Health and Equity through Multi-Level Governance

or

Covid – the end of governance, or a re-birth?

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‘The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear’ (Gramsci)
Governance – too often invoked, rarely defined

- Governance is about power – and holding power to account.
- The opposite of governance is not ‘bad governance’ – it is impunity.
- Governance is a process, punctuated by many local decision-making ‘moments’ - at each such point there exists a dynamic tension between
  - those who have delegated power or authority to make decisions or to act according to regulatory or rule-based guidelines
  - and those citizens/residents, citizen groups, special interests or others, whose interests lie in a transparent process where laws, regulations and rules are fairly and equitably applied and they have voice.
Governance and the global south

• For give the shameless self-promotion

• Governance has been a normative discourse, imposed by the north, to promote ‘good governance’ – and to go to war to ensure it, if necessary.

• Governance has become little more than a gesture towards rule-based implementation – look how rapidly governments across the world (inc. the south) have imposed states of disaster, emergency etc., with lockdowns, curfews, and terrified people.

• Social Darwinism is back.

• Covid emergency tenders have led to unprecedented theft in every society.

• Civil society as only entities not stealing? Or at least able to feed the poor?

• Network governance is the only way to stop people starving!
Governance everywhere!

• North or south, governance is on the back foot
• Like ‘M&E’, governance has become a global industry of dashboards and reports and had meaning taken away. Like ‘M&E’, governance is increasingly about compliance – not accountability
• Most northern scholars argue governance is about efficiency of service delivery – literally, *govern-ance* - and is somehow ‘not political’
• Fukuyama: "... I am excluding democratic accountability from the definition of governance”, because “current orthodoxy in the development community is that democracy and good governance are mutually supportive” – apparently not “an empirically demonstrated fact”. Really? Current orthodoxy seems pretty wrong...
• So if the trains run on time, who cares how many died building the railroad? If the rich remain rich, who cares how the poor survive?
• Governance must give the opportunity for all marginalised groups to have their say in how cities and planned and run – look what Covid has done to our cities and to the poor
Who got the power?
(South African police, Philippines police, US ‘secret police’ in Portland)
Khabarovsk, far northern Russia - protesters chanting “Freedom!” and “Putin resign!” while passing drivers honked, applauded and offered high-fives - “There will be a revolution,” the vendor, Irina Lukasheva, 56, predicted. “What did our grandfathers fight for? Not for poverty or for the oligarchs sitting over there in the Kremlin.” (NYT)

Poland’s far right government withdraw from violence against women treaty as “a feminist creation aimed at justifying gay ideology”

Extinction won’t stop because you arrest Extinction Rebellion protestors...

Black Lives Matter triggering mass police and undercover security violence in USA and across the globe
Eating as privilege not right (SA)
Eating as privilege not right
(Lagos)
Starve or social distance?
Paying the price
• A key overarching principle must be **global health equity**.

• If not, the global north will sacrifice the global south in a very literal and brutal way. Our lives are considered cheaper and more dispensable anyway – and more so under pandemic and the desire to appease their own voters.

• This is already a problem, as US/EU governments buy up all future stocks of vaccines currently being tested, or private sector companies insist on IP and profits (their risk, their profit?) – if we were able to exert pressure (the ‘democratizing moment’ within governance) this could be challenged in the name of humanism and equality, but will disappear in corruption and inequality.

• The Oxford vaccine trial – also being trialed in South Africa and Brazil – has been bought by the UK government in advance. What was the SA/Brazilian value-add – cosmetic? This is vertical non-governance – it is merely the rule of the stronger and wealthier (who are stronger and wealthier because of the south/slavery/colonialism/etc.).

• Do we want these cities of ours to bounce back in the shape they were in before Covid? We – we middle class professionals – designed and built them; or at least ignored the suffering within them.

• If we want a better ‘new normal’ it goes back to organizing, conscientising, mobilizing – governance only works when we can use it to exert pressure.