

China and the World:

A critical discussion on state capacity in the developing countries

Location: LSE Connaught House 7.05

Date: January 29th, 10:00-16:00

Brief summary:

The rise of China and the Global South has put the conventional narrative of weak state capacity of developing countries under scrutiny. This workshop brings together scholars working on contemporary issues in developing countries from a state capacity perspective.

Participants are urged to present their work in progress or unpublished articles, as the workshop is designed in a manner to share on-going work and receive feedback.

We leave it to the discretion of the participants on what they wish to present and receive feedback (e.g. research question, framework, methodology, applications).

10:00 – 12:30

Panel 1: Chinese presence and state building in Africa

Discussants: **Yu Zheng** (Mayling Birney Scholar, Fudan) and **Chris Alden** (LSE)

Presenters:

Ana Cristina Alves (Mohammed VI Polytechnic University) and/or **Chris Alden** (LSE)

TBD

Elisa Gambino (University of Manchester)

Refashioning Patterns of Profiteering: The 'Infrastructure Turn' in Kenya's Political Economy

Miriam Driessen (Oxford)

Brokers of sovereignty: Ethiopian judges, Chinese litigants, and contested claims of immunity

Yuezhou Yang (LSE-Fudan)

Expropriating land for rail: contested land governance and citizenship along China-led rail developments in Kenya

12:30-13:30

Senior Dining Room Lunch Break

13:30-16:00

Panel 2: Environment and Climate in the Global South

Discussant: **Kathryn Hochstetler** (LSE)

Presenters:

Michael Lerner (Department of Government, LSE), Assistant Professor

Expert preferences for carbon pricing in the developing world

Biraj Adhikari (Practical Action, Nepal), Post-doctoral fellow

Urgency with inclusion in global climate adaptation finance: why measurement matters

Ashrika Sharma (University of Edinburgh), PhD student

Public Participation for Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal: Gaps between Rhetoric and Practice

Tanvi Deshpande (LSE-Fudan), Post-doctoral fellow

Urban institutions and global climate action norms

16:00-17:00

Closing refreshment (TBD)

Presentation Abstracts

Ana Cristina Alves (Mohammed VI Polytechnic University) and/or **Chris Alden** (LSE)

TBD

Elisa Gambino (University of Manchester)

Refashioning Patterns of Profiteering: The 'Infrastructure Turn' in Kenya's Political Economy

Since the turn of the 21st century, the development agendas of many African nations have heavily relied on the implementation of a broad range of infrastructure projects. Infrastructure are expected to transform African economies and support the transition to industrialisation, but, due to their transformative potentialities, they have also come to represent sites for political and material accumulation. Infrastructure have effectively opened up new avenues and spaces for (elite) profiteering, which not only increasingly involve external actors, but are also underpinned by the politicisation of infrastructure through the promotion of globalised visions of modernity and development. This paper, inspired by the regulation approach, argues that the spatialisation of Kenya's development strategy has engendered a restructuring of extant modes of accumulation. Specifically, it underscores the shift from infrastructure development for access to farmable land and agricultural profit to infrastructure (and the territories where they are being/expected to be built) as sites for political and economic profiteering. The paper, based on extensive qualitative fieldwork research in Kenya, thus traces the lineages of accumulation processes centred around infrastructure projects crucial to the country's development agenda.

Miriam Driessen (Oxford)

Brokers of sovereignty: Ethiopian judges, Chinese litigants, and contested claims of immunity

Ethiopian sovereignty has long been challenged, if not compromised, by international intrusions.

European colonial ambitions, U.S. commercial interests, World Bank loans and structural adjustment

policies, and more recent manifestations of Western paternalism in the form of political sanctions have all contributed to a sense of loss of sovereignty among ordinary Ethiopians and political elites alike. The Chinese presence poses yet another challenge; one that has not gone uncontested, like past threats to Ethiopian sovereignty. This paper explores how sovereignty is disputed in the courtroom. Since their entry into the country in the 1990s, Chinese companies have been brought to court by Ethiopian laborers, suppliers, subcontractors, and even national banks and government organs, affecting all levels of jurisdiction, from district courts to the federal supreme court in Addis Ababa. Drawing on interviews, courtroom observations, and legal case analysis, I show how Ethiopian judges fend off claims of immunity raised by Chinese litigants and enact their jurisdiction. Reverberating beyond the court, their efforts at brokering sovereignty demonstrate the judiciary's assertiveness in recouping sovereign control ceded by the government or lost through foreign impositions.

Yuezhou Yang (LSE-Fudan)

Expropriating land for rail: contested land governance and citizenship along China-led rail developments in Kenya

China-led infrastructural projects are testing African states' authority and legitimacy in land governance and rapidly changing the social fabric of African countries. Kenya is experiencing a 're-enchantment with big infrastructure.' Yet the effects on Kenya's institutional development and state-society relations remain underexplored. This project takes Kenya's standard gauge railway as a case to systematically and comparatively investigate various spatial and discursive patterns that have emerged along the line around questions of land expropriations. I explore how the big infrastructure projects have put strain on property relations between the state and its citizens and become sites of negotiations among different aspirations and visions of the nation's development, and the inclusion and exclusion of different groups. This interdisciplinary study, bridging development studies, African land tenure and critical scholarship of

infrastructure, advances the theorization of the rapid transformation of African landscape and contributes to the contemporary debate on infrastructure and citizenship.

Biraj Adhikari (Practical Action)

Urgency with inclusion in global climate adaptation finance: why measurement matters.

Scholarship on climate change have underscored that adaptation policies happen in a context of varying resource constraints, institutional dynamics, power asymmetries, and policy priorities at differing scales. Knowledge production and accountability in measuring climate change adaptation is, however, underexplored in this domain, but one of critical importance, given the tension that currently exist between the urgency of climate action in the one hand, and the need for inclusion and accountability in the other. My research is part of a broader programme that examines the socio-political processes that shape adaptation metrics, and the role of international and national finance and policy in shaping this. Particularly, it focuses on how international norms and ideas around adaptation measurement travel to the global south, how they are reconfigured by national state and non-state actors, and how these measurements affect adaptation actions nationally. Basing my study in Nepal, I will conduct ethnography with government monitoring and evaluation units, as well as documentary analysis and key informant interviews. This research could help advance theoretical ideas within Science and Technology Studies on international knowledge production influences on the Global South, as well as encourage Nepal's government to critically reflect and improve upon their adaptation measurement frameworks.

Ashrika Sharma (University of Edinburgh)

Public Participation for Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal: Gaps between Rhetoric and Practice

This research investigates the participatory nature of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) initiatives in Nepal using Policy Arrangement Approach (PAA). Following the promulgation of a new constitution in 2015, Nepal transitioned to a federal republic. In line with the federal restructuring, Nepal adopted decentralized disaster governance, aiming to distribute authority and resources to local governments, and increase public participation in DRR decision-making processes. Despite the widespread use of participatory language, the study found limited changes in practices. Local governments rely on Non-Government Organization (NGOs) to mediate public participation. Participatory processes often begin after projects have been externally designed, primarily serving to legitimize pre-determined decisions. Decision-making remains top-down, influenced by unequal power dynamics. Additionally, DRR practitioners face challenges due to social norms, gendered roles, and elite-dominated structures. Overall, there is a gap between rhetoric and practice, hindering genuine public participation in DRR. The study also contextualises these gaps in the backdrop of Nepal's contested political and bureaucratic reform, its struggle for democracy and its nascent journey into decentralization; and highlights the need for re-envisioning participatory spaces that is tailored to the Nepali context.

Tanvi Deshpande (LSE Fudan)

Urban climate action plan: institutional response to climate change

Urban climate governance in the Global South, including India and Kenya, have been studied through a multilevel and network governance perspective. These frameworks capture the constellation of state and non-state actors involved; however, they undermine the ability of urban institutions (municipal governments) in furthering urban climate policies. This research project will focus on the urban climate policy responses (e.g. city level climate action plan/ climate resilient city action plan) adopted by cities in the Global South. In doing so, the project will study the role of urban institutions particularly municipal governments from secondary cities in shaping and furthering climate policy responses.

The state capacity framework will be used to understand how urban institutions engage with global climate action agendas, negotiate development priorities, and navigate domestic institutional structures.

This research will predominantly focus on Indian cities that have adopted climate action plans. Learnings from Indian cities will be used to conduct preliminary analysis in select Kenyan cities to understand the commonalities and differences across urban climate responses of the Global South. The study will employ qualitative methods (interviews) to conduct in-depth case study and comparative analysis of climate policymaking & negotiating approaches in Indian and Kenyan cities. Findings of this study will contribute (theoretical, methodological, and empirical) to scholarship on climate governance and political science. Additionally, the study has policy implications that can guide Global South cities to pursue climate action.