# (Summer) Reading with Friends

*Seeing Like a State* (and a lot about trees (not binary trees; like bark trees))

---

Ali Alkhatib

July 2, 2021

Reading With Friends

# META STUFF

Reading with friends

# Seeing Like a State

# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

- family names
- standardized measures
- surveys and censuses
- organization of transportation

# Seeing Like a State

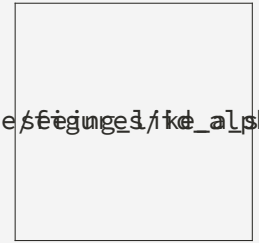
Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

- family names
- standardized measures
- surveys and censuses
- organization of transportation

# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

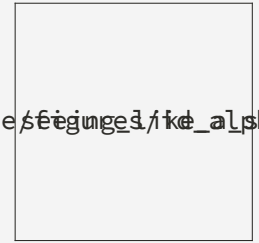
- family names
- standardized measures
- surveys and censuses
- organization of transportation

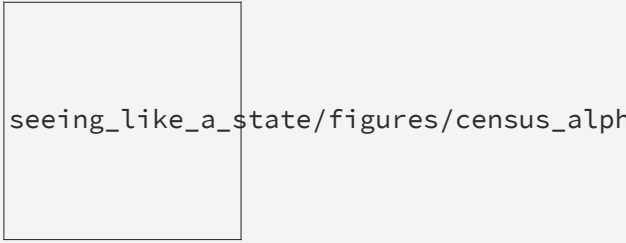


# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

- family names
- standardized measures
- surveys and censuses
- organization of transportation



# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

- family names
- standardized measures
- surveys and censuses
- organization of transportation

# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

These make the world legible to the state.

# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

These make the world legible to the state.

They also scaffold power.

# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

These make the world legible to the state.

They also scaffold power.

# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

These make the world legible to the state.

They also scaffold power.

# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

These make the world legible to the state.

They also scaffold power.

1. administrative ordering of nature and society

# Seeing Like a State

Governments make sense of the world by operationalizing the world in ways that allow them to make comparisons and decisions.

These make the world legible to the state.

They also scaffold power.

When four things line up, you get a disaster:

1. administrative ordering of nature and society
2. high-modernist ideology
3. authoritarian state
4. a weakened civil society

# HIGH-MODERNISM

High modernism is **not** scientific practice

# HIGH-MODERNISM

High modernism is **not** scientific practice

High modernism **is**…

# HIGH-MODERNISM

High modernism is **not** scientific practice

High modernism **is**…

"…unscientifically optimistic about about the possibilities of comprehensive planning…"

"For [high modernists], an efficient, rationally organized city, village, or farm was a city that *looked* regimented and orderly in a geometric sense."

# HIGH-MODERNISM

High modernism is **not** scientific practice

High modernism **is**…

"…unscientifically optimistic about about the possibilities of comprehensive planning…"

"For [high modernists], an efficient, rationally organized city, village, or farm was a city that *looked* regimented and orderly in a geometric sense."

SCIENTIFIC FORESTRY

seeing_like_a_state/figures/zoom/1.png

seeing_like_a_state/figures/zoom/2.png

seeing_like_a_state/figures/zoom/3.png

seeing_like_a_state/figures/zoom/4.png

seeing_like_a_state/figures/zoom/5.png

seeing_like_a_state/figures/zoom/5.png

What about…

- Wildlife?
- People?
- Other trees and flora?

# We interpret the world in constrained ways

We interpret the world in constrained ways

It's how we cope with too much information

# INTERPRETATION TO IMPOSITION

# INTERPRETATION TO IMPOSITION

seeing_like_a_state/figures/sc

# DELAYED DISASTERS

- Things were fine for a while

# DELAYED DISASTERS

- Things were fine for a while
- Then they weren’t

# DELAYED DISASTERS

- Things were fine for a while
- Then they weren’t
  - Pests
  - Storms
  - Hollowing out of the ecosystem

## DELAYED DISASTERS

- Things were fine for a while
- Then they weren't
  - Pests
  - Storms
  - Hollowing out of the ecosystem

*Waldsterben*

## DELAYED DISASTERS

- Things were fine for a while
- Then they weren't
  - Pests
  - Storms
  - Hollowing out of the ecosystem

*Waldsterben*

*Forest death*

# ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

The forest was more than just the trees

# ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

The forest was more than just the trees

It was everything that lived in and passed through

# SO WHAT?

we’re not clickthrough machines, but we measure things like engagement by that

# BACK TO HCI

we’re not clickthrough machines, but we measure things like engagement by that

Did removing all of the other activity from our field of view oversimplify the ecosystem and result in pests?

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


- “identification” by Adrien Coquet from the Noun Project
- “conversion” by Adrien Coquet from the Noun Project
- “census” by Gan Khoon Lay from the Noun Project
- “Subway Map” by Viktor Fedyuk (Tim P) from the Noun Project
- “USA Map” by Alexander Skowalsky from the Noun Project
- “clicking” by Mark Aventura from the Noun Project
- Le Corbusier’s proposal, taken from `http://www.civicconservation.org/rethinking-preservation`
- photo of poplar forest from *Seeing Like a State* by James S. Scott