Chatterjee / Jodhka / Lavinas

Wealth Inequality and Elites in the Global South

Perspectives from Brazil, India, and South Africa

Wealth inequality is both extreme and persistent across much of the world, yet it remains poorly understood relative to income inequality and poverty alleviation. Bringing together original research on Brazil, India, and South Africa, this volume examines the processes through which elite groups accumulate and maintain disproportionate control over assets - through historically embedded social hierarchies, institutional arrangements, and political–economic processes. These middle-income, semi-industrialised societies combine extreme wealth with persistent poverty, making them revealing sites for analysing how inequality is actively produced, not merely inherited. Across nine chapters, the book traces the historical formation of wealth shaped by colonial legacies, racial and caste hierarchies, land regimes, and state formation, before analysing contemporary processes of elite continuities and reproduction. These include financialisation, asset ownership, legal and regulatory frameworks, urban development, and corporate control. Rather than treating elites as a numerical category (the “top 1%”), the contributors analyse elites as historically constituted and institutionally embedded actors whose wealth and power are produced within existing accumulation regimes, and who in turn act to stabilise, adapt, and extend those regimes over time. The volume develops a relational, comparative political economy of wealth inequality, showing that processes illuminated in the Global South also deepen analysis of wealth concentration globally. It will interest scholars and advanced students in development studies, political economy, sociology, economics, law, and global studies.

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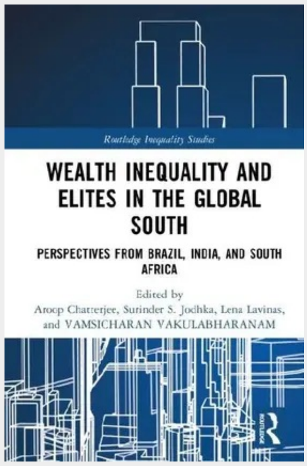

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