



Department of  
**Gender Studies**

*Methodologies for Imagining an Alternative  
Politics of (Human) Rights*

Call for Papers

12 June 2023

LSE Department of Gender Studies

Keynote lecture by  
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All around the world we are witnessing rights mobilisations for a more just and egalitarian world and ecology. From the feminist revolutions in Rojava and Iran, the anti-colonial struggle in Palestine, to feminist and indigenous movements in Argentina, India, Brazil, and Colombia, to name but a few, people across the world are engaged in struggles for rights, justice, and the future of life on this planet. These mobilisations, whether they use the language of human rights or not, are challenging not only the mainstream epistemologies that underwrite the global human rights discourse, but also expand the repertoire of claim-making. In this critical conjuncture, shaped by climate breakdown, deepening inequalities, as well as renewed forms of neo-colonialism, existing authoritarianisms, and insurgent fascisms, such alternative modalities of rights and the politics of claim-making are a source of inspiration and hope. As such, they are in need of careful examination and attention.

This workshop will explore the possibility of alternative ontologies and epistemologies to (human) rights. It asks **how we can best study** rights

cultures—addressing the *methodological, epistemological, ethical, and conceptual* approaches to marginal and excluded voices and practices of rights-making and claiming. In doing so, it seeks to both draw attention to alternative vocabularies of vernacular human rights and emancipatory politics and to reflect upon how we as scholars and activists can develop new practices of knowledge production about these vocabularies and struggles for social justice. At stake is nothing short of a radical and more equal politics of ‘speaking and listening’ (Dhawan 2013).

Elevating counter-hegemonic projects and ‘utopian realities’, as well as feminist and indigenous voices (Tamale 2020; Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006; Said 1983), this workshop seeks to highlight the different histories and struggles of people from the ‘Global South’ in order to imagine a different future (Madhok 2021; Kapur 2018; Khoja-Moolji 2017). Confronting the United Nations’ hegemony on human rights (Santos 2013), we inquire into how we can direct our studies toward rights-making practices that are premised upon gendered ‘social-relational ontologies’ (Escobar 2020) that consider ‘interconnectedness’ and ‘differences of being’ (Tamale 2020). Such a task demands of us, that we pluralise our accounts of being human (Wynter 2003), and do so in terms that attend to the centrality of gender in imagining alternative ways of being. Epistemologies from a ‘Southern’ (Connell 2007), non-liberal (Kapur 2018), and ‘provincialised’ (Chakrabarty 2007) standpoint, challenge this marginalisation caused by the ‘coloniality of power’ (Quijano 2007)—as found within dominant paradigms of international human rights theory and practice.

The significance of this collective task is urgent in order to enable global epistemic justice, and it requires us to track, document, and demonstrate the trajectories of different rights cultures and their alternative vocabularies, institutions, and visions of rights, freedom, and justice. Bringing the materially inhabited ‘social life’ of rights (Abu-Lughod 2010) into focus, this workshop seeks to make sense of how rights are articulated and claimed, what such rights are, as well as how they are justified and on what authority. The workshop, therefore, aims to not only capture the here-and-now of rights politics—but also respond to it in methodological, ethical, theoretical, and conceptual ways. As the experience of rights, or their absence, is always intersectional and traffics between the global and local forms of rights, we seek to understand how to decolonise and

decentre our worldviews of rights and justice through intersectional approaches.

We welcome papers that speak to *how* we can study rights in a multi-directional manner, taking into account both *the politics of location* and the urgent need to work with and through *methodologies that are non-extractivist, intersectionally gendered*, and which take seriously the geopolitics of knowledge production that often underpins both the practices of and knowledge production about rights dispensation in ‘most of the world’ (Chatterjee 2004).

**Potential themes/topics:**

- Alternative concepts of rights, decolonial world-making and global epistemic justice.
- Methodologies for examining human and non-human rights making/claiming, including ecological rights struggles.
- Feminist reworking of rights.
- Alternative approaches to LGBTQI+ rights.
- Rights beyond the nation-state and citizenship.
- Statelessness and rights struggles.
- How to move beyond methodological nationalism.
- Rights and colonial occupation.
- Studying rights as ethics and aesthetics.
- The politics of (re)-presentation and rights.
- Strategies for non-extractivist knowledge production on rights.
- Rights and the politics of abolition.
- Rights, languages, and heritages.
- How to study transnational coalitions of rights.

Submissions are due on February 1st, 2023. We will aim to notify all applicants by February 28th. Please send an abstract of your planned contribution (max. 300 words) together with a short bio to [imaginingalternativerights@gmail.com](mailto:imaginingalternativerights@gmail.com). If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Organised by Dr Hasret Cetinkaya, Dr SM Rodriguez, Dr Sharmila Parmanand and Nour Almazidi (doctoral researcher).

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