The Politics of Ethnic Inequalities

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"The politics of group-based inequalities" – starting points:

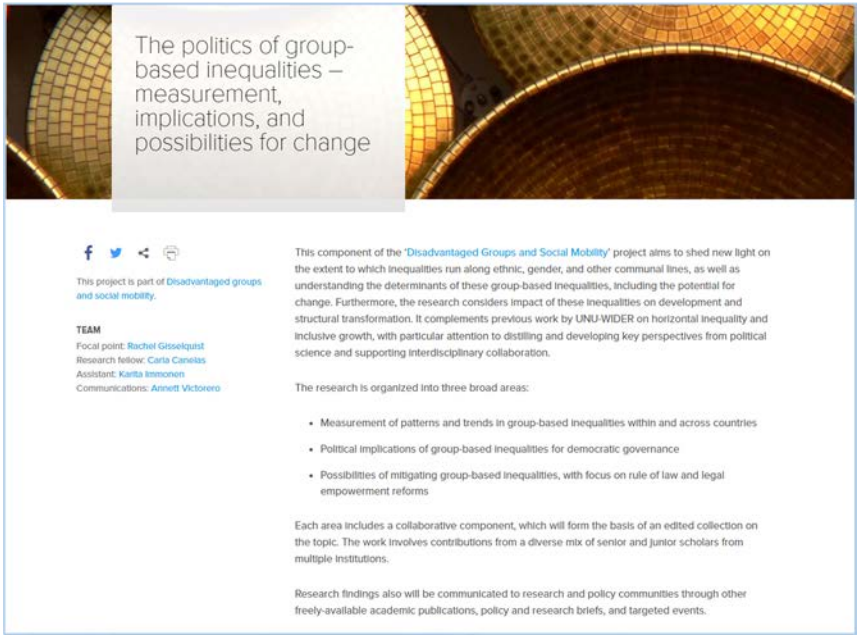
- Inequality matters – not just vertical but also horizontal – and there are especially big gaps in what we know about horizontal inequality.
- Inequalities between ethnic groups are linked to:
  - Lack of growth and the under-provision of public goods (Alesina, Michalopoulos, & Papaioannou, 2014; Baldwin & Huber, 2010)
  - Conflict (e.g., Brown, Stewart, & Langer, 2007; Cederman, Weidmann, & Gleditsch, 2011; Murshed & Gates, 2004; Stewart, 2002, 2008)
- Development policymakers have taken note (Brinkman, Attree, & Hezir, 2013; UN-OHCHR, 2015). E.g., SDGs.

Questions

- How exactly do ethnic inequalities vary across countries, over time, and within countries? What are the patterns and trends?
- What are the political implications of ethnic inequalities – particularly in "routine" forms of politics? Do ethnic inequalities matter more than - or differently to - other aspects of ethnic difference/division? What exactly are the mechanisms?
- How do ethnic inequalities change? What exactly are the mechanisms? How can policymakers influence/hasten/support change?
- (What are the implications here of related work in political science?
    - Cross-cutting versus reinforcing cleavage structures (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Lijphart, 1979; Selway, 2011)
    - Ranked and unranked ethnic systems (Horowitz, 1985; Gisselquist, 2013)
    - Democracy in pluralist societies
    - Rule of law reform, property rights, labor rights)

1. Measurement:
   - Patterns & trends within and across countries
2. Political Implications:
   - "Ethnic Inequality & Its Consequences" (special issue of *Comparative Political Studies*)
3. Change:
   - "Group-based Inequality and Legal Empowerment" (special issue of *Journal of Development Studies*)
   - Affirmative action around the world
4. Forced migrants & inequality

- 30+ original studies
- Working papers, journal articles, edited collections



1. The state excludes and oppresses ethnic groups in multiple ways.

1. Current de jure exclusion and oppression:

Intentional exclusion/oppression on an explicitly ethnic basis – e.g., denial of citizenship to Rohingya

Intentional exclusion/oppression on a basis coinciding with ethnicity – e.g., requirement to be fluent in an official language

2. Long-term effects of historical de jure exclusion and oppression:

Intentional exclusion/oppression on an explicitly ethnic basis – e.g., colonial civil registries did not register the indigenous (see e.g., W. Hunter on identity documents)

Intentional exclusion/oppression on the basis of something coinciding with ethnicity

3. De facto exclusion and oppression:

State capacity to implement the law – e.g., lack of reach into rural (more indigenous) areas

Discrimination by individual state officials

4. Hegemony of one group embodied in the system:

E.g., D. Brinks on justice systems in Latin America

2. There is a lived reality of ethnic exclusion. It's still important to problematize "the ethnic group."

Ethnic groups and identities are not necessarily obvious, fixed, or primary. Individuals may belong to multiple ethnic groups. Groups may intersect or be "nested" (e.g., multiple indigenous language groups).

Within-group inequality may be significant.

Members of ethnic groups may have diverse interests and conflicting claims.

Who has legitimacy to speak for the group?

- E.g., C. Jung on wind farm development in Oaxaca

Ethnic identity isn't necessarily primary – and may yet be enforced by ethnically-targeted policies

- E.g., C. Boone on registration of "homelands" in Cote d'Ivoire

3. The nature of ethnic divisions and inequalities varies across contexts. Some divisions may be harder to address.

Intensity of divisions, histories of conflict, identity salience

Crosscuttingness versus reinforcing cleavages

Spatial distribution: in territorially-distinct regions or intermixed?

Anteriority: are all groups "native" or is immigration a key dividing line?

How large is the disadvantaged group(s)? Is it a majority?

	Majority	Minority
Advantaged	X	(Bolivia, South Africa)
Disadvantaged	(Bolivia, South Africa)	X

Implications

1. Assessment of how the state excludes and oppresses ethnic groups in particular contexts should be taken into account in the design of policies to promote inclusion.

2. In designing, implementing, and assessing policies, it's worth problematizing "the group." Which groups are relevant? Why these and not others? In terms of participation, who participates on the behalf of the group? How are they selected? Etc.

3. Variation in the "nature" of ethnic divisions may influence how to promote inclusion. Some divisions will be harder to address.

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