

D-Lab Development

2009.11.04

Drowned out / Discussion

Discussion w/ Students

Identified themes of the movie:

Class / Human Cost / Politics / Equity vs Efficiency / Eminent Domain / Tribal Rights / Heritage / Accountability (government / multilateral org / private sector) / Corruption of centralized power / International Pressure (HR orgs / world bank) / Voice / Agency / Education / Representation / Media

Questions

1. How can the international community leverage to affect policy?
2. What checks can we put on the government to ensure accountability?

Prof. Balakrishnan Rajagopal

Human Rights and Development Planning: Case of the Narmada Project

Initially a project between states, then settled by special tribunal when couldn't agree.

Planned since the independence of India.

Opposition based on Human Rights and Environmentalism

Initially, the people around, didn't know much about the dam.

They wanted to get more information, about what areas would be flooded, etc. Also opposition concerned over environmental impacts, because of the diverse amounts of flora and fauna in the area.

Conflict from actors at multiple levels from around the world.

Example: Greenpeace in Japan wanted Japanese government to put off loan for purchase of generators for x stage of development.

What is so special about this project? Why so much controversy and international attention?

Many issues:

Place of dams in India. Former prime minister of India described dams as the temples of India. Wanting to use development as a way to build a nation, and a sense of nationalism.

A high stakes controversy.

Any criticism of dams is seen as being anti-national, while support for dams is seen as fascist.

The purpose of the dams described as (classical large scale dam justification)

Flood control, energy, irrigation

Also about the growing industrial area and its need for water

Most of the water for the dam got used for industrial purposes (urban, industry)
It was sold as a means to "Feed the poor"
A bunch of industrialist behind the agenda
They won't say this upfront, because that doesn't sell

Government at various levels with multiple and overlapping responsibilities

Under India's constitution, water is under control of states

While the Federal Gov't has control over interstate water regulation

State responsible for restructuring and rehabilitation

Federal Gov't answers to World Bank saying will you take care of R&R.

Not easy to get political consensus with such diversity

Issues raised by dam

Hydrology - how much water was in the river. How much was flowing through. Dispute among scientist about how much was there. Became less an issue of science, as it was political

Health - particularly over malaria. Shift of flow of river, leading to increase in mosquitos

Safety - the area sits over an earthquake zone.

Environment -

Human Rights - PAPs (project affected people) what to do with them? Who counts as people effected by the project.

Those who are flooded out. People with title to property.

Landless cash laborers, who provide services. Fisherman who need fishing areas for a living, don't need land, but have lost livelihood.

People effected by canals, to get water from dam to urban areas.

Rights of indigenous (tribal) people - free and prior consent to move

Right to livelihood, people being asked to remove themselves from land. Land is more than physical, connection to resources, social network, community. Access to traditional sources of value (a forest with herbs, medicine, etc). Land for land doesn't translate into this element. Land for lands makes sense for agricultural people, but doesn't meet the ecology of a place. Land for land a poor substitute.

Led to criticism of World Bank

First time WB had independent evaluation of own project

To big and to visible

Had a scathing criticism, leading to WB pulling out funding in 1993

Led to changes in WB

Formation of World Bank

Complaints Panel

Lesson From World Bank and World Commissions of Dams

See PPT Notes

Questions

OED report didn't explain, but noted that WB violated its own policy. EIA not being issued before the World Bank approval.

How do you stop it?

Some say you can't

Large projects like this are skeptical in their delivery of what they promise.

The night and day of proposed plans and the reality on the ground

Designers giving PPT presentation of plans to WB, that said they would address all problems.

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SP.721 / 11.025J / 11.472 D-Lab I: Development
Fall 2009

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