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Special Session (SS13) on:
Citizenry and Regional Planning

Organiser:

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The aim and scope of the special session:

When V.L.S.P. Rao in 1960 referred to Le Play's concept of 'Place-work-Folk' to explain his first principle of Regional Planning (action-reaction-interaction of regional factors), he probably could not comprehend how in the course of time 'folk' or more formally as it is known at present 'citizenry' would become so crucial in regional planning. Till mid twentieth century, regional planning was conceived as rational spatial ordering and was appreciative of topographical space (visualisation of solution of regional problem on Comprehensive/ Master Plan). Later on, with popularity of system theories, regional planning inclined towards understanding planning as a social process. Different planning models, theories evolved for regional analysis and Topological space (social space, J. Murdoch 2006, p142) was out layered for apprehending shared space in regional planning. But till regional planning was a neutral as well technocratic exercise. But with the emergence of post modernism and anti-development concepts in late 70's, direct role of 'citizen' in planning was demanded for. ('citizen is member of community who must belong to a space and enjoys some common right...' (P. Cloke, 2005), citizenship is a 'social process' in which negotiation and claims are done. (Dasforgesw, 2004)). Different forms of citizen's institutes (citizen forum, citizen's association, villager's council etc) sprouted up and had been legitimised from time to time. (In India, constitutional amendment was introduced to assure direct access of citizen in area planning) Regional planning gradually became compromising and communicative. Rationality of planning is adjusted with demand for different dominant and powerful set of actors in the society. Planning is regarded as a democratic process. Planning begins to produce agreeable spaces instead of neutral planned area. For laudability of citizens' voice, planning region turns into mere sub-territory or smallest governmental revenue unit (village, Municipality), each one separated from other. Hence, the notion of 'each region is linked to the adjoining region' and any change in one region brings changes in the others (Rao's 2nd principle of regional planning) turns out to be obscured. Concept of 'regional' is losing importance. With entry of citizenry (perceived here as group of demanding citizen who holds command on 'mute' citizen) in planning, professionalism of regional planners (what they learn in their University courses) is undermined. Appreciation of "bottom-up" further muddles the need of regional planning. Who is at the bottom and who constitutes the up is not distinguished. 'Bottom' is often synonyms to 'up' as 'bottom' has to adopt the language, vocabulary and ideas of the 'Up'. Planning becomes politicised. Scope of regional planning is reduced to mere land management. In the mean time, in the Decade of 90s the concept of sustainable development

gained popularity. Regional planning needs to be ecologizing in nature. In this stage, regional planners may regain their sunk ground with their theoretical knowledge on environmental capacity. But the citizenry becomes so crucial, voices of non-humane as well as marginal are muted. Thus if demanded by the citizenry, an irrigation canal could be transformed into market, (though cultivation is the main source of the livelihood in that area). Regional irrigation system (RLIs) which once enabled the production of three crops, a well to enrich underground water could be demolished in the interest of the urban citizenry. Well irrigated fertile land could be handed over to high-profile 'citizens' of car producing companies. The river which is the life line for rural areas can be transformed into discharge sites for the waste water generated by metropolitan citizens and so on. All these experiences, mentioned here are recent and are from West Bengal, the state of India who boasts of her pioneer role in participatory planning. If citizen's participation is an inseparable part of planning, then sustainable regional planning with the expertise of regional planners is only possible with the emergence of 'sustainable citizenship' (i.e. 'sense of obligation towards future generation and a concern with environmental right and responsibility' (P.cloke,2005 :375)). In this context, this session aims at role of citizenry in regional planning and the following sub-themes might be discussed in this session:

- a) citizen, citizenry and sustainable citizenship
- b) rationale of citizen's participation in regional planning
- c) role of regional planners in formulation of sustainable planning
- d) evaluation of recent trends in regional planning practices and working out practicable curriculum for regional planning

References

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