

TD 463

Lecture 8

Assets and the Environment *Civil Society*

Milind Sohoni

`www.cse.iitb.ac.in/~sohoni`

email: `sohoni@cse.iitb.ac.in`

Assets and the Environment

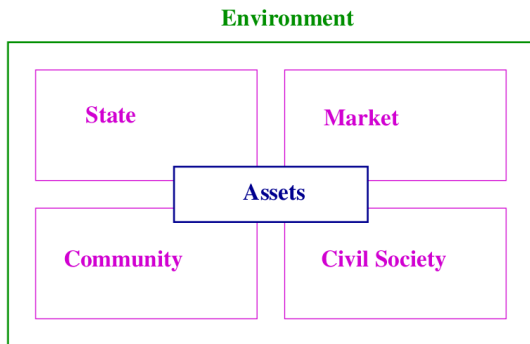


Figure : The basic structure of society

The *external* and the *internal* boundary.

Assets

- Physical or conceptual construction, which is amenable to design, which has a clear purpose, which must be built, and which may be used repeatedly.
 - ▶ bridge, bicycle, timetable, patent, library, Groundwater Act.
- What is *not* an asset? Agents, Consumables and Natural Resources.
- Asset development needs investments. Time, forging of agreement, savings, postponement of current consumption.
- Questions to ask: Who designs it? Who owns it? Who uses it? Who maintains it? Who pays for it?
- Identify agents for each activity above. How do we value their work?

Assets

- Physical assets e.g, bridges and highways, factories and office building. Households are land, the homestead, cattle, a TV, bicycle or a two-wheeler, tools and other productive assets.
- Institutions such as public transport which is not only physical assets but also a practice of their use.
 - ▶ documented and formalized, perhaps held as *intellectual property*.
 - ▶ informal and captured in the everyday behaviour of the agents, its schedules and its monthly and yearly rituals.
- Cultural assets e.g., library, language, stories. Another important civil society asset is its university. There are intangible cultural assets as well such as individual reputation and prestige, public image of a political party, or brand equity of a company.
- **Developmentally important. Social comprehension. Mutual trust. Shared vision of a common destiny.**

Environment

- Ultimate source of all value - *cultural as well as material*.
- **Natural Resource** - Land, Water, Air, and *whats below, within*.
 - ▶ **Stock** and **Flows** - its estimation and measurements.
 - ▶ Rates of renewal, sustainability.
 - ▶ Human activity - cost of extraction, remediation, destabilization, rehabilitation.
- **Natural History**. Sum-total of the history of life on earth, the material conditions, the interpretation of nature by humans, the enchantment. Seasons, the cycle of activities and phenomena.
 - ▶ bio-diversity, bio-mass, forests, the deep sea.
- **The Big Question**: What incentives and knowledge theories will persuade us to make our flows sustainable and replenish our stocks?
 - ▶ **Economic? Scientific? Rational? Cultural?**

Cultural Society

- **Kin-ship needs** : intimacy, conviviality, identity, narratives, coping with grief, enchantment and so on. Unorganized religion.
- **Analytic Needs** : analysis of existing structures, collective associations, new relationships, new roles and re-tooling old roles. Pre-political parties. Mobilizations. Universities.
- **Association of pre-professionals**, e.g., or singers and artists, *kala*, *shastra*, *vinod*, architects, artisans. Body of knowledge, performance, seniors, *charter* from society, train its agents and to actually deliver service.
- **Collectives and Cooperatives**. Guilds, sugar cooperatives, generalized castes. Collective decisions. **Uses**: Monopolies. Shared costs and assets. Bargaining power.

Civil Society

Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite.

- The political, economic and the beginning of the *civil*.
- The old *bourgeoisie*. Middlemen in the feudal set-up. European city-dwellers. Crystallization of the structure of society.

Most civil society transactions are historical and based on a collective membership and have their root in cultural associations.

- **Organized religion**: Religious associations and meetings, educational institutions. Collective action.
- **Caste**: Kinship based association, decided by birth. Interaction with other castes, economic as well as social.
- **The modern bourgeoisie**. **The Intellectuals, Ideology and Discourse**. Human values, such as equality, justice, morality, sustainability, fraternity, modernity and other grand narratives.
- **Big Science and the global economy**. A theory of the future.

Social Comprehension

- **Collective understanding of various roles and an agreement.** Consistency between roles and actions.
- **Shared destiny, definition of development and avenues for its pursuit.**
- **Scientific temper.** Key requisite.

Some of today's problems.

- **Loss of trust:** key indicator symptom of poorly performing civil society associations.
- **Existing and rigid civil society structures.** Benefits by community or socio-economic class may prevent a common understanding of citizen-ship and collective civic behaviour to emerge.
- **Market take-over of cultural functions.** Loss of regional role-models.
- **Failure of the commons.** Shared resource, e.g., lake or grasslands. Preserved through socio-cultural regulations.

Typical society: a web of agents, using environmental resources, generating products and services, or using assets

Environmental resources: geography, the science of the resource, competition in use, distribution and sustain-ability.

Development situation: overlay of historical and cultural issues, of state and market agencies, the desires of various sections of society, the geography of resources and the science of sustainable and efficient use.

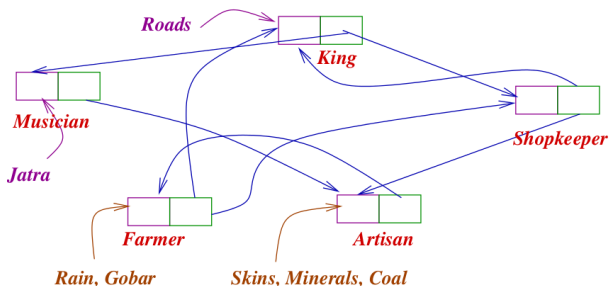


Figure : Society as a web of agents

The Development Question

How did it come to be so? What is the present? How do we get out?

- (i) **Poor knowledge formation.** In elementary education, higher and professional education, practices, absence of scientific methodology, in adequate comprehension of society, inadequate understanding of the vicinity.
- (ii) **Information asymmetry.** Transaction between informationally un-equals. In the market, in the court, at the *gram sabha*. RTI, IT seen as antidotes.
- (iii) **Malfunctioning institutions.** Insufficient capital, poor and outdated job definitions, no monitoring, evaluation or assessments, loss of trust.
- (iv) **Collective Failure.** Historical. Inability to act for collective good. Loss of culture. Divergent agenda.
- (v) **Resource constraints.** Actual physical limits. Poor efficiency and poor indigenous technology.

Thanks

