

CHANDRA SHEKHAR
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CURRENT POSITION

University of Oklahoma (OU)

Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability

Norman, OK

Aug. 2024-present

PREVIOUS APPOINTMENT

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Social Policy

London, UK

Oct. 2022-August 2024

- Work with MIT's Resilient Communities Lab and Louisiana's Isle de Jean Charles (IDJC) Indigenous community to examine environmental impacts using non-Western ideals of justice and sovereignty
- Examine moral dilemmas of street officials in implementing governments' welfare agendas in countries with weak institutional environment and systematic corruption

Harvard University

Affiliate, Weatherhead Center Research Cluster on Comparative Inequality & Inclusion

Cambridge, MA

2023-24

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- Conduct fieldwork with Indigenous groups in Kenya and India to comparatively understand their claims of recognition
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EDUCATION

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)¹

PhD in Public Policy and Environmental Philosophy

Cambridge, MA

September 2022

- General Examination Fields: Public Policy and Political Economy; Corruption, Environment, and Institutional Change
- Dissertation: *State, Street and Public Goods: A Theory of Misgovernance*
- Advisors: Janelle Knox-Hayes, Lawrence E. Susskind, Sally Haslanger, Chappell Lawson, Bish Sanyal, Asya Magazinnik

Georgia Institute of Technology

MS, concentration in climate change and public policy

Graduate Certification in Public Policy

Atlanta, GA

2010

2010

Indian Institute of Science (IISc)

MS (Engineering), concentration in climate change and computational methods

Bangalore, India

2007

G.B. Pant University

BTech in Mechanical Engineering

Uttaranchal, India

2002

SELECTED GRANTS AND HONORS

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- Member of the MIT team along with the Clean Energy State Alliance (CESA), U. of Michigan, Energy Trust of Oregon, Partnership for Southern Equity, Vote Solar, and the U. of Chicago to receive U.S. Department of Energy funding, for the project "Effective Knowledge Dissemination for LMI Solar: The Roles of CBOs and State Governments." 2021-24
 - MIT Center for International Studies Fellowship 2022
 - MIT Martin Sustainability Fellowship 2021-22
 - MIT's Schwarzman College of Computing's Social and Ethical Responsibilities of Computing Scholar. 2021-22
 - American Planning Association Foundation Scholarship 2020-21
 - MIT-wide Graduate Student Council Teaching Award 2020
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¹ My home department at MIT was Urban Studies and Planning. However, I pursued an interdisciplinary degree in Public Policy and Environmental Philosophy, which involved additional training in core courses in Philosophy, Political Science, and Social Theory, including extra areas in my General Exams, as required by the Registrar's Office.

- MIT-India Fellowship for conducting fieldwork in India 2017-20
- Nadine Rodwin Fellowship for conducting fieldwork in India 2017
- MIT Presidential Fellowship 2016-17

PUBLICATIONS in process

- The Equitable Resilience Framework: An Environmental Justice Strategy for Community-led Resilience Planning. *Revise and resubmit. World Development Perspectives.* (With Janelle Knox-Hayes, Jungwoo Chun, Daniela Coray, and Rose Winer-Chan)
- Identifying the demands of justice in Indigenous groups facing environmental risks: The case of a climate change-induced forced migration of a Native American community in Louisiana. *Under preparation.* (With Janelle Knox-Hayes)

Abstract

What are the demands of justice when socially vulnerable groups such as Indigenous communities suffer serious environmental harms? This paper examines environmental justice in the climate change-induced forced migration of a Native American community of southeastern Louisiana, the first climate refugees in the United States. This paper uses archival analysis, the lived experiences of the community members (including its Chief), and in-depth interviews of government stakeholders involved in the planning process led by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to safely relocate the Native members. The paper contends that rather than merely focusing on the fair distribution of environmental risks and benefits, environmental justice should also be process-sensitive; meaningfully involve the risk-facing community; and respect its values, cultures, histories, traditions, and sovereignty concerns. We argue that as the world confronts the reality of anthropogenic climate change, we must move beyond distributional concerns to focus more on “Indigeneity” and on actual disruptions faced by these peoples to design more equitable resilience policies.

- The Logic of Corruption in Government Bureaucracies. (Book project based on my dissertation). *Under contract with Cambridge University Press.* (Scheduled for publication in May 2025).

Abstract

Using extensive fieldwork in three of India’s major state bureaucracies and building on innovative strategies to measure corruption, this study explains why corruption exists and persists in government bureaucracies. I argue that corruption in government bureaucracies could be better conceptualized as grand and petty corruption and that the former causes the latter. I show that these two kinds of corruption are organized around bureaucratic transfers. The existence and stability of the linkages between grand and petty corruption explain why corruption exists and persists and why anti-corruption reforms meet with limited success in the developing world. I provide a critique of the agency theory and discuss why the theory is not suitable to capture the dynamics of corruption in large government bureaucracies. I suggest that the dynamics of corruption in government bureaucracies could be better understood as occurring through social networks of rational actors working to maximize their preferences under structural incentives and organizational constraints. These arguments explain why top-down approaches to addressing corruption are unsuccessful. Finally, I provide a set of recommendations to address corruption based on my findings.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

- A Social Choice-based Approach to Global Justice

Abstract

There are two major challenges in conceptualizing global justice. First, most theories of justice are based on some form of a social contract, which limits their applicability outside the sovereign boundaries of a state. These social contract-based theories need a Leviathan to enforce required rules, and we do not have a world government to play such a role. A difficulty that has engaged some authors is the contrast between the standard treatments of social choice for a sovereign nation (Arrow’s pioneering work does not depart from that basic model) and the essential demand for a multi-nation perspective for a reasonable treatment of global justice. Second, understanding the demands of liberty in the global context poses challenges. This paper discusses these two issues to suggest a possible approach to global justice.

- A Phenomenological Examination of Discrimination Against Women. (With Sally Haslanger)

Abstract

This essay is concerned with the conception of “power,” especially its connection with women’s conformity to socially constructed disadvantageous oppressive practices. I critically evaluate the liberal, Marxist, and Foucauldian accounts of power and supplement them with a phenomenological investigation of the lived experience of ten women in New Delhi, India. Power can be broadly exercised by an oppressor in three ways. One is the sovereign use of power as a brute force to unleash violence aimed at crushing the body; human civilization is replete with such examples. The second is power as a controlling force to dominate women through social and political institutions in liberalism and class domination in Marxism. The third is a more subtle and nuanced Foucauldian exercise of power as an invisible, diffused, and naturalizing force to achieve voluntary submission aimed at not crushing women’s bodies but colonizing their souls and “disciplining” them to normalize discrimination. What is distinct about the Foucauldian conceptualization of power from the traditional liberalism and Marxism accounts underpinned by a juridico-discursive notion of power? Using women’s lived experiences about how power disciplines them to conform to sex-based discrimination, my aim is to tease out that notion of power that is distinctive about Foucauldian power and cannot be captured by historical accounts.

- Impossibility of Metaphysical Realism. (With Vann McGee)

Abstract

Hilary Putnam questioned the realists’ claim that we could know things *in themselves* independent of our minds using a correspondence relationship (*a satisfaction relation*) between the terms of our language and the mind-independent reality. Metaphysical realists claim that there is a mind-independent reality, and that scientific inquiry aims, with some degree of success, to capture that. Putnam, on the contrary, totally *denies* that there is such a thing as mind-independent reality. His questioning of “metaphysical realism” for its *inherent coherence* stirred intense debates among logicians and philosophers of language who stand ever divided. A great confusion in the debate also arises from the fact that Putnam’s own position on realism has changed quite dramatically over the years. In this paper, I revisit Putnam’s anti-realist arguments using quantum indeterminacy as a failure of metaphysical realism, which I claim provides a *reasonable* support to Putnam’s claims.

- A Case of Vector Utility

Abstract

I discuss the history and plausibility of taking a vector view of utility. I build on the remarks on utility presented by Plato, Aristotle, Adam Smith and even Francis Hutcheson, along with the more familiar arguments presented by John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham. One thesis, among others, that seems to strongly emerge from these investigations is the “ordinariness” of thinking of utility in vector terms, with distinct components. People who had interesting observations to make about utility typically began with the variety of forms in which pleasure and pain come. However, many of them followed that by talking about the advantages of a singular view (or a scalar view, as I call it) of utility for some purposes. Even Bentham could not escape a vector-beginning when he started with “the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure.” Ultimately, the issue that looms large is not the plausibility of a vector view, which is straightforward. But what is important is the case for—and against—aggregation into an alleged single magnitude for many purposes of analyses and judgment (including the assessment of “the well-being of people”). I argue that despite the usefulness of an aggregated representation, if the scalar view were to eclipse the foundational vector characteristics, something of real importance would be lost. The loss would be not just from a descriptive point of view but also for further analytical and practical use. It emerges that some issues of justice cannot be handled by aggregating the interests of all. I also discuss the possibility of “multiple moralities,” which could be important in decision theory. This thinking is in part an outgrowth of conversation with Amartya Sen and has benefitted from his guidance.

PUBLICATIONS

REFEREED ARTICLES

- Knox-Hayes, **Chandra**, S. J., Chun, J., Gowda, S., Karmakar, I., and Winer, R. (2023). The Geographies, Typologies, and Trends of Community Based Organizations for Solar Energy in the United States, *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol. 106, 103311, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2023.103311>
- Knox-Hayes, J., **Chandra**, S., & Chun, Jungwoo. (2020). The role of values in shaping sustainable development perspectives and outcomes: A case study of Iceland. *Sustainable Development*, 29(2): 363-377.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Cambridge, MA

- *Theory and Practice of Environmental Policy and Planning*, Professor Larry Susskind (Fall 2021)

- *Science, Technology and Public Policy*, Professors Noelle Selin and Ken Oye (Spring 2021, Spring 2020)
- *Quantitative Reasoning and Statistical Methods for Planning*, Professor Albert Saiz (Fall 2019)
- *Microeconomics, Planning Economics*, Professor Devin Michelle Bunten (Spring 2019, Fall 2017)
- *Making Public Policy*, Professor Andrea Campbell (Fall 2018)

INVITED TALKS

- Ahmedabad University, April 2023
- London School of Economics and Political Science, November 2022
- Syracuse University, August 2022
- Harvard University, March 2022
- Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, India, March 2021

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

National Planning Commission of India

New Delhi, India

Young Professional (Energy, Transport, Infrastructure and Governance)

2010-2014

- Co-authored policy chapters on energy, transport, infrastructure and governance for India's Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2012-17); analyzed income, growth, and income inequalities among India's states.
- Examined institutional conditions to explain the inter-state variations in economic growth and poverty alleviation in India during the last decade of the twentieth century. Using Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, I also investigated why some states could achieve higher levels of human development even if significantly lagging in terms of economic growth.

REFERENCES

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