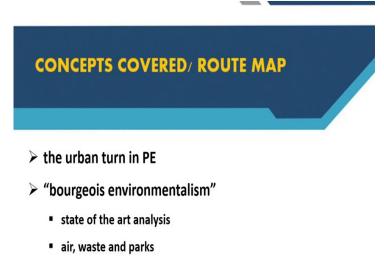
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Module - 04 Urban environmental social sciences frameworks Lecture - 31 Urban Political Ecology: The Indian Context Part I: Themes and Concepts

Hello everyone. So, in this lecture, I would be discussing urban political ecology. So, far as the Indian context is concerned, covering you know the major themes and concepts in this Indian Urban Political Ecology Framework.

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So, yes there definitely has been this urban turn in political ecology. You know as in several parts of the world similarly, South Asia is also not an exception, more specifically, India is not an exception. And we have like very significant concept, so far as you know urban political ecology in India is concerned, the most crucial concept being bourgeoisie or bourgeois environmentalism.

So, what I will be doing here is basically, you know kind of discussing the literature that is available so far as political ecology in urban space or in urban settings is concerned. And I will be discussing you know the works in terms of air or more specifically air quality in metropolitan cities like Delhi, waste, solid waste and also parks urban parks. And there is also a significant amount of works which had been done. So, far as network infrastructures mainly again water infrastructure, water provisions drinking water provisions of cities are concerned.

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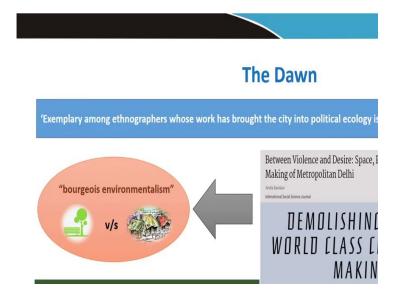
So, political ecology in and of the city. If you look into the literature that is available so far, as Indian urban political ecology is concerned; you will see that you know different, like scholars or researchers coming from variety of fields, array of fields, you know they are pursuing this particular field.

So, different methods, methodologies are being you know, are being, cross fertilized and they are conversing with each other. They are exchanging conversations. So, methodologies and methods are being like kind of combined, cross fertilized and deployed to kind of unpack you know these complex processes and dynamics that actually shape urban nature.

So, we see an un-disciplinary move to explore the complex urban social and environmental transformation of this twenty-first century, which is you know an unprecedented century in terms of planetary urbanization, whether by the turn or not and.

So, what is required and what is also happening fortunately is re-theorizations of global urbanization and the understanding of the twenty-first century socio-nature, through historically contingent multi scaled ethnographic empiricism.

I mean something which you know, Anna Tsing talked about in her 2005 work. Unfortunately, this is what is happening in the urban political ecology domain so far as the Indian context is actually concerned.



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So, this is a quote from Anne Rademacher's urban political ecology article which she published in the annual review of anthropology in 2015 and there Anne Rademacher says that Amita Baviskar you know she is exemplary. So, exemplary among ethnographers whose work has brought the city into political ecology is Amita Baviskar and there is no doubt you know in this particular fact.

And Amita Baviskar through her different works and I have cited some works here, she basically you know, she brought her research, she brought her political ecological analytic to the city.

So, initially you will see that you know the kind of work she has done is about you know, this political ecological dynamics through which she try to explore the multi scalar processes you know kind of shaping rural development projects and it is implications for communities most importantly, the marginalized sections of the people, but then she brought her research political ecological research to the city.

And she is the person who conceptualized and framed this very significant concept or you know analytic or conceptual traction which is bourgeois environmentalism.

And this methodological or conceptual arch in the political ecology literature, it has a kind of influence and inspired number of works you know which has then, tried to kind of deploy this bourgeois environmental, environmentalism perspective to unravel multiple socio natural and political processes shaping urban environments of different cities so far, as the Indian subcontinent is concerned.

So, what is this bourgeois environmentalism is all about? So, this is actually Amita Baviskar critic to this idea and practice of gentrification. So, here what happens is that you know the affluent sections of the society, they try to, they are in favor of city beautification initiatives and urban restoration projects and they considered the poor people as polluters you know as ugly people.

So, unfortunately what happens is that, the way or rather in the battles to curate the urban space you know the right of the city unfortunately is a cast, in terms of the right of this salaried affluent middle-class section against the survival needs of the poor people in that sense.

So, you know this bourgeois environmentalism; this is a very I would say strong you know formulation, because it help us to understand several notions you know at play in the making of urban environment.

So, for example, you know the notion of, the notions of open space green environment and like this apathy to noise pollution to air pollution water pollution and this arch to remain connected to a water system, sanitation, electricity, internet, etcetera. So, which are you know the ideals of advanced living standards and urban discomfort.

Unfortunately, these ideals consider the poor people to be you know to be the polluters and to be the aesthetic nuisance right. So, in that sense so, in. So, it is very derogatory and this middle-class activism unfortunately you know, it also mobilizes against the livelihood provisions of the informal communities or the squatting population inhabiting the most inhospitable parts and stretches of the city. And they also try to kind of activate the state as state agents, media quotes in their favor. So, that is the most unfortunate part of it.

And so, Amita Baviskar in some of her works for example, in her later works like I remember like this works which came out in 2011 what the eyes cannot see or for

example, you know her this cows, cars and cycle rickshaws which is there in this particular book which you edited with Raka Ray.

There she says that how the middle-class also, you know they in their form of bourgeois environmentalism; how they also hide, actually hide you know their extractive relationship to the city, because their ecological footprint is far more than you know the ecological footprint of the squatting population, because unfortunately these people these communities remain.

They do not even get the opportunity to access adequate drinking water, sanitation services and other essential commodities to live a dignified life. So, for example, Amita Baviskar also shows that you know how this movement by the middle-class to kind of to promote the ban on cows and cycle rickshaws in the streets of the city of Delhi.

In order to facilitate uninterrupted urban mobility kind of you know absolutely, it absolutely veiled the fact that cars also create more congestion and cars create more pollution you know that cows and cycle rickshaws.

So, this understanding or the, this lens or the prism of bourgeois environmentalism you know it has inspired several sociologists and anthropologists to kind of you know unravel uneven developments or uneven you know developments of urban spaces in that sense and how these urban spaces are imbued with inequity and injustice or injustices.



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So, yes so, for example, these middle-class sentiments in the form of like metropolitan civility or environmental subjectivities have been kind of captured by other urban political ecologists or urban social sciences scholars like Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria for example.

So, these are very it is a indicative list, because otherwise, you know the this domain is very rich. So, numerous works you know in these lines so, but they are quite important and indicative. So, and hence, I will be in the position to kind of discuss some of them.

So, in this particular article, Anjaria shows that how you know this affluent class, they mobilized against the hawkers you know; the against the hawkers of Mumbai and how they also considered this stalls as health hazards as health hazards and ugly spaces so far as the metropolitan city of Mumbai is concerned.

So, there are several chapters in this particular book by Anne Rademacher and Keshav Ramakrishnan which came out from the Hong Kong University press in 2013. So, there are books there are chapters by you know Janaki Nair and Asher Ghertner and Shubhra Gururani on similar lines that really project you know this middle-class aspirations and interest against the livelihood needs and survival provisions of the urban poor.

Similarly, another book by Surajit Chakravarty and Rohit Negi edited volume on space planning and everyday contestations in Delhi. So, which also uses and deploys the prism of you know the most of the chapters deploy the prism of this bourgeois environmentalism.

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So, then we have very I mean you know dense and rich urban political ecology literature on air quality discussing air quality, discussing solid waste and also urban parks. So, for example, this article by Rene Veron; one of his earlier works 2006 publication, where Rene talks about you know the judicial activism of the environmental NGO's which again manifest and reflect their middle class bias you know so far as environmental aspirations about the city of Delhi or more specifically, how what kind of, what quality should the year have.

And their protest against you know air pollution remain reflective of their you know affluent or middle class biases and that is why Rene says that you know why this political ecological narrative or analytic is a significant to capture you know this different interest, unequally affecting the different sections of metropolitan cities in India.

So, we also have this you know work by Vinay Gidwani and Julia Corwin. So, Vinay Gidwani again, is I mean urban political ecologist or urban social science researcher focusing on solid waste and mainly on the urban governance of waste. And this is from this E P W article where Gidwani says that you know well versed in the production of waste corporate capital has not generally focused on capitalizing on the waste.

So, the discards of consumption previously approached broadly as mere waste have recently found rebirth in an increasing corporate waste market in India. So, ranging from

contracts for waste collection and incineration plant installation to sales of recyclables, formal businesses are entering the business of revaluing waste often to the detriment of India's already existing informal waste sector; that has long conducted its own waste-based businesses.

So, this new increasingly corporate business of waste is intimately connected to a new waste governance regime in India; concerns regarding two symbolically significant waste streams municipal solid waste and electronic waste illuminate waste beyond its management and demonstrate its embeddedness in matters of consumerism informal sector livelihoods and urban ecology.

So, he shows that how you know the corporate sector has kind of accommodated and trying to make business from this waste from both municipal solid waste and also from E-waste and why it is important to actually protect the needs and interests of the informal waste workers.

And he makes a carry and call at the end of the article, that it is important to support their tradition-based practices you know in which lies the future of you know India's waste governance.

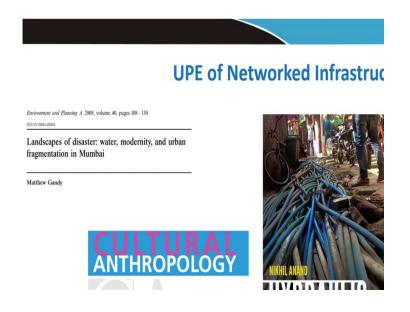
Similarly like, not similarly, but in similar lines, but on a different vein Natasha Cornea Rene Veron and Anna Zimmer; they kind of they shed light on the, on a recent you know segregation at source plant in a small-town in West Bengal and then, they kind of course, using their urban political ecology perspective, they try to capture diffuse forms of power between and within state government agents and local community, local informal waste workers, municipal engineers, etcetera.

And they say that you know why again this political ecology narrative is important to kind of to understand and explore this uneven urban development surrounding the, surrounding ecologies of waste shaping different neighborhoods of that city in different ways. So, the entire thing is powered laden. And it is really important to explore this diffuse forms of power.

In again, another article by the same group Zimmer Cornea and Veron, they discuss or that they, discuss a municipal park. So, how a municipal park in a Gujarati town small town in Gujarat, it was constructed at the center by actually demolishing a slum. And they say that it is why is this urban again urban political ecology is important is an important framework, because it then enables you to kind of, position this particular case study within the larger and wider context of Indian city beautification drives an urban restoration project.

So, that is the within the you know, capitalist urbanization and state formation processes in urban India. So, yes so, this of parks and politics production of socio nature in the Gujarati town is a typical example to that end.

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So, like so, far as you know this global literature is concerned, similarly, Indian urban political ecology literature also, I mean there are numerous works that discuss or where network infrastructures remain the focal point and mainly water provisions.

So, for example, Matthew Gandy in this 2008 part breaking article, he showed that how the city of Mumbai was undergoing through you know this complex, institutional, economic, political and social transition into fragmentary and polarized you know metropolitan space.

So, he traces the tortuous flow of water and he says that this flow of water is strikingly indicative of the persistent you know iniquities that shape Mumbai's urban water infrastructures.

And he says that you know this Mumbai's dysfunctional water infrastructure not only owes back to the colonial history, but these incipient weaknesses have been exacerbated by contemporary or this rapid urban growth and authoritarian forms of political mobilization and also, the dominance of the middle-class interest within the denuded public realm.

So, again Gandy's argument or call is to understand this I mean Mumbai's urban or Mumbai's water infrastructure within the larger historical processes, political processes of capitalized, capitalist of urbanization and state formation in metropolitan India, in urban India for that matter.

Nikhil Anand's you know studies anthropological very rich, detailed, ethnographic accounts on the city of Mumbai is very very interesting, because for example, if you see Nikhil Anand's this article on the polytechnics of water supply in Mumbai. So, pressure, So, here, pressure is not only you know natural or physical pressure, but this is also social pressure; what he is actually talking about and engaging with.

So, he discusses how settlers you know, they mobilize a pressure of pumps pipes and politics you know and then, how hydraulic citizenship in the city of Mumbai actually get forged. And Nikhil Anand for example, you know he also discusses in this particular book; a hydraulic city he says that you know, it is not about the collection of water through pipes and valves, but it is about the complex interrelationship and the dynamic processes that get shaped, through the complex array of like technical apparatuses and social arrangements you know involving and comprising of like municipal engineers, plumbers, politicians and several other you know, user groups, along 3000 miles of pipes that bind this city.

So, this you know history of infrastructures or you know ethnography of infrastructures bring to the four social and civic relationships that kind of craft you know urban socio natural terrains.

Then, this another interesting study by Malini Ranganathan and Ranganathan talks about the mafia's in the waterscape's of Bangalore. So, where mainly this, where public you know there is inadequacies in terms of public supply of water; how this mafias plays an important mafia's play an important role. And Ranganathan says that this mafia is actually a semantic area dotted with situated meanings and cultural interpretations you know. And we need to understand this you know larger meanings and interpretations in order to explore and understand urban informality and everyday publics and politics right shaping the city of Bengaluru or the water trajectories of Bangalore.

And she says you know this there are the there the nature of the political practices among these mafia's actually vary from exploitation to electoral lobbying to social protection to several other you know welfare modes and mechanisms.

So, through this various you know meanings and the through this various interpretations; actually, one need to kind of capture this complex processes that shape Mumbai's informal you know water Mumbai's sorry Bangalore's informal water trajectories and everyday politics.

So, finally, you know now this UP has not only or UP it does not remain only restricted to drinking water supply or drinking water provisions so far as network infrastructure is concerned, but also you know it is kind of discussing or taking up waste water as the conceptual rain.

So, and you know waste water is, remains very significant, because through waste water or waste water provides the fuller understanding of this socio natural process or socio natural processes you know shaping the water resource from source to mouth. So, from production to consumption and then finally, disposure.

So, and there remain various ways of knowing the waste waterscape involving again several groups; like the local communities like scientists, expert's groups, hydraulic experts, engineers, technocrats, policy makers, etcetera. So, Timothy Karpouzoglou and Anna Zimmer; they say that you know when you need to understand or rather urban political ecology enable us to understand that the reason, why the poor people the poor communities remain exposed to this to the waste water or to untreated waste water does not only kind of, should, cannot be only understood or captured through the lens of limits to service delivery mechanisms, but also, you know the way through which legitimacy is averted to competing claims of you know knowledge on the wastewater realm.

So, it is important to kind of understand that who like dominates the decision-making processes and how and whether this decision-making processes are, or remain power laden or not. So, it is important to capture this local geographies of power.

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So, yes so, in the next lecture, I would actually be discussing more recent advances, advancements within the urban political ecology literature in the Indian context. So, these are the references for now so far as this first part or part one is concern.

So, here, we had covered or discussed fundamental themes and concepts in urban political ecology literature, Indian context most importantly, bourgeois environmentalism and related to it metropolitan civility and environmental subjectivity or subjectivities. So, we had focused on this early literature, focusing on urban political ecology of air, water, waste, parks. And then of course, we kind of discuss some very significant crucial you know, works on networked infrastructure then mainly networked infrastructures on water, but also the emerging literature on waste water so.

Thank you.