



Launching the Polilogue Quarterly

Policy Studies remains a relatively nascent discipline in India. Yet, in a world shaped by rapidly evolving economic systems, complex governance structures, technological transformation, climate challenges, and shifting international relations, the need for rigorous and grounded policy thinking has never been greater. Recognising the critical role that academic institutions play in strengthening public discourse and decision-making, the Ashank Desai Centre for Policy Studies (ADCPS) was established in 2016 to advance insightful, interdisciplinary, and actionable policy scholarship.

At ADCPS, we strive to foster a vibrant academic ecosystem that nurtures critical inquiry, methodological rigour, and real-world relevance. Since the launch of our PhD programme in 2017, the Centre has grown into a dynamic community of scholars, faculty, practitioners, and students committed to engaging with pressing public policy challenges in India and beyond. Interdisciplinarity, ethical engagement, and policy relevance form the cornerstone of our teaching, research, and institutional culture. I am happy to launch this first issue of the ADCPS newsletter, *The Polilogue Quarterly*, which has been envisioned as a platform to reflect this intellectual energy. Published every quarter, the newsletter brings together one thematic focus issue alongside updates on ongoing research, faculty members and students' achievements, institutional initiatives, events, and curated readings. Each issue aims to bridge research and practice, highlighting emerging policy debates while showcasing the Centre's contributions to evidence-based policymaking.

The inaugural issue focuses on the Circular Economy, a theme of growing relevance as countries seek pathways toward decarbonisation, sustainable resource use, and inclusive growth. The issue brings together conceptual insights, policy perspectives, suggested readings, global developments, and field-based initiatives such as the work of Living Lab Alleppey, illustrating how research, governance, and community engagement can converge to generate meaningful impact.

Through this newsletter, we hope to strengthen dialogue within the policy community, encourage cross-sectoral learning, and share knowledge that informs both scholarship and practice. We invite readers, academics, policymakers, practitioners, and students alike to engage with the ideas presented here and to contribute to future editions.

On behalf of the faculty, staff, and the wider ADCPS community, I extend my sincere thanks for your continued engagement and support. We look forward to collectively shaping policy thinking that is rigorous, relevant, and responsive to the challenges of our time.

Vinish Kathuria

Professor and Head
Ashank Desai Centre for Policy Studies
Indian Institute of Technology Bombay



Contents

Feature

Circularity for Urban Resilience

Field Impact

Circularity in Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Floods through Living Lab Alleppey

Launch

Living Lab Alleppey Website and Policy Paper Series

Activities

Project Assessment Reports and Indo-German Partnership in Higher Education

Events

Launching Policy Brief Series, Policy Talks held and Scheduled events for 2026 Q1

Highlights

Visitors & Distinguished Guests, Awards & Honours, and Publications

Call for Contributions

The Polilogue Quarterly is the newsletter of IIT Bombay's Ashank Desai Centre for Policy Studies. The next issue is slated for April 2026. Contributions may be sent to head.cps@iitb.ac.in by 23 March 2026.

Circularity for Urban Resilience

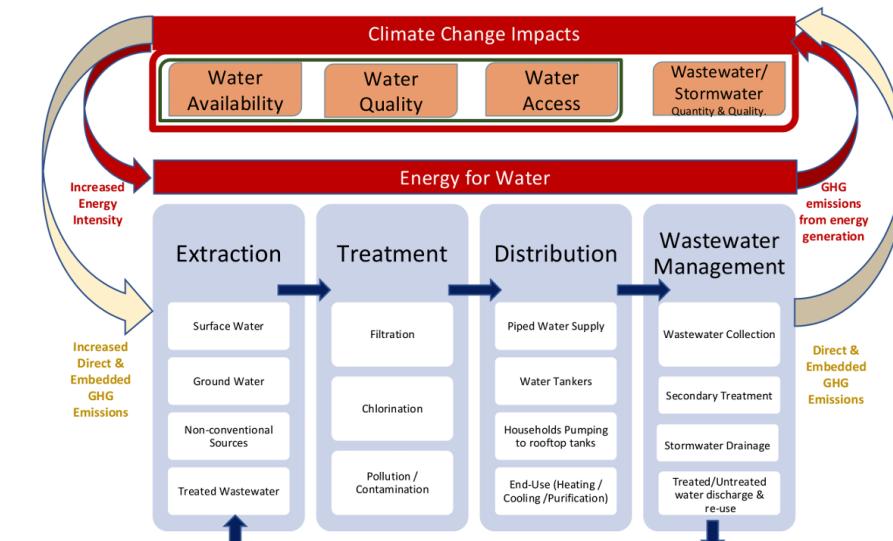
Circularity offers a transformative lens for rethinking how cities manage resources in an era of growing climate uncertainty. Moving away from linear models of extraction, consumption, and disposal, circular approaches focus on reducing losses, extending resource use, and recovering value from materials traditionally treated as waste. In urban infrastructure, this translates into systems that are functional, regenerative, and resilient, while simultaneously strengthening service delivery, inclusion, and long-term sustainability.

In the water sector, circularity helps reframe the urban water cycle as an integrated system rather than a collection of isolated services. It emphasizes closing loops through efficiency, reuse, and recovery across water supply, sanitation, and stormwater management. Wastewater and stormwater are thus reimagined not as liabilities, but as valuable resources that can contribute reusable water, energy, and nutrients. Circular water systems offer pathways to enhance resilience, reduce costs, and improve environmental outcomes, while enabling towns to adapt more effectively to climate variability and long-term development challenges. Similarly, circularity in solid waste management focuses on reducing waste generation, extending material lifecycles, and recovering value through reuse, recycling, and composting rather than disposal. By closing material loops, it minimises environmental impacts while creating economic and social value across the waste system. These shifts are particularly critical for small and medium towns, where climate risks, infrastructure deficits, and financial constraints expose the limitations of linear, energy-intensive models.

The figure shows how climate change pressures cascade across the urban water cycle, affecting water availability, quality, access, and wastewater and stormwater systems. Each stage—from extraction and treatment to distribution and reuse—is energy-intensive and increasingly stressed by climate variability. As cities respond through deeper pumping, longer transfers, and advanced treatment, energy use and greenhouse gas emissions rise, reinforcing a cycle in which climate impacts and energy demand continually amplify each other.

A highlight of this newsletter is the work within the domain of Circular Economy by the Living Lab Alleppey, a collaborative platform that brought together local stakeholders, researchers, and policymakers to co-create and implement context-specific solutions for water and sanitation. Working over eight years, the lab is guided by the transdisciplinary principles of participatory research, co-production of knowledge, and community engagement to generate actionable insights that are tailored to the local context. The Living Lab model highlights a dual pedagogy that positions students as active problem-solvers and communities and local governments as knowledge partners.

The lab was supported by the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the IDS Sussex; the Swiss National Science Foundation through the University of Lausanne and the Tata Centre for Technology and Design, IIT Bombay through projects. The initiative reflects ADCPS's commitment to aligning technology, governance, and pedagogy with place-based realities.



Circularity in Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Floods through Living Lab Alleppey

Solid waste management (SWM) has emerged as a critical issue with environmental and public health implications, in small towns and socio ecological systems in the Global South. Our work seeks to develop context-specific SWM plans that promote circularity, livelihood creation, and community entrepreneurship. We also prioritize engaging local stakeholders to design and implement customized solutions, fostering circular practices and sustainable livelihoods.



Context-specific waste management solutions



Plastic brand audit in collaboration with students from local colleges



Living Lab Alleppey received the Best Stall at The Clean Kerala Conclave, organized by the Suchitwa Mission, Government of Kerala



Converting organic municipal waste into biocompost and branded as Alpy Gold

Most towns in the Global South face issues with sanitation systems that include a lack of access and poor design efficiency. Sanitation issues also get amplified in regions with high water tables, like the coastal region of Alleppey, particularly during floods. Living Lab Alleppey explores the possibility of scaling up alternative technologies at a town/village level through participatory planning, capacity building, and working with local governments to ensure effective outcomes.



Developed village level Flood Resilient Sanitation and Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) systems supported by the Kerala Development & Innovation Strategic Council (K-DISC), and UKRI



Decentralised Wastewater Treatment System (DEWATS) system in collaboration with CDD Bangalore and Inspiration, Kochi

The deltaic region of Kuttanad is most vulnerable to climate change impacts such as rising sea levels, increasing tidal influence, frequent and severe flood disasters, and displacement of people because of its Below Sea Level location. Living Lab Alleppey explored alternative techniques to localize adaptive strategies through nature-based approaches and help communities reduce vulnerability and build resilience.



Coir based embankment reinforcements to address flooding issues using local expertise

Living Lab Alleppey Website

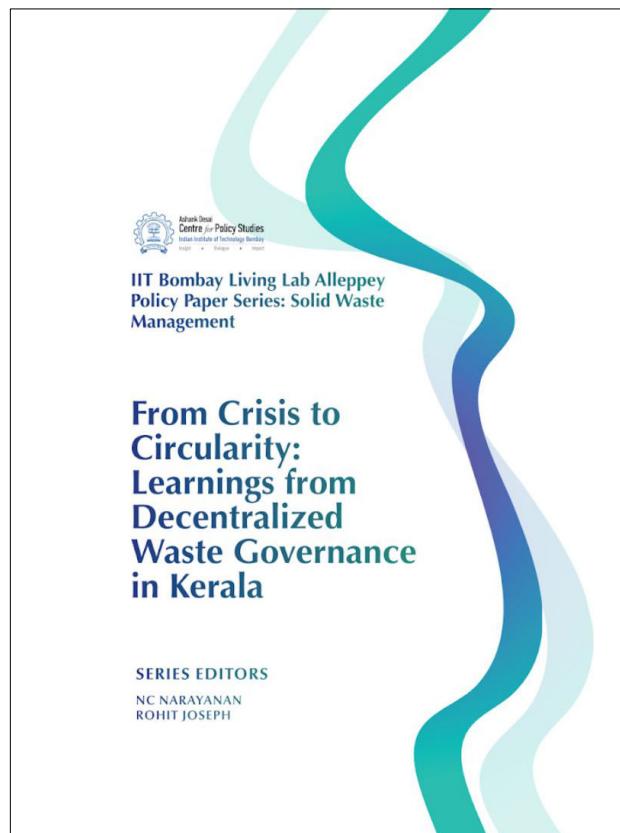
The Living Lab Alleppey page within the ADCPS website, and a series of Policy Papers were launched by IIT Bombay on 5 December 2025, marking an important milestone in eight years of sustained research, field experimentation, and institutional collaboration in Kerala's decentralised governance context. The website serves as a knowledge hub, integrating field insights, planning tools, and documentation of community and institutional partnerships across waste, water, and sanitation sectors (livinglab.ncniit.in/). Alongside the launch, a Photo Report documenting work from 2017-2025 was released, capturing initiatives in canal restoration, circular waste management, flood-risk analysis, and civic engagement (livinglab.ncniit.in/about/).



Policy Paper Series

The Policy Paper Series on Solid Waste Management, reflects eight years of iterative and sustained field engagement and research in Kerala's decentralised waste sector. The series comprises nine policy papers authored and co-edited by Prof. N. C. Narayanan and Mr Rohit Joseph, drawing on extensive field-based research in Alappuzha. It documents Kerala's solid waste management transition over two decades, from crisis-driven responses to systematic and innovative approaches informed by long-term observation and stakeholder collaboration (livinglab.ncniit.in/from-crisis-to-circularity-learnings-from-decentralized-waste-governance-in-kerala/).

The series and its policy implications were discussed at a joint knowledge exchange session held in October 2025 in Thiruvananthapuram, with participation from senior state officials, local governments, and the Living Lab team. The series, finalised based on session inputs, marks the project closure of and offers evidence-based guidance for policymakers and practitioners working on sustainable waste governance.



Assessment Reports

Release of Assessment Reports of project titled "Towards Climate Resilient WaSH Infrastructure and Services: Situational Assessment of Coastal Towns"

The project, implemented between July 2023 and December 2025 under the guidance of Prof. N. C. Narayanan, covered Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. The initiative, supported by HSBC India, with the Indian Sanitation Coalition supporting outreach and advocacy, and the CDD India leading implementation.

The 12 town reports examined urban water systems through a climate-energy-water nexus lens and highlight opportunities for circular interventions. By reducing energy intensity, recovering resources, and closing feedback loops, circular approaches can help strengthen the resilience of urban water systems. The reports were finalized following inputs from a Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on Climate-Resilient Urban Water and Sanitation Infrastructure Services held on 13 August 2025 at IIT Bombay in a hybrid format. It brought together policymakers, experts, and practitioners from four states to review project findings, examine governance frameworks, and discuss strategies for strengthening climate-resilient urban water and sanitation systems in coastal towns.

The project outputs from the multi-state initiative "Landscape Analysis for Four Coastal States on Climate-Resilient Water and Sanitation Infrastructure", supported by HSBC India, were formally released at IIT Bombay. The outputs were formally released by Prof. Milind Atrey (DD ART), Prof. Ravindra Gudi (DD FIA) and Prof. Upendra Bhandarkar, Dean (ACR), IIT Bombay.

The research team included Dr Neelam Rana, Ashish Dangi, Abhay Junaghare, Priyakshi Gogoi, Udip Das, Sucharita Roy, and Tejash Anand.



Report Release



Stakeholder Workshop



Research Team During Fieldwork

Indo-German Partnership in Higher Education 2020-2024



6 Faculty and Student exchange programmes

11 Workshop, Conferences & Seminars

2 Research publications

5 Winter and Summer schools

Project Title: "Exploration: New Opportunities in Indo-German Academic Cooperation"

The project funded by DAAD-UGC Indo-German Partnerships in Higher Education (IGP) programme, that focused on strengthening institutional cooperation and academic mobility, was completed 31st December 2024.

IIT Bombay served as the coordinating institution, with Prof. Swati Patankar as Principal Investigator at inception and Prof. Siddhartha Mukhopadhyay (IIT Kharagpur) as Co-Principal Investigator. Project coordination was handled by Prof. D. Parthasarathy followed by Prof. N. C. Narayanan with ADCPS as the hub.

The collaboration addressed thematic areas including climate and environment, innovation, energy, and transport and mobility through joint research, workshops, conferences, and capacity-building activities involving faculty, postgraduate students, and postdoctoral scholars. A series of summer and winter schools facilitated student exchange between IIT Bombay and TUM in Germany and India.



Students from ADCPS at Munich for Summer School 2024



Students from TU Munich in Alibagh, India during Winter School 2023

Policy Brief Series

The ADCPS Policy Brief Series was formally launched on 5 December 2025 at IIT Bombay in the presence of the Institute's senior leadership. The series reflects ADCPS's commitment to translating rigorous research into actionable policy insights at the intersection of governance, technology, and social realities.

Designed for policymakers, administrators, and practitioners, the briefs bridge academic inquiry and public decision-making. Each brief synthesises evidence-based research into accessible, implementation-oriented frameworks while maintaining analytical rigour. The series aims to support informed policy choices across sectors shaping India's development trajectory. The policy briefs can be accessed at www.cps.iitb.ac.in/policy-brief-series



List of Policy Briefs

1. Digital Federalism and Service Delivery: Governance Transformations in India's Rural Water Sector
Authors: N. C. Narayanan, Rohit Kumar Prince & Vartika Arora
2. JJM Database: From Monitoring to Decision Support Tool
Authors: Rohit Kumar Prince, N. C. Narayanan, Himanshu Kulkarni & Vartika Arora
3. Transitioning Towards Digital and Data-Driven Decision Support Systems: The Case of JJM in Maharashtra
Authors: Abhishek Khaire, Rohit Kumar Prince, N. C. Narayanan, Himanshu Kulkarni, Vartika Arora & Salman Zaheer
4. Failure in Aadhaar - Based Demographic Authentication for "Non - Dominant" Name Patterns: Evidence from SARAL Policy of Maharashtra
Authors: Amod Moharil & Shishir Kumar Jha
5. Policy Lessons from India's Privatized Waste - to - Energy Models
Authors: Rakendu Suresh & N. C. Narayanan
6. Towards Sustainable Menstrual Waste Management in India: Insights from a National Brainstorming Workshop (3 September 2025)

Policy Talks

29 October 2025

The Rise of Silicon Empires

Dr Nick Srnicek, Senior Lecturer, King's College London

Examined AI as a general-purpose technology shaped by corporate expansion strategies and geopolitical rivalry, particularly between the United States and China.

14 November 2025

Nudging Policymakers in India through Granular Data and Visualization

Dr Gayatri Mishra Oleti, Former Head, L&T Public Charitable Trust

Highlighted how micro-level data, visualization tools, and community-led evidence generation can strengthen accountability and improve policy outcomes in India.

25 November 2025

The Global Landscape of Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education - Plus Reflections on India

Dr Matthew Witenstein, Associate Professor, University of New Mexico

Drawing on a global scoping review, Dr Witenstein discussed conceptualizations and implementation strategies of GCE and ESD, with reflections on the Indian context.

16 December 2025

The AI-SDG Nexus: Risks, Opportunities, and Policy

Dr Ranjula Bali Swain, Research Director, Centre for Sustainability Research, SIR, Stockholm, and Professor at Södertörn University

Explored how AI can both support and challenge sustainable development goals through data-driven and targeted policy interventions.

Events Scheduled for 2026 Q1

09 February 2026

Workshop on Streamlining Qualitative Data Analysis with MAXQDA

Resource Person: Ms Sarah Harniswala, PhD Scholar, ADCPS, IIT Bombay

14-15 February 2026

CEP Short-Term Course on "Governance of Digital Technologies"

Resource Persons: Prof. Shishir K. Jha, Dr Anupam Guha, Prof. Sundeep Oberoi & Prof. Santosh Noronha

24-27 March 2026

Workshop on Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM): A Primer on Impact Evaluation (IE) Methods

Resource Person: Dr Ishani Mukherjee, Associate Professor, Singapore Management University & Visiting Faculty, ADCPS, IIT Bombay

Visitors & Distinguished Guests

Dr Ashok Kumar Mittal, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and Founder Chancellor of Lovely Professional University, delivered an invited public policy lecture titled "Is the Public Policy for Public?" on 15 September 2025.

The ADCPS 9th Foundation Day on 27 September 2025 featured **Shri Abhishek Verma**, Partner and Lead for Digital Government Advisory at KPMG India, as the Chief Guest, and **Shri Ashank Desai**, Founder and Chairperson of Mastek Ltd., who delivered the Founder's Address.

Prof. Mathew Witenstein, Associate Professor of Education Leadership and Policy, University of New Mexico visited ADCPS from 23-25 November 2025.

Awards & Honours



Dr Himanshu Kulkarni, Visiting Professor

Awarded the prestigious 2025 International Water Prize sponsored by the WaTER Centre at the University of Oklahoma, USA—becoming the first recipient from the Indian subcontinent—for outstanding contributions to water supply and sanitation in emerging regions.



Dr Ajay Deshpande, Adjunct Professor

Appointed Chairman of the Domain Expert Group (Ecology, Environment and Sustainability thematic area) for evaluating and selecting Fast Track Translational (FTT) and Fast Track Commercialization (FTC) project proposals submitted by various CSIR laboratories.

Appointed Member of the State-Academia Environmental Innovation Council (SAEIC) of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, to help foster research-driven, cost-effective solutions for environmental challenges.



Mr Prithvi Rathod, 2nd Year MPP student

Awarded grant under the Prime Minister's Scheme for Mentoring Young Authors (PM-YUVA 3.0) for book proposal, titled *Policy Entrepreneurs of Modern India*.

Publications

K. T. Sarath (with Trupti Mishra & Rangan Banerjee) · 2025 · *Cities*

A Multidimensional Urban Transport Equity Assessment Framework: A Case of Mumbai

Malini Krishnankutty (with Jayaraj Sundaresan & Richard Scaria) · 2025 · (Book Chapter) (128-147) In Sletto, B. Winkler, T. & Huq, E. (Eds.), *Decolonizing Planning: Power and Knowledge in the Informal City*, Edward Elgar Publishing. Local collectivist capability and the People's Plan for Chittur-Thathamangalam, Kerala, India

N. C. Narayanan (with Sruthi Pillai and Mijo Luke) · 2025 · *Ecology & Society*

Coping with Conflicts in the Co-production of Solid Waste Management Services: Experience with a Real-world Lab in India

Rahul S. Sapkal (with Daksha Parmar & Areesha Khan) · 2025 · *International Journal of Social Determinants of Health and Health Services*

Women's Autonomy, Violence, and Maternal Health Care Utilisation: Empirical Evidence from India

Trupti Patil (with Arnab Jana & Sarthak Gaurav) · 2025 · *Journal of Population Ageing*

Determinants of Functional Disability in India: The Interplay of Health Conditions, Environmental and Personal Factors

Note: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented in this newsletter. However, if any errors have inadvertently slipped in, we regret them in advance and would be grateful if you could bring them to our attention. For any feedback, queries, or further information, please contact us at office.cps@iitb.ac.in or 022 2576 5061