How and With which consequence Does the State Make People "Legible"

Silin Zhu[1*], Zeran Xu[2], Yianfei Zhu[3]

[1]*Department of Anthropology, The London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, United Kingdom*
[2]*Department of Media and Communication, The London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, United Kingdom*
[3]*School of Chinese language and literature, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 710119, China*
Corresponding author. Email: Cecily.S.Zhu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

"Legible" is a method used by states to obtain clearer understanding and better control of the governance. This article will base on Scott's "legible" theory to illustrate how does the authority make state and people "legible" in three ways: redesigning the city, mandatory use of the surname, and promoting the use of official languages. Then the writer will try to find out how this "legible" process influences the state and citizens. Finally, the conclusion will be made that "legibility" brings benefits to governors, states, and individuals, but it may also lead to the ignorance of the local knowledge and cause the failure of some public programmes and harm the interests of local people.

Keywords: Legible, State, James C. Scott, Public programmes;

1. INTRODUCTION

As Caponigri (1948) argues, 'compared with the witchcraft in primitive society, the scholars and the governors in the modern society developed a more sophisticated divination method-- science and philosophy to rule the public.' [1] Compared with the pre-modern society, modern society achieves the goal of controlling society and ruling by knowing its objects of governance, including population, wealth, natural resources, land, productivity, and territory. "Legible" is the premise of control. (Scott,1998, P22.) [4] The state can use legible as a tool to unify measurement units and standards.

This article will base the ideas of James C. Scott and answering the question of how and with which consequence does the state makes people "legible". Firstly, this article will illustrate how the state make people "legible" by redesigning the city. The rebuilt of Pairs will be analysized as a typical example to support this idea. Secondly, the author will give an example of the situation in the Philippines to show how the creation of surnames affects the process of " legible. Thirdly, it will show how the governments use official language to make people "legible". Finally, two conclusions will be made. It will show how it can influence the states governs and citizens' well-being.

2. "LEGIBLE METHOD"—REDESIGN THE CITY

The state redesigns the city into a more legible method to get better control of the people and society. The layouts of those old or less modern cities are complex and fuzzy, covered by "an inextricable network of narrow and tortuous public ways, alleys, and dead-ends". layouts make it impossible for outsiders to walk freely and achieve some purposes (domination, military use, census, and mandatory taxation and so on) without the help of local guides, which let the residents have the ability to resist the penetration and control of state power and retained certain autonomy rights.[2] Thus, to completely understand the society, the authorities redesigned the city into clear logical grids and function zones.

Most modern or redesigned cities are built under the regular of grids and geometrically, with straight lines, right angles, and repetitions that make the cities show strict symmetry. These layouts facilitate policing and control by making the police and armies easier to find certain locations in the city. As Scott (2006) claims, when urban riots happen, the authorities wanted to move quickly to the precise locations that would let them to" contain or suppress the rebellions effectively." [2]

Besides, building a grim city allows the state to build the order both aboveground and underground. The construction of aboveground grim simper the public affairs, including conscripting, tax collecting, census conducting, massage delivering, putting down riots. These blocks regulated by grim also "suits equally the surveyor, the planner, and the real estate", which make the city and the land easily be standardized as a commodity to assess into the market.[2] The underground grim including tube, water pipes, storm drains, sewers, electric cables, which let the water resource, energy resource, underground transport, and even the public health and disease control situation more legible.

Louis Napoleon's redesign of Paris can be seen as a typical example. Compared with focusing neighborhood feelings and community culture, this public program which stretching from 1853 to 1869 more emphasize the aim of enhancing military security. New boulevards and inner boulevards were reconstructed following the order of a geometrically regular to meet demands of authorities and governors. 'Its visual regimentation has a ceremonial or ideological quality, much like the order of a parade or a barracks.'[4]

Old, winding streets are widened and straightened and finally replaced by the redesigned communities which more emphasis on simplification and a synoptic grasp of the ensemble. New public transportation systems, drainage system, streets and communities, plazas, parks, and complexes have thus been rebuilt with legibility added into them, which strengthen the control of the state.

During the Revolution of 1830-1848, it was very easy to hold an insurrection in Paris—complex streets and multiple buildings made it difficult for the police and the army to find the resistances. However, to retrofit the city let this potential security risk disappeared. The gridded and clear blocks make it easy for the military to remotely locate and protect the safety of the city. In such planning, it is difficult for the rebels to escape the control of the police.

3. "LEGIBLE METHOD" --THE CREATION OF SURNAME

There are very rich naming methods in different societies. Commonly, a citizen will have different names during a different period in his life, and it is also possible that the person will have many names at the same time. Sometimes names can' show the identity of a citizen and this city's position in a social relationship This naming style is legible to those who familiar with local knowledge and context, but it creates huge ambiguities and understanding barriers for the state and outsiders. Citizens can use this ambiguity to achieve anonymity, thereby obtaining security protection that escapes state control. However, the state must adopt means of creating surnames and forcing citizens into the surname system to understand and account for how many people the state owns for the reason that it is relevant to legible of taxes, censuses, marriage registration, land registration, and public order.

Here is a case study in 1894 in the Philippines, which was one of the colonies of Spanish. The governor of Spanish forced the local people who used not to have a surname to choose the surname form colors, art terms, minerals, and animals. With the use of the surname, the colonists can gain accurate data of the specifying tribute obligations, communal labor obligations, first name, surname, age, marital status, occupation, and exemptions of each citizen and these registers allow the state to compile the precise statistics promote fiscal efficiency.

With the development of technology and innovations, nowadays the state also uses other tools such as passport, identity numbers, photograph, the birth certification to identify individuals and make people more legible. [8] All these methods put people into the network of states. Using this network let the state easily able to track property ownership and inheritance, collect taxes, maintain court records, police officers, enlisted soldiers, and control epidemics.

4. "LEGIBLE METHOD"—OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

"The campaign of linguistic centralization was assured of some success since it went hand in hand with an expansion of state power." [2] As the carrier of local knowledge, history, and culture, language can be seen as a discourse which is unique to a region Thus, the state makes the people legible by enforcing them to use official languages, which helps to legal and administrative standardization，including petitions, court cases, school documents, application. Most of the social aspects, for example, careers, educations, public service, politics, and economic activities and even entertainment and cultural activities are supported by the official which means that those who insisting to use local language will be marginalized. By contrast, those who use the official language will stand out and play the various social roles that the country expects to be standardized and legible. [3]

5. THE CONSEQUENCE OF "LEGIBLE"

Legible has a positive impact on both the state and individuals. When citizens accept legible manipulation and enter the legible system (which is made of code, regular, and statistic by the government), the rights of citizens will be guaranteed by the state. For example, agreed channels for participation in politics, avoidance of double taxation, protection of private property, protection of personal safety, and guarantees of various social benefits and social security net. [5] Some of the effects of national visualization can also unexpectedly contribute to public health, disease prevention and control, and mortality reduction. In France, for example, in 1850, the redesign of the city of Paris led to the reconstruction of groundwater pipelines. In the past, due to old sewers and irrational urban tube layout, domestic water in Paris was severely polluted, which led to the spread of cholera and caused a high mortality rate. The rebuilt Paris drainage system is much cleaner, thus improving the health of Paris citizens. Besides, legible has brought the country's control over macro data, which means that the country can analyze infectious diseases and disease control conditions in specific locations by monitoring constantly updated data, thereby improving residents' public health services.

For the state, legible improve the state's financial revenue and strengthens the state's control over society. The state uses legible as a tool to promote high-modernism, which reconstructed the society that meets the standard of the state. Thus, to ensure the authority and God's view of the state, they govern society by simper the data, population, real

estate, and the city layout. This rule often conflicts with important local knowledge and practices of local people. In a simplified country, local people have lost their power to confront the state, so this local voice is often ignored and suppressed by the state. [6] This result is disastrous, as the practice of ignoring local knowledge often means failure. The failure of large-scale projects organized by the state has affected the local people's lifestyle, quality of life, production mode, health, mortality, and other aspects related to the basic quality of life.

For example, in Hubei province in 1950, due to the plan of iron and steel smelting, the government decided to adjust the local agricultural structure and changing the original high-stalk crops into high-yield crops without considering the environment and the advice of the local peasants. The new crops do not adapt to the new fragile and frequent disaster environment, resulting in a large reduction in production. Also, due to the government's blind decision to "refine steel" that did not fit the current product, the local demand for high-stalk crops as fuel has increased. As a result of this large-scale project, both high-yield crops and high-yield crops have reduced yields, which has caused a very negative impact on local ecology, industrial development, agricultural structural adjustment, and personal income. This neglect of local knowledge has brought disaster to the local people: a two-year famine has directly affected the quality of life of the local people. [7]

For individuals, there are also some negative effects. For example, the process of legible is based on political, military, and economic considerations. Previous city culture, citizens' living experiences, local knowledge are ignored during the reconstruction process. The loss of 'the spatial irregularities that foster coziness, gathering places for informal recreation, and neighborhood feeling.' seems inevitable. (Scott, 2006, P261)

6. CONCLUSION

This article answers two issues: how the state achieves legible and its impact. Firstly, the state simper language, redesign cities' layout, and creates surnames to make the society and people legible. These behaviors can have a benefit to citizens and the state.

However, it is worth noting that legible can also help the country to develop high- modernism, which has caused the power of the country to conflict with local knowledge and local people, leading to the failure of large projects and the sacrifices of local people's demands and interests.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

REFERENCES

[1] Caponigri, A. (1948). The Review of Politics, 10(2), 262-264.

[2] Scott, J. (2006). "Cities, People and Language." pp. 247-269

[3] Swan. D, A (1998), In Care of the State. Polity Press, Oxford.

[4] Scott, J. (1998). Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed. Yale University Press, New Haven. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nq3vk

[5] Bao, L. (2005). The operating logic of extreme modernism-- 《Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed》. widely read, 05: 90-95.

[6] Huang, Y. (2008). Legibility and simplification: hidden tools of governance: A review of "The Perspective of the State" by Anthropologist James C. Scott. Qinghai Ethnic Studies,02:170-172.

[7] Meng, F. (2009). Rural life fuel crisis before and after the Great Leap Forward and its response. Shang Hai, East China Normal University Press.

[8] Gu, J & Gao, J. (2017). Compound society encounters national authority: the root causes of the failures of those "designed" projects-Reading James C. Scott's "National Perspective", 39(05): 81-91.

[9] Nugent, D. (1994). Building the State, Making the Nation: The Bases and Limits of State Centralization in "Modern" Peru. American Anthropologist 96(2):33-369.

[10] Gordon, Colin. (1991) Governmental Rationality: An Introduction. In: The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. Burchell. G, Gordon. C, and Miller. P, (Eds). University of Press, Chicago. pp. 1-51.

[11] Ferguson, J. (1994). The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

[12] Gordon, C. (1991). Governmental rationality: an introduction. See Burchell et al. (1991), 1-52. [13] Hacking, I. 1986, Making up people. In Reconstructing individualism, T. Helleret, C. al. (Eds), Palo Alto, Stanford University Press. California.

[14] Drayton, R. (2000). Nature's Government: Burchell, G. 1986. Liberal government ano techniques of the self. See Barry et al (1986), 19-36. Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World. Cr Yale University Press, New Haven.

[15] Skocpol, T. (1979). States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[16] DuBois, M. (1991). The Governance of the Third World: A Foucauldian Perspective on Power Relations in Development. Alternatives, 16(1): 1-30.

[17] Escobar, A. (1995). Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

[18] Pels, P. (1997). The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality. Annual Review

[19] Peluso, N, L. (1995). Whose Woods Are These? Counter-Mapping Forest Territories in Kalimantan, Indonesia, Antipode, 27(4):383-406.

[20] Rose, N. (1999). Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[21] Schrauwers, A. (2000). Colonial "Reformation" in the Highlands of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, 1892-1995. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

[22] Valverde, M. (1996). "Despotism" and Ethical Liberal Governance. Economy

[23] Scott, James C. (1985). Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant. Yale University Press, New Haven.

[24] Thomas, Ni. (1994). Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology. Travel and Government. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

[25] Robinson. G. (1995). The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Ball, Cornell University Press, NY.

[26] Miller, P. & N. Rose. (1990). Governing economic life. Economy and Society, 19(1),1-31

[27] Rose, N. (1987). Beyond the public/private division: law, power and the family. Jour.al of Law and Society, 14(1), 61-76

[28] Rose, N. (1995). Authority and the genealogy of subjectivity. In: De-traditionalization: authority and self in an age of cultural change, Heelas. P, Morris. P, Lash. S, (Eds).Basil Blackwell Press.

[29] Rose, N. （1996）. Inventing our selves: psychology, power and personhood. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[30] Murray, C. (1980). Losing ground: American social policy 1950-1980. Basic Press, NY.

[31] Pasquino, P. (1991). "Theatrum Politicism": the genealogy of capital -police and the state of prosperity. See Burchell et al, 1991: 105-18

[32] Walker, R, B. J. (1993). Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[33] Taylor, D (1997). Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War". Duke University Press, Durham, NC.