

Democracy Beyond Elections: Citizen Claim-Making in Rural India

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Abstract

How do citizens of the world's largest democracy make claims on the state? Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner will explore the processes through which rural citizens of India seek to secure public services from the state. Her research helps shed light on the understanding of distributive politics (who gets what from the state) and democratic practice (who participates and how). Drawing on fieldwork in the state of Rajasthan, she documents various claim-making practices. Socioeconomic status or caste category can not alone explain why different groups differ in how they make claims on the state. Kruks-Wisner argues, rather, that claim-making practice is shaped by the degree to which a person is exposed to people and settings across social and spatial cleavages. Expanded social and economic opportunities go together with the expanded knowledge necessary for citizen-state engagement, increasing both the likelihood and breadth of claim-making practice.

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India is bewilderingly complex. Parties hone drastically different campaign pitches for different states. Some economists speculate rural India is still reeling from Modi's surprise decision in 2016 to invalidate a majority of the currency in the economy, which led to months of cash shortages and knocked an estimated 2% off the country's GDP. These economic missteps would matter less if Modi had not promised so much in 2014. At raucous election rallies across India, he boasted he would create 10 million jobs and unearth enough untaxed wealth to deposit 1,500,000 rupees (£16,000) in every citizen's bank account – remarks that are likely to be repackaged as Congress election commercials and social m A formal democracy is a genuine democracy insofar as it guarantees, among other things, the right to vote and the freedom of expression. Yet it may not evince all the features of its normative ideal, thus the notion of a substantive democracy. A compound of its formal and substantive meanings, democracy here refers to more than the exercise of citizens' voting rights in elections or even the right to free speech. Though an important feature of democratic processes, elections are only the political manifestation of democratization in the wider social sphere. Trump won the election last night, taking Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and North Carolina, among anchor states like Florida and Texas. As TGP reports: In Pennsylvania Trump was ahead by nearly 700,000 votes. In Michigan Trump was ahead by over 300,000 votes. In Wisconsin Trump. But in the middle of the night Democrats went to work stealing the election by fabricating fake voting numbers in Michigan and Wisconsin. To carry out the fraud, the Dems shut down vote reporting until 3:30 am, and then magically out of nowhere, Biden jumped up 200,000 votes without a single vote for Trump. Democracy Beyond Elections is a collaborative, national campaign dedicated to transformative democracy rooted in community led decision making. It is not enough to get the right person elected or to know that those closest to the issues are closest to the solutions — we must act on this knowledge and put real decision making power in community hands. This means equipping community-members often ignored, pushed out, or marginalized by our current democratic systems with the tools, resources, and opportunities to deeply engage in democratic processes. This means committing to radically reimagine