



Development Through Bricolage: Rethinking Institutions for Natural Resource Management

By Frances Cleaver

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Why, despite an emphasis on 'getting institutions right', do development initiatives so infrequently deliver as planned? Why do many institutions designed for natural resource management (e.g. Water User Associations, Irrigation Committees, Forest Management Councils) not work as planners intended? This book disputes the model of development by design and argues that institutions are formed through the uneven patching together of old practices and accepted norms with new arrangements. The managing of natural resources and delivery of development through such processes of 'bricolage' is likened to 'institutional DIY' rather than engineering or design.

The author explores the processes involved in institutional bricolage; the constant renegotiation of norms, the reinvention of tradition, the importance of legitimate authority and the role of people themselves in shaping such arrangements. Bricolage is seen as an inevitable, but not always benign process; the extent to which it reproduces social inequalities or creates space for challenging them is also considered. The book draws on a number of contemporary strands of development thinking about collective action, participation, governance, natural resource management, political ecology and wellbeing. It synthesises these to develop new understandings of why and how people act to manage resources and how access is secured or denied. A variety of case studies ranging from the management of water (Zimbabwe, India, Pakistan), conflict and cooperation over land, grazing and water (Tanzania), and the emergence of community management of forests (Sweden, Nepal), illustrate the context specific and generalised nature of bricolage and the resultant challenges for development policy and practice.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The idea of 'bricolage' is an attractive one, and neatly captures the idea that institutions can only very partially be shaped and planned by outside interventions... the book not only provides an original and much needed addition to the literature on institutions, but also gives a wonderful overview of the existing literature - turning it into an excellent work of reference for scholars and students." –

Margreet Zwarteveen, Assistant Professor and Senior Researcher at Wageningen University, the Netherlands

"The main contribution of Development Through Bricolage comes from its explication of the prevalence of 'bricolage', grounded in examples from Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Sweden. For students, practitioners, and academics wanting alternatives to simplistic, and unrealistic, models, the concept of 'bricolage' opens the door to a wider way of thinking about natural resources management and international development." – *Bryan Bruns, Consulting Sociologist and Independent Scholar and co-editor of Negotiating Water Rights (Intermediate Technology Publications, London, 2000)*

"I recommend this book highly to everyone trying to understand the reality of attempting to encourage institutional change or to introduce new types of water management institutions. The disappointing experience with introducing water users associations over the past few decades is a case in point. But reading this book takes time and patience: because it avoids sweeping easy general conclusions, and instead offers a subtle and nuanced argument, non-social scientists in particular may find it a slow read – but your patience will be rewarded by the insightfulness of each chapter." –

Douglas J. Merrey, Water Alternatives

"Cleaver succeeds ... in giving voice to the many examples that illustrate bricolage, and more importantly in beginning to flesh out how institutional bricolage relates to previous social theorizing, and then providing a framework for those working on the critical boundaries of development studies"

– *Ken J. Caine, Society and Natural Resources*

About the Author

Frances Cleaver is Professor of Environment and Development at Kings College, London. She wrote the bulk of this book while a Reader in International Development Studies at the University of Bradford.

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