

# The Impact of Path Dependency on Planning Systems - the Case of India

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**Abstract:** There is relatively little research on path dependency, planning culture and the impact of institutions on the planning systems of India and other countries, as well as on the opportunities and obstacles for India to transfer planning practices internationally. For India, the concepts and theories of path dependency, planning culture, and the role of institutions are equally important for understanding its planning system. India's existing infrastructure planning and services have struggled to meet its rapid urbanisation, as Mathews et al. (2018) claim that there are several issues hinder urban land planning and service, including the limited use of mapping technology such as GIS, municipal government lack of fundings and advanced technical devices, and land market distortions. Thus, the fundamental reasons for these major problems of urban planning are closely linked to path dependency, planning culture and the role of institutions in India. India's international transfer of planning practice has tended to be dominated by imports, mainly from Britain during the colonial period. Conversely the output side has certain limitations, mainly due to its rapid urbanisation, while the planning of infrastructure has failed to meet the demands of rapid urbanisation. This essay will critically discuss the role of concepts and theories that important to the Indian planning system.

**Keywords:** Path Dependency; Planning Culture; Institution; India

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## 1. Broad Overviews

### 1.1 Path dependency

Path dependency is an useful and important concept for understanding time dimension. This is because the research found that it is a popular label for the intuition that 'history matters' account of decision-making over time (Kay, 2005). Sorensen (2015) stated that once established, certain institutions will become increasingly difficult to adjust and modify over time, therefore, any tiny decisions made early on, can have a huge long-term consequences. Decision-making is neither independent nor completely taken in accordance with the current situation; rather, it has been influenced by those who have made decisions in the past. In other words, The concept of path dependence refers to the idea that previous events might subsequently impact future events. This idea is crucial to understand the existence of certain institutions. For example, the Greenbelt was introduced to Britain in the early 20th century with the primary objective of constraining urban sprawl and providing more places for recreational purpose at the edge of the city. As a result, this role came to dominate the public mind. By the end of 2016, the Manchester federal government proposed to expand economic growth by reducing the Green Belt area by 8%. One research found that during the brief consultation period on these proposals, approximately 28,000 complaints were filed by Greater Manchester residents decrying the loss of Green Belt area (Bradley, 2019).

Although the path dependency theory is logical and reasonable, it has been continually criticized. As Gains et al. (2005) suggests that the argument concerning growing returns is the path dependency theory's shortcoming, one major flaw in the idea is that it exaggerates the importance of history. The pressure for change are emphasized, when benefits are reduced. The research found that policy implementers may also have a broad feeling of decreasing returns and, as a result, begin to push for policy reform (Deeg, 2001). Furthermore, the concept of path dependency are void of clarity, As Gains et al. (2005) states that what is the width of the road, or what makes a policy the same and what would constitute a significant departure.

Lack of clarity regarding what it means to be on the route and what it means to be off the path reduces the concept's credibility.

## **1.2 Planning culture**

The concept of planning culture first appeared in 1993 when three planners described “the first impressions of a journey into the planning cultures of four countries” (Keller et al.1996). Planning culture can be understood as a strategic and holistic planning and arrangement of urban resources. As Friedmann (2005) stated that Planning culture is defined as the formal and informal way in which spatial planning is conceptualized, institutionalized, and implemented in a particular multi-national area, country, or city. For instance, Portland, Oregon, is well-known in the United States for its excellent quality and consistency of the planning, owing to the city's distinctive stance toward compact growth and environmental preservation. It is essentially a culture of local planning.

However the growing body of work on planning culture has produced many useful insights, and it has some limitations as an interpretive concept. As Taylor(2013) showed that Explaining cultural stability and change is difficult, Societal cultures are implicitly perceived as stable and long-lasting, but organisational cultures are sometimes viewed as more malleable and flexible.

## **2. Development and evolution of the planning system**

### **2.1 The impact of path dependency on planning system**

Path dependency is a barrier to development. In the middle of the 18th century, Britain established a colony in India. At that time, the British desire to manage India's population through town planning, the adoption of the advanced British survey and surveying agencies of the time and the introduction of the land management model of the British planning system that facilitated the development of the Indian planning system by this imperial relationship. As Ahluwalia(2011)stated that India's current town planning system is rooted in the British Town and Country Planning Act of 1947.Once established, however, some systems are difficult to change; for example, India currently has a large proportion of cities that follow the earlier British measurements and traditional surveys of land, and when Calcutta's lack of a master plan came to light in a lawsuit brought by an NGO in the public interest. the only data that the Calcutta Urban Development Authority was able to provide was a 75-year-old survey map prepared by British experts (Roy, 2004).This exposes the lack of land recording, measurement and master planning by Indian authorities influenced by path dependency.

While institutional reforms during normal periods of path dependence are difficult to implement, when long-term path dependence encounters anomalies, the opportunities for innovative reforms are increased. As Ghimire (2018) stated that Under normal circumstances is broken by an extreme, unexpected catastrophe, such as a natural disaster, war, economic crises, political unrest, or epidemics, abnormal times will subsequently ensue. For example, Bangalore is a bustling city, yet its cities' infrastructure and fundamental layout are inherited from the past. With the development of a new airport in Bangalore, similar to Zurich Airport, the roads linking the city centre to the airport are insufficient to handle traffic, and the city's water supply does not reach the region near the airport (Booth, 2007) .The failure of infrastructure planning, as a result of chronic underestimate of infrastructure and service demands, has presented an opportunity for Bangalore to be invested in and prepared for. The research found that Bangalore is gradually being 'planned,' if not by private developers, then by foreign financial institutions (such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank), who are investing hundreds of millions of dollars into highway construction, water and sanitation projects, and municipal reforms...(Goldman, 2008) . Therefore, when path dependency appears to be an abnormality, this creates an opportunity for Bangalore to grow and change.

Some strategies may lead to long-term success, but when applied to the present, they may look incorrect or limited. Australia's approach to planning evolved through time, with the emphasis on accommodating population expansion and economic development. Australia has had a lengthy period of prosperity as a result of this. However, a shift in conditions over a lengthy period of relative stability in a prosperous era might cause uncertainty. As Bunker (2012) stated that these measures, through strengthening path dependency, have resulted in economic restructuring, with some sectors being severely impacted, changes in domestic migration patterns and population increase, and pressure on housing affordability . For instance, In 11 years, Sydney prepared three plans, reflecting the uncertainties brought forth by shifting conditions following

the relative stability of the lengthy boom (Searle, 2004). As a result, relatively successful planning strategies may lose their original effectiveness over time.

## **2.2 The impact of Planning culture on planning system**

Ignorance of local planning culture can lead to inapplicable planning strategies. In the early years of India's independence, engineers and architects were mainly foreigners, meanwhile planners were mostly trained by foreigners. The lack of local expertise and traditional planning culture led to a focus on modernization. Some of the planning strategies of the mid-20th century were considered 'un-Indian'. Corbusier's Chandigarh, for example, was so modish and fashionable that many of the public spaces in Chandigarh were not used in the way that the designer had intended. As Shaw (2009) suggested that Le Corbusier is often considered to be unconcerned with local culture, merely imposing his own preconceptions from above. As well as Sprague (2013) argued that Informal commerce has infiltrated non-commercial areas; intended manicured green spaces are being utilised for non-green purposes; plots previously used by single-family houses are now inhabited by many households. Therefore, when designing a site, planners should pay more attention to the local planning culture and apply it to the design to suit the local residents life. Conversely, Corbusier also changed the original way of thinking and building of the local population, bringing modernist ideas into the Indian architecture as well as the planning profession.

A planning culture will improve the quality and coherence of planning. The research found that traditional lifestyles should be taken into account as part of a well-coordinated economic and social development policy, as well as urban and regional planning (Singh, 1997). For instance, Otto Koenigsberger's plan for Faridabad (1949) in Punjab reflects a more specifically Indian context. And it also considers the traditional way of life, which has been widely praised. It is difficult to get away from and cut off the status, so the planning culture is even more of a positive symbol of continuity.

Controlling land usage and building use has always been the emphasis of urban planning. In spite of the fact that urban planning is the duty of local governments in the United States, which has resulted in a significant degree of variation in urban planning across the world. However, the emergence of neoliberalism has resulted in a more market-driven approach to planning. As Friedmann (2005) stated that In the United States, planning advocates for less government interference rather than more. However, because developers and architects are profit-driven, this may lead to a slew of planning issues in the United States, ignoring the needs of impoverished minority communities. And Grengs (2002) stated that any planning concerns in the United States are eventually resolved in the courts.

## **2.3 The impact of Planning culture on planning system**

The role of institutions can influence urban planning decisions. India's institutions are federal, and the states have considerable autonomy from the central government. The research found that India is governed by a robust, albeit unstable, democracy with a free press and an independent judiciary (Friedmann, 2005). In India, urban planning plans are a land consolidation approach in which government officials aggregate property belonging to diverse landowners in order to execute various public use reserves stated in the city's master plan (Mathews et al., 2018). Accordingly, In India, planning is regarded as the duty of the civil service. India's civil service has played an important part in development management in the Five-Year Plans. However, it has not been able to ensure variety in Indian planning. Due to the fact that Females and racial minorities are under-represented in the civil servants. As Friedmann (2005) stated that The central and state civil service is far from indicative of the variety that exists in Indian society; women are significantly under-represented, and the civil service is dominated by urban middle and upper class people. However, in India, the civil service examination concentrates on broad knowledge rather than specialised abilities. As a result, the institutional structure of India might contribute to a lack of variety in urban planning.

# **3. Transfer of planning practice internationally:**

## **3.1 Opportunity**

Urban planning policies were often conveyed somewhat unconsciously and randomly from Britain to India. India, formerly a British colony, brought advanced British ideas of planning, surveying organisations, and land management. According to the research, the colonisers absorbed the most sophisticated concepts, institutions, and practises created in their

European country, such as city administration, physical planning, and civic amenities such as public parks, interfering immediately and aggressively (Kumar et al.,2020). This was instrumental in the development of urban planning in India, and many of the surveying agencies and management models are used today. However, the adoption of the British model of planning and management in India has limited the development of local urban planning in India, especially in underdeveloped areas.

### **3.2 Barrier**

The transfer of urban planning policies from India to other countries is often exceptionally difficult. Since the transfer of planning policies is often an Intra European transfer, an export (or imposition) to developing countries, lessons learned from developed countries, or the transfer of the role of intergovernmental organizations to developing countries in terms of policies and procedures (Dolowitz and Medearis, 2009) .However, India's rapid urbanisation has led to a more limited development of land planning and services policies as it has neglected planning and building infrastructure. The limitations that have led to the international transfer of India's urban planning policies.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study found that path dependence in Indian urban planning can lead to prosperity for a long period of time, but over time can hinder local urban planning development if no unusual circumstances arise to cause changes. And the neglect or lack of attention to planning culture can lead to inapplicable planning strategies that do not lead to the desired outcomes of their planning designs. Conversely, attention to planning culture can improve the coherence of urban planning and the quality of planning. The role of institutions will improve the quality of urban planning in development and management, but India's appraisal mechanism for civil servants has led to a lack of diversity in its urban planning. The early British colonisation of India, and for India the transfer of British urban planning policies, contributed to the development of urban planning in India. However, the transfer of planning policy in India has led to limitations in its transfer internationally due to its own development.

To sum up, this paper is less descriptive of the institutional set-up in India and does not discuss the causes that led to the development of urban planning in India in the context of the overall institutional set-up, and only describes the mechanisms of the civil service.

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