

PLS 341

Politics of Development

Week 9, Lecture 1:

'Seeing like a state' and administrative ordering of society

Recap

- Developmental success of capable states and efforts to emulate it

Plan for this week

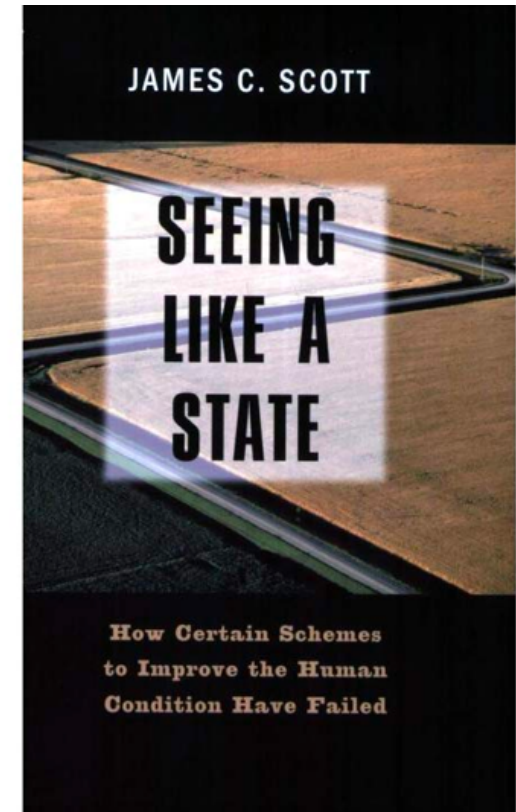
- Developmental pitfalls of state capacity:
 - Seeing like a state and the anti-politics machine
 - Administrative ordering of:
 - Society
 - Nature

Plan for today

- Development as a technical problem:
 - Seeing like a state
 - Anti-politics machine
- Administrative ordering of society

Seeing like a state

- Legibility as a central problem in statecraft —>
- States' need to make society legible —>
- Administrative ordering of nature and society through simplification and standardization in order to facilitate central monitoring and management
- Subversion of local knowledge (*metis*) in favor of rational administrative ordering (*techne*)



Seeing like a state in practice

- Administrative ordering by capable and autonomous states:
 - Invention of surnames
 - City planning
 - Standardization of measures, languages, and legal systems
 - Establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers



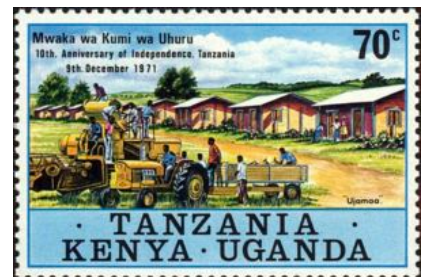
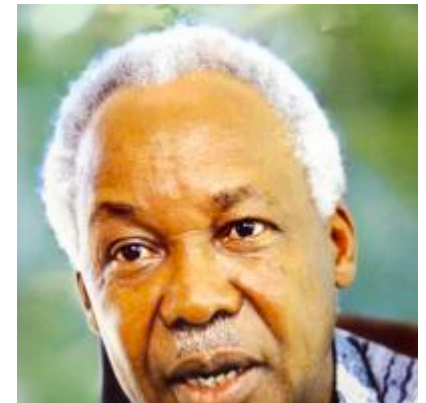
Seeing like a state in practice

- Administrative ordering by capable and autonomous states:
 - Norway spruce monocultures in 18th-c. Prussia and Saxony
 - Soviet collectivization
 - Tanzanian villagization



Seeing like a state in Tanzania

- ‘Illegibility’ of the rural population in Julius Nyerere’s Tanzania in the 1970s
- *Ujamaa* compulsory villagization scheme
- 5 million Tanzanians relocated to *ujamaa* villages
- No attention paid to the local knowledge and practices of cultivators and pastoralists —>
- Economic and ecological failure
- Societal reordering and expansion of state reach



Seeing like a state in Lesotho

- Thaba-Tseka project (1975-1984) in the highlands of eastern Lesotho:
 - Failure as an pastoral development project
 - Powerful 'instrument-effects':
 - Road construction
 - New district administration
 - Greater government presence



Anti-politics machine

- Construction of “Lesotho as a particular kind of object of knowledge” and creation of “a structure of knowledge around that object”
- Lesotho in development discourse:
 - Traditional, bounded national economy based on agricultural production
- Real Lesotho:
 - Capitalist labor reserve dependent on South Africa



Anti-politics machine

- “The thoughts and actions of ‘development’ bureaucrats are powerfully shaped by the world of acceptable statements and utterances within which they live; and what they do and do not do is a product not only of the interests of various nations, classes, or international agencies, but also, and at the same time, of a working out of this complex structure of knowledge.”
- Anti-politics machine’s function: “[D]epoliticizing everything it touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight, all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power.”

Anti-politics machine

- “In this perspective, the ‘development’ apparatus in Lesotho is not a machine for eliminating poverty that is incidentally involved with the state bureaucracy; it is a **machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power**, which incidentally takes ‘poverty’ as its point of entry—launching an intervention that may have no effect on the poverty but does in fact have other concrete effects. Such a result may be no part of the planners’ intentions—indeed, it almost never is—but resultant systems have an intelligibility of their own.”

Takeaways

- The state's capacity to transform and control society in the name of development
- Depoliticization as exercise of state power