

State, Governance, and Public Policy

1. Evolving Relationship between Civil Society and the State in India and its Relevance to Public Policy

Convener	Sanjiv Phansalkar, Professor, VikasAnvesh Foundation
Keywords	Governance, Civil Society, Formation of the State

Call for Abstracts

The term State refers to the set of entities in the country which together have legal, political and coercive power and are recognized as legitimate by other States. The Indian State includes legislature, executive and the judiciary at Central and regional levels. Forms of State extend down to the village and city level after the 72nd and 73rd Amendment. By this very nature, the State is not a monolith as different units of the State have different mandates and hence operational objectives. Civil Society is the vast array of formal and informal organizations which arise from citizens' wishes and actions and which have a domain outside the domain of the State and the domain of the market.

Civil Society in India is large and has a long history. Civil society helped the freedom fighters win freedom for the country from colonial powers. It has been engaged in myriad different ways to voice citizens' desires as well as to educate, enable and empower citizens. In the process civil society engages with numerous subjects on which the State too is active. The relationship between civil society and the State ranges from providing leadership and showing direction as well as strong mutual help and cooperation on one hand to divergence of views and confrontation at the other extreme. What is more, this relationship can be dynamic.

This panel will explore the role of civil society in public policy formulation as well as implementation and how civil society participation in these processes shapes and is shaped by its interaction with the State. Papers are invited on the following dimensions of this process:

- conceptual framework and a narrative of the drivers, content and results of the evolution of this relationship between State and Civil Society
- concrete illustration of how this relationship has evolved in a State of the Union in India
- leadership role of civil society in formulating and implementation of public policy in a specific sector of activity

2. Public Service Innovations in Global South

Convener	Devasheesh Mathur, Assistant Professor of Strategy, IMI Delhi
Keywords	Public Service Innovations, Policy Innovations, Processes and Knowledge Networks

Call for Abstracts

The role of policy making and governance is to create public value by building the operational capacity of the public sector and making legitimate policies (Moore and Moore, 2005). However, when a new idea is being implemented, how do civil servants ensure acceptance for the innovation?

Several scholars have been driving the thought that innovation is typically an unconscious phenomenon and the organization’s path determines whether it would happen or not. The idea that innovation can very well be consciously done is gaining traction in the field (Weible et al, 2010). Recent scholarship of the field indicates that governments can design policy innovations too (Sangiorgi, 2015; Bason, 2012). But, what is the process of innovation, and what role do stakeholders play?

An early how-to-do-it guide for innovators, including those in the public sector, was Promoting Innovation and Change in Organizations and Communities, by Jack Rothman, John Elrich and Joseph Teresa (1976). They posited that “the innovators should begin with organization goals and program objectives; identify the relevant actors next who hold power in the goal setting and then formulate a strategy to cope with or enlist the support of these powerful actors. In the end, perform a detailed operational analysis of specific objectives, facilitating and limiting factors of change agents, clients and other actors and entities in the environment.”

There are, however, a number of lacunae in this approach and policy innovation requires a rethink. The panel invites paper proposals which address any of the following questions related to the process of policy innovation or public service innovation:

- What are the processes or pathways to innovation in public policy and public services?
- What are the enablers and disablers to innovation in public policy and public services?
- What factors determine the larger adoption of the innovation by citizens?
- How are knowledge networks created in the global south to facilitate public service innovations?

Papers are invited that evaluate the process of innovation and/or the role of stakeholders involved in the public policy/ service innovation. Papers that address the above-mentioned questions through a case study method or qualitative studies in general are welcome.

3. South Asian Administration: ‘Southern’ Characteristics, Transformations, Ruptures, and Resilience

Convenor	Satyajit Singh, Professor of Political Science, University of California
Keywords	Bureaucracy, Public Administration, Global South

Call for Abstracts

The papers in this panel seek to study the administrative structures in South Asia since 1947, pointing to its distinct characteristics, the transformations it has endured, and the ruptures it has experienced. The Weberian order of the British colonial administration provided a frame for the entire administrative system in South Asia. The independent nations made several adaptations. For instance, the Constituent Assembly in India debated the role of the executive and provided it with certain safeguards from changing political whims to safeguard the Constitution. Since independence, varied political dynamics have contributed to changes in the administrative structures in the sub-continent. South Asia thus presents a unique opportunity to study varied directions in which a Western model has been adapted over nearly eight decades. It provides a departure from “the politics-administration dichotomy” that formed the basis of the administrative apparatus in the Western democracies.

The Indian administrative structure benefitted from autonomy provided through safeguards in the Constitution; the military and its interest in politics got the upper hand to undermine the administrative structures in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Sri Lankan bureaucracy succumbed to paternalism and alliances with political dynasties, ethnicities, and religions. An almost common administrative and institutional arrangement designed for similar democracies in the sub-continent has weathered assaults on its democratic institutions through emergencies, military coups, ethnic strife, and religious conflicts.

The panel examines the different administrative pathways that developed in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, probes divergences, existing commonalities, and whether there are lessons that they can learn from each other. We are particularly interested in understanding and juxtaposing the critical junctures at which administrative structures across the region have changed. The panel provides a platform to discuss a Southern perspective on how administrative structures intersect with policy processes in the Global South. The papers in the panel will focus on but will not be restricted to the concerns below.

- Key elements of a ‘Southern’ perspective
- Critical junctures or punctuations in Administrative Structures in South Asia.
- The balance of ‘politics-administration’ over time in each of the countries
- ‘Rational-legal’ versus ‘instrumental’
- The interplay of ‘central’ versus ‘federal’ – structure and politics
- Pathways of centralization, decentralization, and recentralization
- Institutional resurgences (after backsliding) and resilience

4. Policy Implementation: Role of Middle-level Public Institutions

Convenor	Santosh Gedam, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad
Keywords	Middle-level Public Institutions

Call for Abstracts

The central theme of this panel is the role of middle-level government actors, those between policy makers and street-level bureaucrats. A focus on middle-level government actors is all the more important in developing countries like India, where hierarchical administrative structures make the role of middle-level actors even more decisive. By engaging with middle-level public institutions, the panel broadly aims to unpack what policy processes occur at these key levels. The panel broadly engages with the public institutional space at the middle level without limiting itself to studies of any specific policy domain. The objective is to discuss and learn about middle-level decision-making spaces.

The panel aims to invite and engage scholarly work related to the role of middle-level public institutions in policy implementation. The panel invites empirical studies from any public policy domain that involve a significant role of the middle-level public institution in its implementation. The panel aims to engage with how middle-level government actors interpret and transmit policy to the field level for implementation. What are the characteristics of these actors relating to their ways of interpretation? What is the role of administrative agencies external to middle-level actors in their interpretations and implementation actions? Under what situations do these middle-level actors act to implement policies? How do non-government actors engage with middle-level actors for policy implementation? These are some suggested questions, but other related and innovative questions can also be considered. Papers can draw from various theoretical perspectives to explore the role of middle-level actors in policy implementation. The paper can be a case study or an empirical work that can also be theoretically interesting. Using any analytical methods or their combinations is welcome as long as it can bring out a typical complexity that can characterize the actions of middle-level actors.

5. Revolutionizing Criminal Justice: Policy Reforms for the Global South

Convenor	Krupa Nishar, Researcher, Prakruthi NGO
Keywords	Leveraging Technology for Justice, Equity in Justice, Reformative Policy Reforms

Call for Abstracts

Criminal justice systems across the Global South face a multitude of challenges, struggling with high incarceration rates, backlogs, and a lack of public trust. Traditional approaches struggle to manage caseloads, ensure public safety, and deliver equal justice. These issues disproportionately impact marginalized communities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and injustice.

Our panel addresses the pressing need for comprehensive reforms within the Criminal Justice System across the Global South, with a particular focus on South Asia. The central theme of our panel is to explore innovative policy solutions aimed at tackling systemic challenges and fostering equity and fairness within these crucial systems. Through rigorous examination and forward-thinking proposals, we aim to contribute to a more just and inclusive society.

This panel seeks groundbreaking research that reimagines criminal justice for the 21st century.

Themes include:

- **Leveraging Technology for Justice:** Investigate the transformative role of technologies like AI and blockchain in enhancing transparency and efficiency within criminal justice systems. How can AI and data analytics be harnessed to reduce bias, streamline investigations, and improve case processing efficiency?
- **Equity in Justice:** Address systemic biases and propose policy reforms for ensuring equitable access to justice for marginalized communities.
- **Reformative Policy Reforms:** Offer actionable policy recommendations to reshape criminal justice systems towards fairness and human rights.

We encourage papers that present innovative solutions rooted in real-world contexts. Research that explores the unique challenges and opportunities faced by developing nations is particularly welcome.

Selected papers will be expected to address:

- The specific technology or policy intervention under study.
- The potential impact on reducing inequalities and promoting social justice.
- Strategies for overcoming implementation challenges in the Global South.

We encourage submissions that offer empirical research, case studies, policy analyses, and theoretical frameworks. Papers should propose concrete policy recommendations and showcase the potential for real-world impact.