SP.723: D-Lab III: Dissemination: Implementing Innovations for the Common Good
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Lecture Notes

Session 14, 4/3/07

- How was your spring break?

- Scheduling case studies for this week and next week

Case Study #1 for today: Banerjee "Making Aid Work"
- What are some of the arguments that have been made for and against aid?
  - Project-by-project, more aid does not mean that something will be successful. We can't even argue that foreign aid is successful
  - Others say that .7% of the GDP of wealthy nations should be going to third world countries.
  - Only a small percentage of World Bank projects get evaluated
    - What are some of the reasons that the World Bank and similar groups have trouble implementing these evaluations?
    - They don't want to spend money on evaluations when they could spend that money on directly helping people
    - The world bank is starting to cooperate more with people like Banerjee though
- What are some of Banerjee's main points?
  - His big argument is that we should be doing more randomized trials
    - You can often use governmental policy decisions to divide between control and experimental groups (when the government has already divided these groups and decided which policies will be used in each)
  - He claims that randomization is the most certain kind of knowledge that we have available, and we should be devoting our money to the projects that we already know will work, based on studies.
- There have been a lot of criticisms made against Banerjee's arguments: How effective do you think his claims are?
  - Do people doing as he says run the risk of just becoming a policy analyst instead of someone working for development?
  - Does this sort of measurement come at the expense of community empowerment? You can't really talk quantitatively about empowerment in the same way that you can talk quantitatively about other kinds of success.
    - It seems like we should be using both the quantitative and the qualitative measures
    - The two measures serve different purposes

- You can quantify empowerment in certain ways, such as with surveys. You just need to be creative about how you find ways to quantify it.
    - Sometimes things will seem to work in one place and not another. How effective are Banerjee's studies at actually demonstrating success?
    - Do all of these things really need to be measured? Maybe we just want kinds to be worm-free for the sake of being worm-free, and isn't it just rational that if we're able to provide these things then we should?
    - Can the measurement of these things facilitate the diffusion of innovations that work well, over the diffusion of worse innovations?
  - Banerjee's argument are picking up steam. The World Bank is interested, and the Gates Foundation is really into it.
  - Has anyone considered how they could evaluate their own innovations, in this class?

Case Study #2 for today: Rosenbaum & Flynn, Brophy & Smith: Mixed Income Housing
  - Why would local housing authorities be interested in adopting this style of housing?
    - See an example of how other people live
    - Transit – it often means a shorter commute
    - Since education is location based, mixed income housing makes it easier to desegregate schools
    - To attract higher-income tenants, they can just add better amenities
    - Often the higher-income tenants pay more, so that their extra rent covers the lower rent of the low-income tenants. However, the government provides perks or subsidization to make it work.
  - People criticize these plans because the government can end up subsidizing housing for upper-income people who could afford it elsewhere. Housing for the poor would be cheaper if we just built it en masse, all together, so that we could house more people total.
  - How do you measure success in mixed-income housing?
    - One level might just be getting these housing units built and lived in. However, a higher level is empowering the lower-income groups.
    - A low crime rate is a mark of success. Graffiti is also sometimes measured as a mark of how much success people have for their environment.
    - Equal opportunity. Can people who grow up in this housing self-determine and choose their own life path independent of their wealth as a child?
    - Will people be more open and tolerant toward people who are different from themselves?

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