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Paper Title: Housing Slum and Squatter Dwellers: Revisiting Theoretical Perspectives on NGO-State Relations

Author(s):

Ramya Ramanath, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, USA

Summary of Research

Several broad typologies have been developed to examine NGO-government interactions. Among these, Najam's (2000) "Four Cs" framework has received considerable attention. The framework classifies relationships into cooperative, complementary, co-optative, and confrontational interaction styles. Taxonomies such as Najam's, though useful, fall short of: a) explaining why NGOs with similar goals rely on different tactics and strategies to advance their agendas with the state; and, b) capturing simultaneous and sequential existence of multiple interaction strategies between NGOs and government agencies. This paper will address these by linking research on urban political economy to research on organizational life cycles and strategic institutional change.

Description

Theoretical progress in understanding interaction between nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental organizations recognizes the complexities in relationships between the two sets of actors. In an effort to sort the complexity and render multiple forms of interactions with some analytical clarity, several broad typologies have been developed (Seibel 1992, Coston 1998, Young 1999, Najam 2000). Among the more recent and well-cited analytical frameworks is the "Four Cs framework" developed by Najam (2000). Najam classifies relationships on the basis of varying and converging institutional interests and priorities of both NGOs and government agencies. As a result, the typologies that constitute the framework include cooperative, complementary, co-optative and confrontational interaction styles. Classifications of the type offered by Najam while useful analytically, focus on overt outcomes of interactions to the exclusion of micro level nuances which I contend are conducive to conceptual framing and critical to sorting the much touted complexity.

This paper draws from my dissertation field research and focuses on the formative years of three NGOs working in the city of Mumbai: Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS), Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), and Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC). I use a multiple-case study method with two units of analysis. The primary unit of analysis is the NGO. For each NGO, I focus on critical incidents in their histories, particularly as they relate to interactions with government agencies over housing. These incidents or "key housing interventions" are my second, or nested, unit of analysis. Description of three key housing interventions – one in each NGOs' formative years - draws on in-depth semi structured interviews, impromptu group interviews, archival research of NGO and government records, and participant observation of NGO-community interaction.

The paper puts forth two key and related arguments. Firstly, NGOs with similar goals are likely to rely on different tactics and strategies to advance their housing agendas. Despite similarity in formative conditions, participating housing NGOs were found to display internal as well as intra-organizational diversity. Early NHSS interaction with government was based on collective protest whereas YUVA engaged in community mobilizing and organizing as well as institutional tactics of lobbying through participation in national and city level advocacy campaigns. SPARC significantly digressed from the existing repertoire of accepted tactics to engage in forming tactical alliances with federations of the poor and government departments. The experiences of founding members of NGOs, their core values and beliefs, housing philosophy, and needs of their client community, were found to work together to create distinct NGO understanding of the significance and role of the state in housing slum and squatter residents.

This being said, a second key argument calls for more robust frameworks for discussing NGO-government interactions. Prevailing taxonomies fail to capture the simultaneous possibility of multiple

interaction strategies existing between individual NGOs and government agencies. Even though confrontation was an overarching strategy defining NGO-government interaction in their formative years (during the 1980s), my analysis of program-level tactics deployed by each NGO, brings to light the simultaneous and sequential prevalence of other relationship types. Tactics used were therefore not just different across NGOs but were deployed alongside other strategies which reflect a willingness to cooperate, a tendency to co-opt, and complement the strategic interests of the state. Whilst in some policy arenas clear 'battle lines' are drawn, overall, in housing, the characteristics of NGO interventions is fragmented, rapidly shifting and multifaceted, with important implications for theories of NGO-government relations and housing policy implementation.

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