

# Tanu Kumar

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## Summary

I study governance, social protection, urbanization, and digital technology in India and elsewhere in the global south. I also explore patterns of local politics in the United States that are instructive for developing contexts. I have been named a Susan Clarke Young Scholar by the American Political Science Association's Urban and Local Politics Section for this work.

Methodologically, I rely on field studies, primary data collection, qualitative methods, RCTs, and creative strategies for causal inference. I have been responsible for the full range of activities across each project below, including conceptualization, fundraising, exploratory fieldwork, engaging local partners, survey design, survey programming, enumerator training, data collection, analysis, and reporting. I have collaborated with scholars at universities across the globe, development organizations, NGOs, local social enterprises, and government agencies. I also train and mentor graduate students.

## Education

Ph.D. in Political Science, University of California, Berkeley (2020)

M.A. in Political Science, University of California, Berkeley (2014)

B.A. in Government and Economics, Bowdoin College (2012)

## Relevant focus areas and experience

### Governance and service delivery

*-Program implementation and responsiveness in rural India, 2022-Present:* Conducted qualitative and quantitative in-person surveys (including experimental components) of 1,293 block-level bureaucrats in rural Jharkhand to learn about their motivations, constraints, and incentives in implementing government programs. Collaboration with a local firm, the Ministry of Rural Development, and a community media NGO. Funded by MIT and the University of Virginia.

*-Local government responsiveness in urban India, 2020-Present:* Webscraped over 100,000 digitally placed citizen complaints and responses in Mumbai and used natural language processing and machine learning (LASSO and random forests) to classify them into general topic areas. Merged with census and local-level electoral data to identify correlates of responsiveness, and further conducted qualitative interviews with government officials to explain patterns.

*-Training local politicians in Sri Lanka, 2021:* Consulted for the International Republican Institute to evaluate politician training programs (ex-post qualitative interviews and matched survey of participants and non-participants) in Sri Lanka to inform the design of future programs.

*-PhD-level class on policy implementation at Claremont Graduate University, 2023:* Developed and taught a seminar exploring the causes of variation in policy implementation in decentralized contexts. Topics included politics, institutions, bureaucracy, corruption, monitoring, technology, and community-level collective action.

### Social protection and poverty alleviation

*-Government-subsidized homeownership in India, 2016-Present:* Dissertation work on the economic, political, and social effects of subsidized homeownership for the poor across India. Included follow-up survey of winners and nonwinners of a lottery program in Mumbai, an 18-year matched panel study of a nationwide rural housing construction program, and a medium-N pair-matched qualitative study of a slum-upgrading program in Mumbai. Results shared, upon request, with the central government (including India's Chief Economic Advisor), the implementing agency, and local newspapers. Funded by J-PAL and the Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics (Harvard and the University of Chicago).

*-PhD-level class on household-level poverty alleviation at Claremont Graduate University, 2023-Present:* Developed and taught a seminar exploring obstacles to wealth accumulation among the poor and policies to lower these barriers. Topics include consumption smoothing, credit, labor, health, education, psychology, ethnic and social divisions, infrastructure, political institutions, corruption, and conflict.

### Urban development and inequality

*-Predictors of water service quality in Bangalore, 2014-2018:* Conducted original survey on water service quality (frequency, predictability, pressure) along with original data on water pipe infrastructure and merged with demographic and political data to identify political and social predictors of service quality. Funded by USAID.

*-Unauthorized private colonies in Jaipur, India, 2021-Present:* Conducted qualitative surveys of officials in the Jaipur Development Authority and local neighborhood leadership to understand the implications of living in privately-developed middle-class neighborhoods not zoned for inclusion in the city and community organization to demand zoning law changes. Larger survey with officials and neighborhood residents slated for Summer 2024. Funded by the University of Gothenburg.

*-Mid-tier and small cities in the Global South 2021-2022:* Conducted a systematic review across 20 years and 10 journals across disciplines to demonstrate that mid-tier and small cities are underrepresented in research on urban governance. Developed four sets of hypotheses on how governance in small cities might differ from that in metropolitan areas.

*-Smart-city technology adoption in California, 2020-Present:* Conducted webscraping, qualitative interviews, and a survey of municipal-level officials to understand determinants of smart city technology adoption across California's municipalities. Paper won the Paul Sabatier Award for the best paper on science, technology, and education presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting in 2022.

*-District elections and homelessness in California, 2022-Present:* Conducted original data collection across California cities to measure the effects of switching from at-large to district elections on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

*-Conference on urban politics in the Global South, 2022-Present:* Co-organized annual conference to bring together social scientists researching urban politics in low- and middle-income countries in different regions. Solicited, selected, and discussed conference papers, invited panel of policymakers for the keynote session.

## Digital technology and development

*-Smartphones and women's livelihoods in Malawi, 2020-Present:* Conducted randomized control trial with 2,000 participants measuring the effects of smartphone ownership on women's economic, social, and political behavior. Effects benchmarked to both a pure control arm and a placebo group receiving the cash equivalent. Funded by the Gates Foundation and BRAC.

*-The general equilibrium effects of smartphones in Uganda, 2021-2022:* Designed multi-level cluster-randomized saturation trial to measure the spillover and general equilibrium effects of smartphone ownership in rural Uganda. Designed in partnership with KEIphone (a social enterprise) and funded by Open Philanthropy

*-Reducing the costs of water intermittency in Bangalore, 2013-2018:* Conducted cluster-randomized trial to measure the effects of an SMS intervention intended to reduce waiting for intermittent water. Study also featured qualitative interviews with street-level bureaucrats to understand barriers to implementation. Project developed in partnership with NextDrop (a social enterprise), Bangalore's water and sanitation utility, and funded by the Gates Foundation.

## Employment

Assistant Professor in Political Science, Claremont Graduate University, (2022-present)

Postdoctoral Researcher in Digital Technology and Development, William & Mary (2020-2022)

Research Design and Programming Consulting, the D-lab at UC Berkeley (2016-2018)

## Publications

### Peer-reviewed

#### Book

**Kumar, T.,** *Building social mobility: how subsidized homeownership creates wealth, dignity, and voice in India.* Under review at Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press.

#### Articles

**-Kumar, T.,** "Home-price subsidies increase local-level political participation in urban India." *Journal of Politics*, 2022.

**-Kumar, T.** and Stenberg, M. "Why political scientists should study smaller cities." *Urban Affairs Review*, 2022.

**-Kumar, T.,** Post, A., Ray, I., Otsuka, M., and Pardo-Bosch, F. "From public service access to service quality: The distributive politics of piped water in Bangalore." *World Development*, 2022.

**-Kumar, T.,** "The housing quality, income, and human capital effects of subsidized homes in urban India." *Journal of Development Economics*, 2021.

**-Kumar, T.,** Post, A., and Ray, I. "Flows, leaks, and blockages in informational interventions: A field experimental study of Bangalore's water sector." *World Development*, 2018.

### Policy writing

- "Why political scientists should study smaller cities" w/ M. Stenberg. Urban Affairs Forum, 2022.

- "Household-level effects of subsidized housing: Evidence from urban India." VoxDev, 2022.

- "Benchmarking 'smart city' adoption in California: Developing and piloting a data collection approach."

w/ K. Trapenberg Frick, G. Mendonça Abreu, and A. Post. University of California. 2021.

- "Housing is a welfare weapon. It can help people escape poverty." The Hindustan Times, 2021.

- "How does subsidizing housing shape political behavior?" Ideas of India (podcast), 2020.

- "Mumbai residents win govt housing lottery and spend more on kids' education, jobs: Study." ThePrint, 2019.

- "Household-level effects of affordable housing: Evidence from Mumbai." Ideas for India, 2019. Also translated to Hindi.

- "Here's what Gavin Newsom, Elizabeth Warren, and Microsoft should know if they want to end the affordable housing crisis." The Washington Post Monkey Cage, 2019.

## Skills

Programming and software: R, STATA, Open Data Kit-based survey platforms, ArcGIS, GitHub, Microsoft Office

Statistics: Sampling, regression (hierarchical models, parametric models, non-parametric models), causal inference for observational data (e.g. difference-in-differences, regression discontinuity, synthetic control, etc.), experiments (including blocking, clustering, and saturation), Bayesian statistics, machine learning, text analysis

Languages: Native fluency in English and Hindi, Proficiency in Spanish