

5YYD0014 Social justice: ethnographic insights (2018-19)

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Social justice has long been at the heart of 'development' – alongside economic growth, environmental sustainability and accountable governance. Further, these other goals are often regarded as instrumental to justice: growth enables surplus for redistribution; sustainability ensures fairness to future generations; and accountability promotes more equitable shares.

Rather than debate 'social justice' in abstract terms, this course engages with embedded, ethnographic perspectives: why does injustice prevail; why do inequalities persist; why are states violent; how do people come to resist and mobilise for change; engage with the state; or turn to violent opposition? In listening to people's perspectives, understanding their beliefs and desires, the course also introduces the anthropological approach to development at large.

After a brief recap of relevant theory, the course reviews seminal ethnographic literature in the two main arenas through which people have attempted to advance social justice: the state and social movements, respectively. It concludes with a session to reflect on the ethics and politics of being embedded in projects for social justice while researching them.

Each of the main lectures introduces one seminal ethnographic monograph, drawn from a single country case. The accompanying weekly seminar sessions aim to provide context and critique through additional literature and comparisons with other parts of the world.

This module is assessed through one essay due at the end of term (weighed 50%, 1500 words) and one centrally scheduled exam (weighed 50%, 2h). Everybody is also expected to once prepare a 10-15min short presentation to kick off the seminar discussion. The essay tests depth of engagement and will focus on one week (usually the week where you prepared the seminar input, which can thus serve as the essay's formative stage). The exam tests breadth of knowledge and will focus on themes that cut across several weeks (to prepare, use the collaborative Prezi as well as your own notes).

Please read introductions, conclusions and (at least) one substantial chapter from both the main and contrasting monograph before class each week. It sounds a lot, but rest assured: anthropology writing is a joy to read (usually, and certainly in the wider universe of academes). The additional resources listed each week are optional, in case something really intrigues you.

For the short inputs, please take five minutes to introduce the contrasting monograph's ethnographic setting and context, and another five minutes to articulate the main arguments. If you wish, you can then use a final five minutes to explicitly compare this to the week's core reading. Add your presentation visuals to the collaborative Prezi (you need to create a free Prezi account and then email Raphael to be given writing access). Also please see Andrea the week before your presentation during office hours to make sure everything is on track.

1. Social justice and the perspective of anthropology

This introductory session will provide an overview of the course, recap key insights and questions from the 'introduction to development' module – in particular about the Capability Approach – and highlight the methodological benefits of anthropology. To further illuminate this theme, we consider ethnographic critiques of quantitative research that narrowly defines 'empowerment' and then measures the extent to which it is achieved by other women, via microfinance.

- Mosse, David, 2013: The Anthropology of International Development. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, 227-246

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Vera-Sanso, Penny, 2008: Whose money is it? On misconceiving female autonomy and economic empowerment in low-income households, *IDS bulletin* 39 (6), 51-59

Additional resources:

- Appiah, Kwame Anthony, 2006: *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a world of strangers*. Penguin.
- Sen, Amartya, 2009: *The idea of justice*. Allen Lane

2. Bureaucracy

We begin our inquiry into state-led projects for social justice with innocent naivete – arguably a key ethnographic sensibility. Could one not simply say that states which intend to further social justice should develop appropriate policies, provide funds for it and task the bureaucracy with its implementation? Unfortunately, the latter step in particular is rarely that straightforward. To understand why, we have to unpack how implementation works. Who are said bureaucrats? How do they operate? And why is their work often so frustrating? These questions are explored in a recent but already classic piece of ethnography about these key actors in state-led development and social justice delivery – contrasted in the seminar with another classic, written two decades earlier.

- Gupta, Akhil, 2012: *Red tape. Bureaucracy, structural violence, and poverty in India*. Duke University Press

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Ferguson, James, 1994: *The anti-politics machine. "Development", depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. University of Minnesota Press

Additional resources:

- Ang, Yuen Yuen, 2016. *How China escaped the poverty trap*. Cornell University Press
- Bierschenk, Thomas & Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre (eds), 2014: *States at Work: Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*. Brill
- Hossain, Naomi, 2010. *Rude Accountability: Informal Pressures on Frontline Bureaucrats in Bangladesh* 41(5): 907–928.
- Tender, Judith, 1997. *Good governance in the tropics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.

3. Education

If straightforward policy-to-implementation shortcuts tend not to work, perhaps we should adopt a more long-term perspective? Indeed: a second major narrative on state-led social justice projects concentrates on rather more indirect effects of state activity, namely the provision of universal education. If only everybody would attend school, then at last people would be skilled enough to find employment and aware enough to become proper citizens who fight for their rights; after a few

generations, this will finally result in greater social justice – or so this particular narrative goes. A second classic ethnography re-evaluates how far the narrative of education holds – and when, why and for whom it breaks. The seminar pushes the need of situating youth aspirations in context further – education is just one route to a future, and only for some.

- Jeffrey, Craig; Jeffery, Patricia & Jeffery, Roger, 2010: Degrees without freedom? Education, masculinities and unemployment in North India. Stanford University Press

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Schielke, Samuli, 2015: Egypt in the future tense. Hope, frustration, and ambivalence before and after 2011. Indiana University Press.

Additional resources:

- Jeffrey, Craig, 2010. Timepass: Youth, class, and time among unemployed young men in India. *American Ethnologist*. 37(3): 465–481.
- Longwe, Sara Hlupekile, 1998. Education for Women's Empowerment or Schooling for Women's Subordination? *Gender and Development* 6(2): 19-26.
- Mische, Ann, 2009: Partisan publics. Communication and contention across Brazilian youth activist networks. Princeton University Press.
- Wadley, Susan S, 1994: Struggling with destiny in Karimpur, 1925-1984. University of California Press.

4. Security

A third strand of thinking about the state and social justice refrains from both involved bureaucratic management and long-term endeavours such as educational reform. Instead, some posit that the state should act as a neutral arbiter between social groups. Our next ethnography reveals that the state (particularly the police) are rarely impartial vis-a-vis society, indeed often engages in injustice, land grabs, forced evictions and violence. The contrasting reading changes the regional context, and explores further how everyday violence gets embedded in everyday life – and how it becomes integral to social and political processes rather than coming as a somehow external challenge.

- Denyer Willis, Graham. 2015. *The Killing Consensus: Police, Organized Crime and the Regulation of Life and Death in Urban Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Debos, Marielle, 2016. *Living by the gun in Chad: Combatants, impunity and state formation*. University of Chicago press.

Additional resources:

- Brass, Paul, 2003: *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India*. Oxford University Press.

- Holston, James, 2007: *Insurgent citizenship. Disjunctions of democracy and modernity in Brazil*. Princeton University Press.
- Nordstrom, Carolyn, 2004: *Shadows of war. Violence, power and international profiteering in the twenty-first century*.
- Wacquant, Loic, 2008: *Urban outcasts. A comparative sociology of advanced marginality*. Polity

5. Representation

The bureaucracy is frustrating, education only delivers for some, the police turns violent and partial – so should we just completely discount the state as a provider of social justice? Surprisingly enough, most people don't think so – especially poor and disadvantaged people. Rather than ending the first half of this module on a pessimistic note, our final instant ethnographic classic therefore explores the various ways in which the state, despite its flaws, remains a central point of reference for projects of social justice in the imagination of many:

- Banerjee, Mukulika, 2014: *Why India votes?* Routledge

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Postero, Nancy Grey (2007) *Now we are citizens: indigenous politics in post-multicultural Bolivia*. Stanford University Press.

Alternative readings:

- Heller, Patrick, 2001. *Moving the State: The Politics of Democratic Decentralization in Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre*. *Politics & Society*, 29(1): 131-163.
- Jaffrelot, Christophe, 2003. *India's silent revolution: The rise of lower castes in North India*. Columbia University Press.
- Nielsen, Kenneth Bo & Nilsen, Alf Gunvald (editors), 2016. *Social Movements and the State in India: Deepening Democracy?* London. Palgrave.
- Nugent, David, 1997: *Modernity at the edge of empire. State, individual, and nation in the Northern Peruvian Andes, 1885-1935*. Stanford University Press

6. Class

After discussing the state as the first main institution through which people attempted to achieve greater social justice, the module now turns to the second strategy: mobilizing in social movements. One prototype for these in the modern era has been the labor movement. Yet despite the potential gains of more responsive governance, poor people do not always mobilise or even identify as a class. Rather than organise collectively, they may secure their individual material survival (e.g. jobs and services) by supporting political patrons. These rational coping mechanisms entrench ruling elites by curbing public critique and horizontal associations. So how do marginalized groups come to question and resist inequality, how does the labor class emerge as a political force?

- Koo, Hagen, 2001. *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation*. London: Cornell University Press.

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Edelman, Marc, 1999: *Peasants against globalization. Rural social movements in Costa Rica*. Stanford University Press.

Additional resources:

- Ciccariello-Maher, George (2016), *Building the Commune: Radical Democracy in Venezuela*. London: Verso.
- Evans, Alice, forthcoming. *Politicising Inequality: The Power of Ideas*. World Development.
- Naila Kabeer, Ratna Sudarshan and Kirsty Milward (eds), 2013 *Organizing Women Workers in the Informal Economy: Beyond the Weapons of the Weak*. London: Zed
- Wolford, Wendy (2010) *This Land is Ours Now: Social Mobilisation and the Meaning of Land in Brazil*. Duke University Press.

7. **Transnationalism**

One problem with limiting our understanding of social justice to projects of the state is the fallacy of methodological nationalism: neglecting regional influences and global connections (material as well as through the circulation ideas). The importance of breaking out of country case studies is clearly illustrated by ethnographies of transnational activism, while the importance of globally circulating ideas is illustrated by our contrasting reading on ‘human rights’ in Palestine:

- Juris, Jeffrey, 2008: *Networking Futures: The movements against corporate globalization*. Duke University Press

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Allen, Lori, 2013: *The rise and fall of human rights. Cynicism and politics in occupied Palestine*. Stanford University Press.

Additional resources:

- Anderson, Lisa, 2011. *Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya*. *Foreign Affairs* 90(3): 2-7.
- Brysk, Alison (2000) *From Tribal Village to Global Village: Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America*. Stanford University Press.
- Della Porta, Donatella & Tarrow, Sidney G. 2005. *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Rowman & Littlefield.

- Van Cott, Donna Lee, 2005. *From Movements to Parties in Latin America: The Evolution of Ethnic Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

8. Illiberalism

When considering social movements as vehicles for social justice, it is important to note the multiplicity of meanings that this term can take on – not always does it mean working for peace, environment and women’s empowerment. While the social movement literature long concentrated on activists who pursue these liberal goals, anthropologists have creatively adopted its instruments to the study of right-wing, sectarian and nativist protest as well, challenging the tendency to denounce rather than understand such movements. After all, their practices are also often articulated in the language of social justice – only that the aim isn't necessarily justice for all, and the means not necessarily protest, as this highly influential ethnography of an Islamist piety movement demonstrates:

- Mahmood, Saba, 2005: *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton University Press

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Bedi, Tarini, 2016: *The dashing ladies of Shiv Sena. Political matronage in urbanizing India*. SUNY Press.

Additional resources:

- Ahmad, Irfan, 2009: *Islamism and democracy in India: The transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*. Princeton University Press.
- Marranci, Gabriele, 2008: *The anthropology of Islam*. Berg.
- Susewind, Raphael, 2013: *Being Muslim and Working for Peace: Ambivalence and ambiguity in Gujarat*. SAGE.
- Zakaria, Fareed. 1997. *The Rise of Illiberal Democracy*. *Foreign Affairs*. 7(6): 22-43

9. Insurgency

Mainstream development narratives often construe social change as non-conflictual. Yet the preceding session demonstrated that the rhetoric, imaginary and practice of social justice has such strong appeal that it can inspire much more radical politics than thought possible by either politicians or scholars. Indeed, social change has often been fought for, violently. The final ethnography provides an engaged, ethically and conceptually challenging account that demonstrates violent pathways to social justice:

- Kunnath, George, 2012: *Rebels from the mud houses. Dalits and the making of the Maoist revolution in Bihar*. Social Science Press

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Holtzman, Jon, 2016: Killing your neighbors. Friendship and violence in Northern Kenya and beyond. University of California Press

Additional resources:

- Kunnath, George, 2013. Anthropology's ethical dilemmas. Reflections from the Maoist fields of India. *Current Anthropology* 54(6): 740-752
- Lawoti, Mahendra and Pahari, Anup Kumar, 2009. The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-first Century. Routledge.
- Roberts, Nathaniel, 2016: To be cared for. The power of conversion and foreignness of belonging in an Indian slum. University of California Press.
- Shah, Alpa, 2013. The intimacy of insurgency: beyond coercion, greed or grievance in Maoist India. *Economy and Society* 42(3).

10. Social justice and the politics of anthropology

One underlying tension in many ethnographies of social justice introduced throughout this course – from staid bureaucracy to violent revolution, from electoral politics to nativist protest – has been the extent to which anthropologists should, could, or want to participate in the politics that they experience and write about. This concern is inevitably entangled in the colonial history of anthropology as a discipline and in the current power imbalances in our world. The final session explicitly reflects on these tensions, from ethical and political perspective.

- Hayes, Matthew, 2018: Gringolandia. Lifestyle migration under late capitalism. University of Minnesota Press.

Contrasting reading for the seminar:

- Canagarajah, A Suresh, 2002: A geopolitics of academic writing. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Additional resources:

- Crewe, Emma & Axelby, Richard, 2013: Anthropology and development: Culture, morality and politics in a globalised world. Cambridge University Press
- Gardner, Katy & Lewis, David, 2015: Anthropology and development: Challenges for the twenty-first century. Pluto