

Numbers as Political Allies

Numbers as Political Allies analyses censuses of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) as public goods, collective self-portraits and symbols of modernity and enriches the debates on the political economy of statistics. Using field interviews, archival resources and secondary data, the book tracks how censuses relate to their administrative, legal and political-economic contexts and captures their entire life cycle: from the political and administrative manoeuvring at the preparatory stage to the partisan use of data in policymaking and public debates.

The book argues that J&K's data deficit is shaped by, and shapes, ethno-regional, communal and scalar contests across different levels of governance, but the deteriorating quality of metadata limits our ability to evaluate the quality of census data. Further, comparing the experience of J&K with that of other states in India's ethno-geographic periphery, the book argues against resorting to legalistic and technocratic solutions to address the issue of data deficit and suggests possible measures to enhance public trust in the census.

Vikas Kumar is Associate Professor of Economics at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. He is the co-author of *Numbers in India's Periphery: The Political Economy of Government Statistics* (2020) and the author of *Waiting for a Christmas Gift: Essays on Politics, Elections and Media in Nagaland* (2023). He curated the exhibition *Counting and Controlling Population: Postal Services, Census and Family Planning in Post-Colonial India, 1951–2011* at the Bangalore International Centre (January 2023).

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The Census in Jammu and Kashmir

Vikas Kumar



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