

**owens:** India is the world's largest democracy, with more than a billion people and hundreds of languages and religious traditions. How does Indian democracy manage this kind of diversity?

**kruks-wisner:** With a lot of difficulty. We need to draw some distinctions between procedural democracy and substantive democracy in India. In terms of procedural democracy, there's a lot to cel-



roads, demanding the teacher attend school—there’s a large problem with teacher absenteeism—or demanding that health officials actually attend public health clinics; basically, trying to make services work. Moving from the administration and bureaucracy down to the level of the doorstep of the village, to actually access and gain material benefit from these services that ostensibly one is entitled to. So I think about those as claims on the state—citizens with democratic rights and entitlements saying, “I have an expectation, a right, an entitlement, and I’m, as a citizen of India, demanding these things from my local representatives.” I see that as being different from making claims against the state, where it’s saying, “I have a right to autonomy, I have a right to protection, I have right to these basic civil liberties, and I don’t want the state to impinge upon those things.”

To be a little more theoretical about it, you can think about it in terms of negative and positive freedoms. My work mostly focuses on the notion of positive freedoms, the idea that with access to healthcare, with access to education, with access to paved roads and clean drinking water, one can lead a productive life where you’re able to pursue opportunities and expand your own human capabilities. I’m drawing here a lot on the work Amartya Sen, who developed this notion of development as freedom, as an expansion of human freedoms and capabilities, that it’s a positive sense as opposed to simply a negative sense which would entail a sort of freedom from interference from the state.<sup>25</sup>

programmatic or rule-bound agenda in terms of considering certain goods to be rights and entitlements available to all—instead exercise a lot of discretion on a day-to-day basis in terms of who gets what and how things are allocated. This discretion is often equated with corruption. The interesting thing, though, is that discretion is also sometimes equated with greater flexibility and local accountability. So the act of discretion sometimes means corrupt allocation, favoring certain constituents over others, and other times discretion means flexibility and the ability to really listen to your constituents; so it's sort of a double-edged sword. The key difference, though, is that this is not a rule-bound, programmatic distribution of services that one would expect in the United States, although you could find communities here that would also question that. For example, the machine politics that came out of Chicago in the 1950s and 1960s.