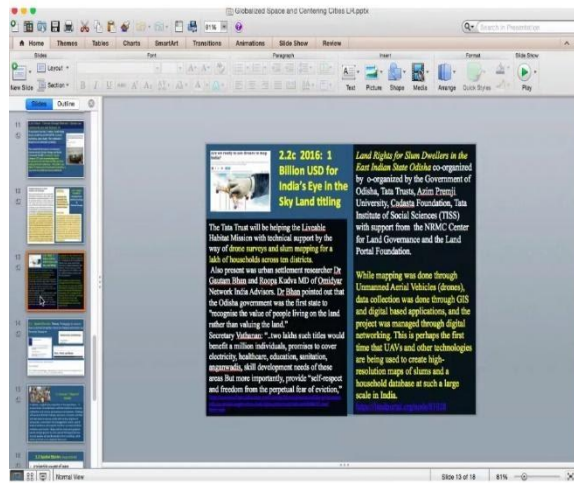**Globalization: Theoretical Perspectives**
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Lecture 35
Globalized Space Centers Cities – Solly Benjamin

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 I had ended here at the Orissa land titling project through the Tatas, Omidyar, TISS is also involved, the government of Orissa obviously. So, then I come to this part.
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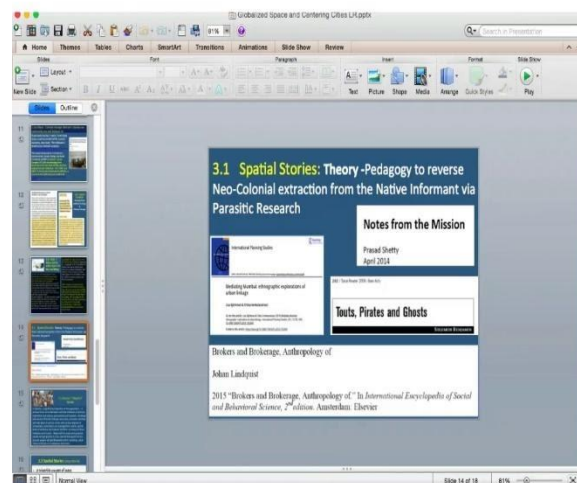
This is starting of the last part of the presentation. So, in this part I am going to run you through, from a very Doreen Massey kind of perspective, a kind of a both the theory, pedagogy kind of framing which tries to do two- three things. The first thing, which is very much derived from the earlier slides, it is trying to look at the spatial complexity of cities, especially because they are globalized in very different ways. So, that is one very broad argument.

The second is to talk about that, to understand this, to take the histories seriously, one needs a kind of a methodology to be able to do that and that is what one of the ways, which a friend who is from Hong Kong, he and I have been exploring now for some time, is his working around spatial stories, which are, as I will explain a particular way of taking history and sociological categories constructed out of practice.

So, one is looking very closely at institutional practice, it can be practices of how people use a street, how people use sacred spaces, beyond just the rhetoric of 'oh some places are just religious' because, as Ketki Purushottam argues in her work, in Vadapalani, yes, there are those temples and there are sacred spaces, but it is like an underlayer, which occasionally comes above ground, to shape other kind of political logics round party politics, around other kinds of real estate, things that are happening over there. So, is this complexity that one is looking at? And the reason why one is looking at that is not just for fun, but rather trying to see how does political agency in a city work.

Where are the real fractures that come about? And I think that is important because sometimes, many times and as I mentioned, like this Orissa land titling, or some of these other cases of climate change, I just provided two of them, there are obviously more interventions that are made by very well-meaning people, well-meaning researchers, a lot of researchers implicated in this can have devastating kind of impacts.

So how do you deal with this kind of a thing, where theory and method both get implicated in a kind of a political realm? They are not neutral; they are not innocent. The third reason why I am putting it there is that we have seen especially over the last 10-15 years that it has become sharper and sharper, there is a form of added, I have just called a neo colonial extraction from researchers in the south who are supposed to generate field work for researchers for the north who are going to work with theory. And this split between theory and field work starts to recreate categories of analysis in ways which I would argue are disconnected from what is happening on the ground.

Here, you see, I am just giving you one example, from the world of understanding politics of what is called politics of governance, which has several works here, which are to do with brokers and brokerage in one case by Lisa Brockman and Chitra who are looking at water infrastructure in Mumbai, notes from a mission, Prasad Shetty looks at the complexity of decision making around these various mega projects. And my early work on Touts, Pirates, Pirates and Ghosts, which is looking at industrial areas in East Delhi. And of course, then John Lindquist's work.

The reason why I put this there that each of these works fall into what used to be called, and is still called patron clientelism, which is very broad way, it is a bit of like what would be seen as a global city wipes out all other forms of understanding of how actual politics works out in the ground.
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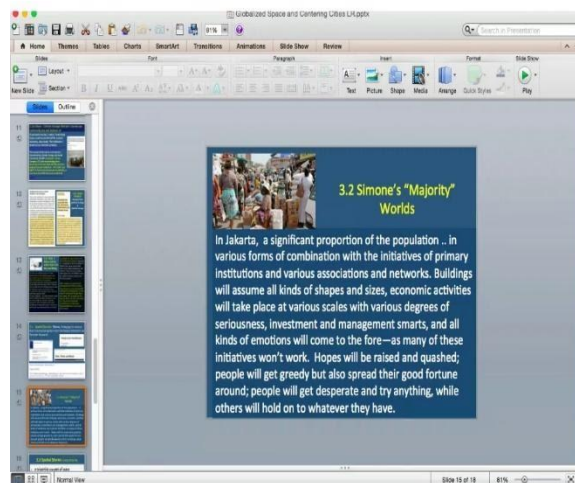
And some of the most interesting work here, I have now changed the slide to Simone's Majority Worlds, I hope you can all look at it, it is a bit of an extended excerpt, but it gives you a kind of sense of his ability to pick up these kinds of nuances, his early work in Western Africa and more recently in Southeast Asia, especially Jakarta where he had been living for a long time.

And he was able to kind of show the complexities of markets and marketplaces in the way people would connect up, people would work the physical spaces, there were a range of economies. One of the most important things in this is as his approach of understanding survival in a city, which seems all marginalization, you know, as a landscape of marginalization.

And that is how it retreated in a lot of modernist theory is to show the complexities of agencies and power structures and how fluid they are, how necessarily, they are opaque and that is not necessarily a bad thing, because if everything was made transparent almost like a drone coming over you and mapping those social relations, that is the first way in which things would be captured.

A classic example of this is actually work in Delhi, which was looking at waste recycling, which were well meaning academics who mapped out all the system, suddenly find themselves implicated in a court case, which then moves towards evicting the very people whom this person had researched.
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3.3 Spatial Stories (Tang 2019-20)

□ a tripartite concept of space

Δ absolute - thing it itself, with a fixed boundary

Δ relative - objects relativised by others

Δ relational - defined by processes

So, in a sense, you know, one is talking about these kinds of complexities from their politics. Now, very quickly, I will give you a sense of this ideas of spatial stories, it comes from Michel DeSoto's work, but if some of you may remember, he posed it in the sense, in a binary between tactics and strategies. Strategy, related to big power moves, big physical infrastructure, and tactics was to do with how people could manoeuvre around those.

Now, that sounds fine but that means that all your maneuverability is happening within a larger structure, it is not recreating its own structures. So, I think one of the interesting things about borrowing from there but not being too restricted is to look at the advantage drawing from Lefebvre in a sense, but also other people thinking about the complexity of space.

And here, what Winching Tang lays out is a very interesting thing of looking at different perspectives in the way space is looked at. And particularly look at the last one, relational spaces, which are defined by various processes that come together at particular time. This is very different from thinking about space as a fixed boundary in a cartographic way, saying this room is 10 feet by 10 feet.

It is very different from saying what planner says, if it is 10 feet by 10 feet, it is either too big for you or too small for you. So, it is relativised by other people who are in a different power relation. (Refer Slide Time: 09:43)

So, the idea is to take the complexity of any kind of space and here I am talking, not just physical space, but it could be institutional space, it could be legal space, it is an economic space, and these can be entangled in each other. And that is where that sets the sort of a ground to think about the space in a kind of dynamic way, space as a metaphor, symbolic, what do people use it for, how do they evoke particular kind of memories, both traumatic and also positive.

And how does it get constantly reworked in terms of what are those boundaries and curiosities? Now, these seem like complicated terms, but I think once you go with the sensibility, and then you start talking to people, interview them, it requires that kind of ability to listen and to also try to figure out what are the kinds of connections that are happening very much AbdouMaliq Simone kind of approach.

The lower part of this, the table, you will see that the diagram, it poses three tables, the first one is a typical colonial kind of survey, many of you would have read Bernard Cohen's the colonial survey. The second one, so the first one you have, it is a very cartographic from facts on the households, who is the head of the household, there has to be a guy, you know, people's need.

So, you tick the boxes, yes, I need a TV, yes, you need a TV, or you need an internet connection. So, you already got those boxes that are filled with you. I can give you an example, there was a NGO, Janaagraha, which was talking about area management and in their surveys, which they have given to, quote unquote, what they defined as citizen group, there was a box which says are they hawkers who encroach on your garden? And ironically in their room, they had people who, the NGO had put in who were also hawkers, and they said, well, A, we are the hawkers, B, we do not have a garden. So, I am just giving you that as an example, where there is a sort of a problem, very severe, explicit problem with the service.

The second one is this kind of oral history approach, and life story and there is a very nice critique of it by Lisa Peattie who was an anthropologist, in her book on planning, showing how the classical kind of area studies anthropology which still persist, again kind of reveal a particular rigidity of boundary making, of what those social networks are, where people live. And in effect, it is a kind

of a container in both the first and the second column are kind of creating a container where people are being fixed in time and space, particularly space.

And once they have done that, then they are subject to, if you take the metaphor of how capital travels, a kind of a time sequence of how they are going to develop. Now, what we are doing here in spatial story is to reject these two forms. And then we start focusing on, in the way we talk, and research is to kind of focus on social relations, is to take history, and particularly history that matters to those particular sites at that particular time, try to understand it.

And then pick up a sense of what is the kind of differential space that is there. What are those differences that make a big difference, they are substantive, and what are those differences which are for a particular person at a particular time or a group of people, because that is very important to think of people not just as individuals, but as groups and in complex configurations, what are things that make life different for them?
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Now, this kind of approach requires a kind of, I think, sensitivity to be working with, not just narratives, which some of us feel and we are working on this idea, when narratives tend to fix you, very much like those global city kinds of narratives but rather what are the kinds of stories that are coming out where the boundaries of that story are built upon how the people whom you are talking to reveal their world and to what extent they want it to be revealed.

Because they are also trying to locate you, who are you doing your research. So, in a sense, this kind of approach, or a kind of a sensitivity or research sensibility is saying that the categories of analysis have to come out of these kinds of processes, you can think of it as a grounded theory, there is a literature on that and within that there are the two parts of you know, one which takes a meta level framing to an extent but constantly interrogates it and another position with which refuses any meta level and says that everything has to be built up from the ground up.

Irrespective of that, I think the point here is that it recenters the politics of knowledge creation, in the way that people who are going and talking to them, there is a direct reflexivity in the process,

the whole process of ethics goes beyond just getting a consent form filled, rather, in terms of trying to understand what your research is going to do to them.

I think one of the interesting points is that it also therefore, by default, starts to question this binary between northern theory and southern fieldwork, which has come to kind of dominate a lot of international collaborations in international projects. And which does not just become hegemonic, but it also tends to lead to other politics in terms of publishing worlds, academic careers, getting grants, getting big labs funded, then, other kind of problems of senior scholars plagiarizing junior scholars work a whole range of issues start to get played out. And I think, so, in a sense, I have laid out this kind of a methodology which I hope would be useful for you to think about how globalised space can be played out in an urban setting. So, thank you very much.