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Navigating Austerity: Currents of Debt along a South Asian River (Anthropology of Policy)

Laura Bear

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Navigating Austerity: Currents of Debt along a South Asian River (Anthropology of Policy) Laura Bear *Navigating Austerity* addresses a key policy question of our era: what happens to society and the environment when austerity dominates political and economic life? To get to the heart of this issue, Laura Bear tells the stories of boatmen, shipyard workers, hydrographers, port bureaucrats and river pilots on the Hooghly River, a tributary of the Ganges that flows into the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. Through their accounts, Bear traces the hidden currents of state debt crises and their often devastating effects.

Taking the reader on a voyage along the river, Bear reveals how bureaucrats, entrepreneurs and workers navigate austerity policies. Their attempts to reverse the decline of ruined public infrastructures, environments and urban spaces lead Bear to argue for a radical rethinking of economics according to a social calculus. This is a critical measure derived from the ethical concerns of people affected by national policies. It places issues of redistribution and inequality at the fore of public and environmental plans. Concluding with proposals for restoring more just long term social obligations, Bear suggests new practices of state financing and ways to democratize fiscal policy. Her aim is to transform sovereign debt from a financial problem into a widely debated ethical and political issue. *Navigating Austerity* contributes to policy studies as well as to the understanding of today's global injustices. It also develops new theories about the significance of state debt, speculation and time for contemporary capitalism. Sited on a single body of water flowing with rhythms of circulation, renewal and transformation, this ambitious and accessible book will be of interest to specialists and general readers.

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