



Lecture Series in Social Anthropology

Full
Semester
2025

Tuesday 11 November 2025 | 4.15 p.m. | Room AND-4-06

Rethinking Child-Sensitive Social Protection in Amazonia: Beyond Consumption and Relative Poverty

Dr. Thaís de Carvalho (School of Oriental and African Studies)

Child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) has become a widely adopted strategy to break intergenerational cycles of poverty. Programmes such as conditional cash transfers aim to enhance children's health, nutrition, and education by providing modest financial support to low-income families while promoting behavioural changes. These encouraged habits — dietary shifts, regular school attendance and health checks — are presented as pathways to a better life for children. In practice, however, the implementation of these programmes tends to generate an array of consumer desires that are unattainable for children living in subsistence economies. Drawing on ethnographic research in the Brazilian and Peruvian Amazon, this lecture explores how interventions designed to improve children's well-being can instead deepen feelings of relative poverty among Indigenous families. While the development literature often frames these outcomes as 'unintended', I argue that they are predictable consequences of consumption-oriented social protection programmes operating in contexts of structural marginalisation. The lecture situates these findings within historical and anthropological debates on social assistance targeting Indigenous children, highlighting how state interventions have often reinforced, rather than transformed, Indigenous families' positions at the margins of society. The lecture will conclude with a reflection on the role of anthropology — and anthropologists — in shaping policies that advance social justice in multi-ethnic societies.

Organization:

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Entrance free of charge.

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