to refer to a spatial entity located between the Himalayas in the north and the seas in the west, south, and east.
 - The name Bharat is based on the name of the legendary King Bharat, who was also mentioned in Jawaharlal Nehru’s *The Discovery of India*.
- Some have also argued that in the colonial era “Bharat” was used to invoke native identity. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s “Vande Mataram” invoked the idea of Bharat Mata as anti-colonial resistance against the partition of Bengal.
 - Shortly after this, Bharatmata manifested in visual form juxtaposed with territorial borders.
 - The petitioner has argued that “Bharat” remains the crucial link to the legacy of the anti-colonial struggle, and to precolonial continuity of the Indic civilization.
- Moreover, the urge to draw legitimacy from the legacy of anti-colonial nationalist resistance pushed the framers of the Indian Constitution to retain ‘Bharat’ alongside the more pragmatic name “India” in Article 1.
 - It is worthy to note that this legacy of anti-colonial nationalist resistance has played an important role in structuring political and legal discourse in the country since independence.
- The reason behind dropping ‘Hindustan’ lies in its meaning as the land of the Hindus which excludes other religions.
 - It is interesting to note that both V D Savarkar and Mohammad Ali Jinnah preferred ‘Hindustan’ over other names.

What is the Name?

- Names represent the expressions of political power. Renaming the public places, roads, and cities which is used as a citation by the petitioner represents the expression of the state's authority to its citizens.
- Maybe this is the reason why the native people are demanding to keep the native place names in place of the colonial names.
- The sovereignty of the country is depicted by the national names but it also indicates the basic qualities of the nation.
- The politics of naming is closely allied with the attempt to organize public memory around a state-preferred version of the historical past.

Role of law in the politics of naming

- Juridical baptism leads to the structuring of public discussions such as what should be said, what should not be said, and the way one should talk with significant lawful impacts on the [freedom of speech and expression](#).
- The denial of the Holocaust by the European laws in public arouse such matters.

Concerns that arise from legally endorsed names

- Lawfully approved names give rise to other major harmful concerns such as the violence of renaming and the consequent prohibition of imagination.
 - For example, the Karnataka government advised its officials not to use the word Dalit in any official communication, just after the petition was dismissed by the court.
- This order is based on a 2018 advisory issued by the union government to the same effect.
- The plausible reason behind this is to stick to the constitutional nomenclature, which is Scheduled Castes in English or in similar dialects.
- The literal translation of the term Dalit in the Marathi language is broken people.
- B R Ambedkar led down the anti-caste resistance which completely changed the explanation of this term and now this term is used to denote the dignity and unity of historically oppressed people.

Loyalty to the legal names acts as a tool to negate such prospects.

Renaming of places as a reason behind the request in the courts

The recent renaming of places such as Allahabad as Prayagraj, Mughalsarai as Deen Dayal Upadhyay, the Aurangzeb road of Delhi as A P J Abdul Kalam Marg is cited by the petitioners and it may be one of the reasons behind the request of the people in the Court.

Conclusion

- The multiplicity of names, Bharat, Hind, Hindustan, India, etc. reflects the many aspirations, ideas, and people that have been echoed through the form of the nation. These names have varied ideological and political interpretations.
- One may go so far as to say that a nation that corresponds to either India or Bharat alone does not exist. What exists beyond doubt is "India, that is Bharat," but very often is also Hindustan, and more occasionally, Hind.

