The Politics of Group-based Inequalities in the Global South

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Horizontal inequality between groups in society defined in "ethnic" or cultural terms (in contrast to vertical inequality between individuals, households)

SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries:

- 10.2: "By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status"

Politics is central to SDG 10 – especially in relation to horizontal inequality (HI):

1. HI has potentially big implications for peace, development, and governance.

2. Addressing HI is inherently political.

3. Data are political – posing challenges for SDG measurement and monitoring.

4. There are multiple policy options to addressing HI – and no one-size-fits-all solution. But do note some risks with group-targeted policies.
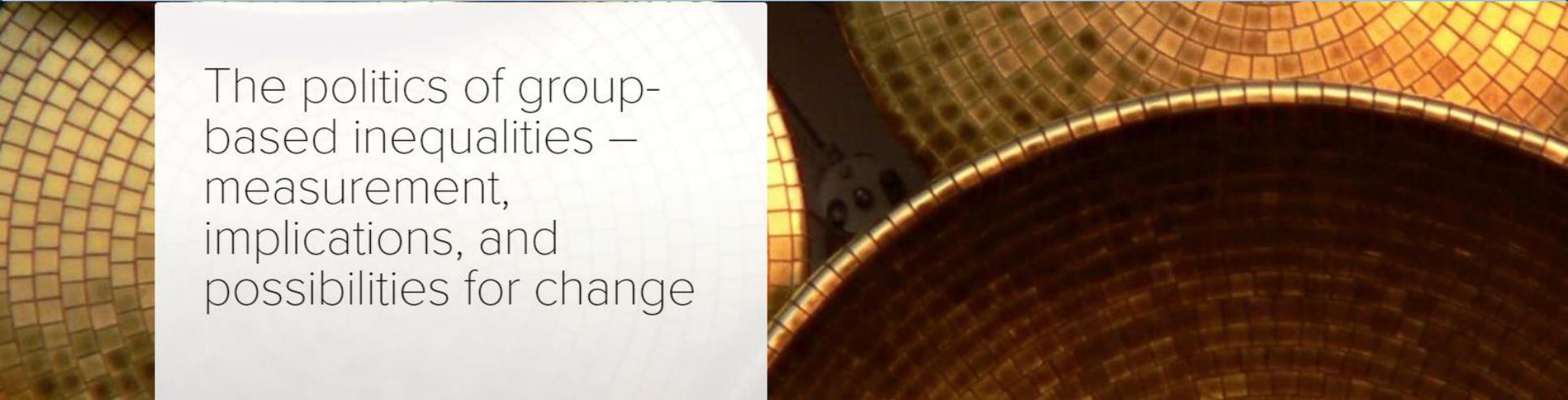
The politics of group-based inequalities — measurement, implications, and possibilities for change

This is part of the 'Disadvantaged groups and social mobility' project.

TEAM

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This component of the 'Disadvantaged Groups and Social Mobility' project aims to shed new light on the extent to which inequalities run along ethnic, gender, and other communal lines, as well as understanding the determinants of these group-based inequalities, including the potential for change. Furthermore, the research considers impact of these inequalities on development and structural transformation. It complements previous work by UNU-WIDER on horizontal inequality and inclusive growth, with particular attention to distilling and developing key perspectives from political science and supporting interdisciplinary collaboration.

The research is organized into four broad areas:

What does it mean to look at the politics of HI?

Politics is about "who gets what, when, how" (Lasswell 1936)

- Who are the actors? What do they want (power, money, resources...)? How is the distribution decided (war, elections, official decree, popular deliberation...)?

The project offers examples of how to "take politics into account" in development, along illustration of a key critique:

- There's not one approach to taking politics into account, but multiple approaches (pluralist, statist, structuralist, rational choice institutionalist...).

4 research areas & 4 interrelated sets of questions

- **Patterns and trends:** How does HI vary (across countries, over time, within countries)? What more can be learned from available survey and census data? What are prospects for better data?

- **Political implications:** What are the implications of HI? What are the mechanisms?

- **HI as an outcome:** How and why does HI vary and change? How can policymakers influence/hasten/support positive change?

- **Inequality and migration:** How does migration influence HI? Why are inequalities between migrants and host country populations deeper and more persistent in some contexts than others?

A mixed-method, multi-level research strategy

Concept formulation and theory-building studies:
- 4 that introduce & situate core concepts, chart new areas for research & policy
- 9 on political implications in routine politics - 3 thematic areas, 3 regions
- 5 setting out new directions for research on legal empowerment

Cross-country data and analysis:
- Stocktaking & quantitative analysis of available datasets on HI
- Data collection on affirmative action around the world (watch this space)

Case studies (quantitative and qualitative):
- 15 selected countries – on HI patterns/trends, using survey & census data
- 8 comparative "group-country" studies -- 2 migrant groups, 4 host countries

42 original studies, 4 edited collections, 60 collaborating scholars:

Patterns and trends: Belinda Archibong, Bethlehem A. Argaw, Biniam Bedasso, Carla Canelas, Nishant Chadha, Thi Thu Hoai Dang, Sanaz Fesharaki, Iván Gachet, Diego Grijalva, Isaac Kanyama, Patricia Justino, Pedro Leivas, Emmanuel Maliti, Mahdi Majbouri, Hadia Majid, Bruno Martorano, Omar McDoom, Muhammad Rashid Memon, Christophe Muller, Bharti Nandwani, Nonso Obikili, Paul Ponce, Celia Reyes, Anderson Moreira Aristides dos Santos

Political implications: Natalia Bueno, Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, Thad Dunning, Josh Gelber, Clark Gibson, Courtney Jung, Adrienne LeBas, Beatriz Magaloni, John Porten, Joel Selway, Prerna Singh, Dean Spears, Pavithra Suryanarayan, Ashutosh Varshney

HI as an outcome: Rina Agarwala, Catherine Boone, Daniel Brinks, Carla Canelas, Wendy Hunter, Liliana Narvaez Rodriguez, Scott Taylor, Lars Waldorf

Inequality and migration: Qais Alemi, Carl Bankston, Phi Su, Tamsin Barber, Franck Bosch, Catherine Gladwell, Feng Hou, Ravi Pendakur, Carl Stempel, Min Zhou

1) HI has potentially big implications for peace, development & good governance

HI matters not only for normative reasons (fairness, equality, justice), but also because of its potentially negative impact on other outcomes that we care about:

- Peace & conflict: Brown, Stewart & Langer 2007; Cederman, Weidmann & Gleditsch 2011; Stewart 2008; Nygård et al. 2017; Justino 2017

   "Some of the greatest risks of violence today stem from the mobilization of perceptions of exclusion and injustice, rooted in inequalities across groups…" (World Bank & UN 2018)

- Growth & development: Alesina, Michalopoulos & Papaioannou 2014

Our work considers "routine" politics as well:

- Elections: Conroy-Krutz 2016; Suryanarayan 2018; Bueno & Dunning 2017

- Service provision: Singh & Spears 2017; also Baldwin & Huber 2010

- Protest & contentious politics: Gubler, Selway & Varshney 2016; Lebas 2017; Jung 2017

The implications of HI may be as bad as – even worse than – vertical inequality and ethnic division alone (Baldwin & Huber 2010; Østby 2013).
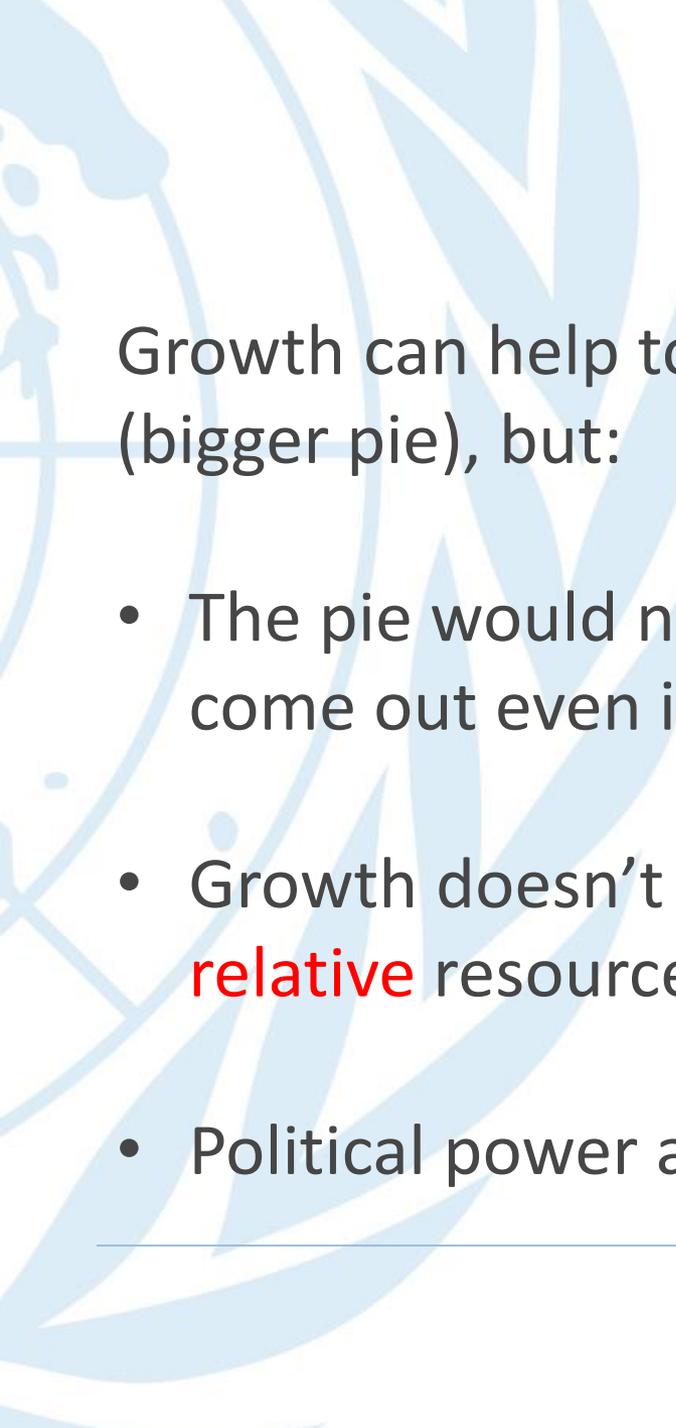
2) Addressing HI is political.

Greater equality might be optimal for society as a whole, but not for all groups and individuals. "Winners" (C, D) under the current distribution have clear interests in <u>not</u> redistributing:
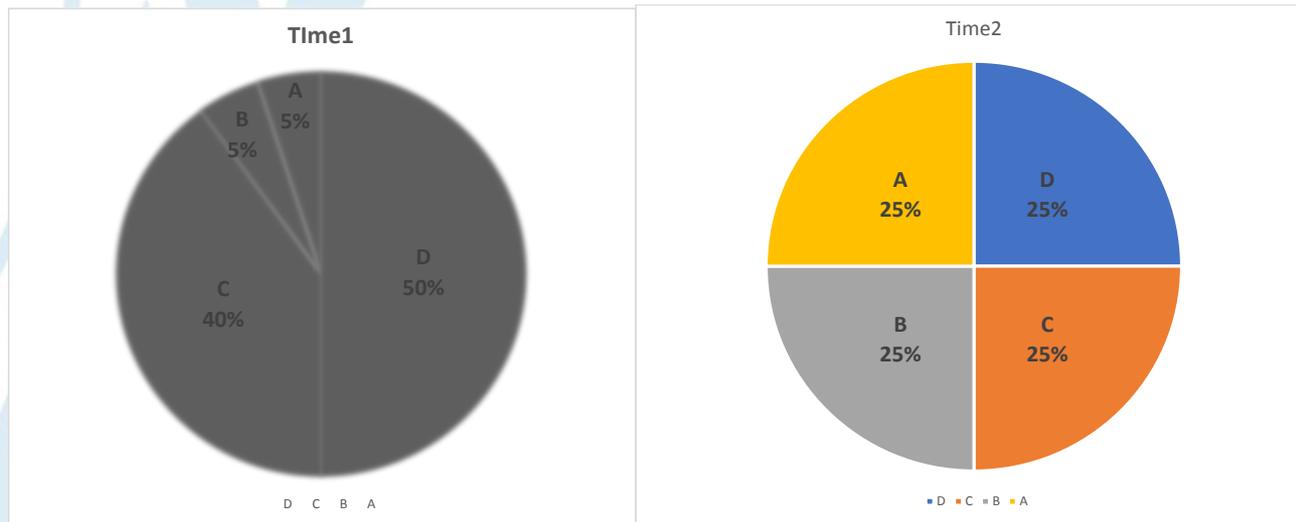
How can the political will for reform (including C & D) be built and sustained?

Growth can help to ease distributional challenges (bigger pie), but:

- The pie would need to be a lot bigger for C & D to come out even in absolute terms

- Growth doesn't help much if groups care more about relative resources

- Political power and status tend to be relative

3) Data on HI are political – posing extra challenges for SDG measurement and monitoring

Despite progress, we lack the data necessary to assess and monitor the "social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of … race, ethnicity, origin, religion" (SDG 10).

- Consider Tanzania (Maliti 2018)…

Data gaps stem from a variety of challenges:

- Some are common across multiple thematic areas (cost, technical skill, administrative capacity)

- Others are more acute for "ethnic" data (methodological, conceptual, and political challenges).

Political challenges to collecting and making public ethnic data

There's money and power at stake – use in the allocation of public resources and representation (e.g. legislative seats).

Statistics influence perceptions of power and political maneuvering among groups. They are a potentially powerful tool in documenting grievances and advancing political claims.
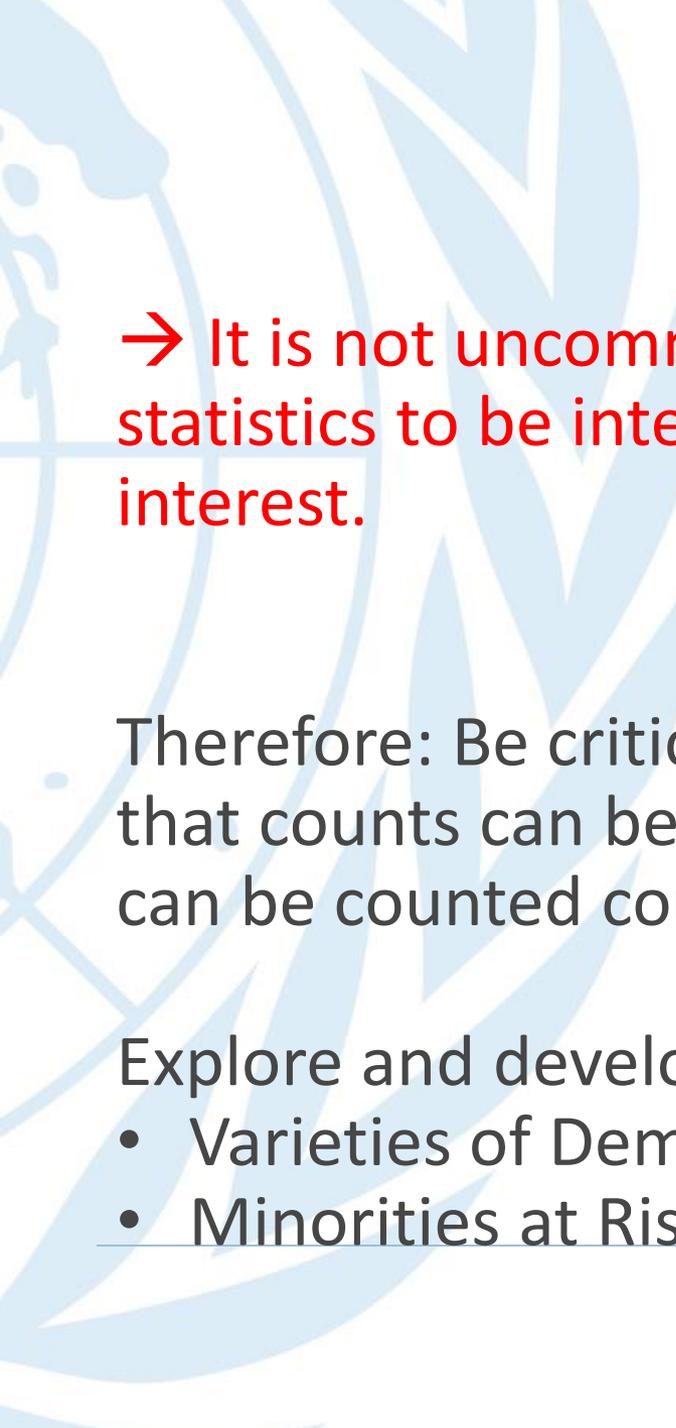
They can be used to identify and discriminate against groups.
- Ú.S. Census and Japanese-American internment (Minkel 2007)
- Concerns may impact responses

Simply compiling such data may be nationally divisive (Lieberman and Singh 2016)
- "There is no ethnicity here. We are all Rwandan."

→ It is not uncommon for gaps in ethnic and HI statistics to be intentional. This can be in the public interest.

Therefore: Be critical of the numbers -- "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts."

Explore and develop other types of databases
- Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)
- Minorities at Risk (MAR, A-MAR)

4) Addressing HI: options and considerations

Discussion tends to focus on a narrow range of policy options – e.g. affirmative action, targeted transfers, group rights – but a broader perspective is in order.

At the country level, our policy "tool-box" includes policies/ reforms/initiatives designed to:
- redistribute economic resources
- equalize socioeconomic status, opportunities, mobility
- make government and institutional structures more responsive to, and inclusive of, marginalized populations – to improve their real and effective participation and representation

Multiple levels – from grassroots initiatives to reform of national state institutions

"Bottom up" legal empowerment (LE) initiatives like community paralegals programs (e.g. Timap for Justice) that help marginalized populations to use and understand the law to protect and advance their rights

Constitutional reform – e.g. in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru, to recognize the multiethnic, multicultural nature of their societies

Electoral system reforms that create new incentives for political representation of minority groups

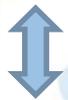Electoral quotas and reservations for marginalized populations

From group-targeted to more universally framed

Electoral reservations or quotas for marginalized groups

Collective land rights

Affirmative action – e.g. in U.S., Black Economic Empowerment in South Africa, New Economic Policy in Malaysia

⬍

Social assistance programs providing benefits to individuals/ households that meet certain criteria in terms of need

Addressing gaps in universal programs to which all citizens are entitled as a right

Group-targeted policies often come first to mind – be careful!

Can political will can be built and sustained?

Concerns about fairness, heightened ethnic tensions, backlash

Tensions between group rights and individual rights, lack of consistency with liberal values

The risk of freezing distributional conflict along these lines

- Bosnia's consociational settlement (Stroschein 2014)
- Cote d'Ivoire's 1998 land law (Boone 2019)

Policy options: is gender like ethnicity? (Htun 2004)

There's an empirical pattern in institutional remedies to address the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities:
- women → quotas in political parties
- ethnic minorities → reserved seats in legislatures

Given that women crosscut political cleavages, and ethnic groups tend to have boundaries that coincide with political cleavages, this is what you would expect:
- women's issues can be addressed within existing parties
- ethnic minority issues require new parties

To recap

- Inequality – especially HI – is political in implications and influences. This makes it difficult to measure and monitor, and to address.

- That said, our policy "tool-box" for addressing HI in socioeconomic and political terms is quite big and diverse. Be aware of the risks of group-targeted policies.

- More research is needed to map and assess options across different types of HI and contexts (watch this space!)

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