

The Field of Public Policy and Research

1. The Discipline of Public Policy in India: Research, Pedagogy, Practice, and an Emerging Identity

Convenor	Dayashankar Maurya, Associate Professor Nazarbayev University
Co-Convenor(s)	Ishani Mukherjee, Associate Professor, Singapore Management University Sreeja Nair, Assistant Professor, National University of Singapore Ataf Virani, Associate Professor, Monash University Dr Panchali Guha, Singapore Management University
Keywords	Public Policy Research, Public Policy Education and Pedagogy, Policy Advising and Capacity Building

Call for Abstracts

This panel aims to explore the state of public policy as a discipline in India through emerging trends across the three defining themes: research, education, and state service. We invite papers that analyse one or more of these themes, examining inputs, processes, and outputs. Papers may focus on specific sectors or offer cross-sectoral analyses. Papers could analyse the status and evolution of public policy research in India, exploring inputs such as funding, data sources, and institutions; processes such as methods and techniques; or outputs such as publication outlets, research utilization or impact on policy making, and the establishment of policy education or capacity-building programs.

We welcome papers examining public policy education in India, including the alignment of curricula with student needs, labour market demands, and national research and policy priorities. Papers focusing on state service may investigate subjects such as policy advice, capacity building, and knowledge partnerships. For example, what is the status of the industry of policy advice in India? What is the demand and supply of policy advice? Who are the actors, and what are the processes for providing policy advice at various levels? What is the status of bureaucratic capacity building in India? Which are the institutions involved in building state capacities, and what is the nature of existing capacity-building programs? What kinds of knowledge partnerships have emerged, what do they involve, and how substantive or extensive are they?

Prospective presenters are encouraged to submit abstracts, outlining the aims, methods, and findings of their proposed papers. Please indicate the theme(s) your paper addresses in your submission.

2. Democratic Innovation and Participatory Governance in the Global South: A Policy Design Perspective

Convenor	Yifei Yan, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Southampton
Co-Convenor(s)	John Boswell, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Southampton
Keywords	Democratic Innovation, Participatory Governance, Policy Design

Call for Abstracts

Recently, much has been explored on whether participatory practices and institutions in the Global South achieved or deviated from the creation of normative values, be it empowering citizens, improving transparency or enhancing equality or redistributive justice (Brautigam 2004, He 2011, Frenkiel 2020, among others). Overwhelmingly, the emphasis is on the micro- dynamics of different participatory interventions and the internal design features that give rise to these dynamics. Less explored are the meso and macro dynamics in which democratic innovations are embedded – areas of focus that seem especially important in the Global South where resource and capacity constraints in policy making are frequently acute.

This panel proposes that engaging more closely with the theoretical perspectives on policy design can be one promising way to address the gap identified above. Construed as a move away from a “technocratic and engineering approach” (Peters 2018, cited from Boswell et al. 2022), the policy design perspective and its contextualisation in participatory governance research (Boswell et al. 2022) highlights both the necessity and the usefulness of scrutinising participatory interventions as embedded in complex social, political and administrative contexts. Taking a design perspective is also useful for countering the tendency to dichotomise policy design and policy implementation, which is still common in the developing world (e.g. Muralidharan and Singh 2021).

Under this line of thinking, the design of policy interventions and how it can anticipate and address implementation challenges remains much under-explored as the blame is put entirely on the implementation stage (Yan 2024). However, instead of focusing on the design and deployment of any individual policy tools or instruments, the emphasis is increasingly placed on how different instruments mix and integrate with one another to jointly enhance policy effectiveness (Virani et al. 2023). Relatedly, a sophisticated set of policy capacity along analytical, operational and political dimensions are considered vital for policy process to run smoothly and public services to be delivered effectively (Wu et al. 2015, Mukherjee et al. 2021).

Building on these insights, among others, as a starting point, this panel intends to encourage, facilitate and provide a platform for further dialogue between the policy design scholarship and that on participatory governance, both broadly understood. Alongside the value the former can bring in addressing the key question of how participatory governance can be made to work, using participatory governance as a critical case may also help address some of the outstanding gaps in the policy design literature such as the dynamics of policy design and the ordering (if any) of policy capacity (Mukherjee et al. 2021).

For this purpose, we invite scholars from diverse geographical backgrounds and methodological orientations to present original research that addresses any of the following non-exhaustive list of questions- and beyond:

- Why do participatory practices and institutions endure longer in some places than others? What features in their intrinsic and integrative design (and/or implementation) have driven such differences, and how do they interplay with the social, political and institutional settings of the context?
- For participatory practices and institutions that last, has their impact been consistent, improved or diminished over time? How can this be explained by policy design and other policy theories, such as learning and feedback (Manes- Rossi et al. 2023) or policy capacity (Yan et al. Forthcoming)?
- How similar or different are the conditions for participatory governance to work in individual localities as compared with those required when being scaled up to a higher level of administrative hierarchy?
- In societies marked by socioeconomic inequality and fragmentation, what are the specific mechanisms and related capacities needed for preventing the participatory process from being dominated by local elites and promoting equitable and inclusive participation?

Notwithstanding the panel’s special focus on the Global South, submissions from scholars doing comparative research between the Global South and Global North contexts are also welcomed. For scholars whose research focuses exclusively on the Global North, submissions can be favourably considered if the relevance of key messages to the Global South can be explicitly highlighted.

3. Unpacking Knowledge Perspectives in State Policy through Discourse Analysis

Convenor	Madhulika Banerjee, University of Delhi
Keywords	Discourse Analysis, Epistemology, Climate Crisis

Call for Abstracts

This panel invites papers that examine contemporary policies offered by states for different 'development' objectives. The focus of the papers are expected to be on unpacking the knowledge perspectives that underlie the documents put out by states, from at least three points of view: as a statement of their understanding of the area for which they are making policy, their considered opinion on what kind of epistemologies would guide the 'development' of that area, and what they expect out of that intervention. This analysis is pertinent today for several reasons: in the light of the substantial critique of epistemologies that have governed state policy in the post-colonial period in India, and the global recognition of the climate crisis, there is recognition that knowledges other than the dominant scientific/ technical ones, given their resilient natures, might have significant contributions for contemporary alternatives, through providing spaces for adaptation at least. Further, the Indian state's needs to respond to the climate crisis in general and very specifically too, the current regime's declared bent towards Indic or civilisational knowledges, need to be critically analysed.

Given that the discourse of state policy substantially directs the way recognition is accorded, institutions are created, funds are allocated and also, how each of these is temporally and spatially altered, papers are expected to address as many of these aspects as possible towards the purpose of the panel. Typically, policy documents constitute technical, social and economic aspects of the issue and so it is expected that papers will be of a transdisciplinary nature. This panel invites critical analyses of policy documents in the public domain that ideally combine inputs from more than one discipline.

4. Identity, Organizational Processes, and Policy Design in International Aid Organizations: Implications for Development Outcomes in the Global South

Convenor	Jasleen Kaur, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin
Keywords	Aid-effectiveness, Policy Design and Performance, Identity of Bureaucrat

Call for Abstracts

This panel seeks to explore the complex interplay between identity, organizational processes, and policy design in international aid organizations operating in the Global South. Drawing from various theoretical frameworks, such as the representative bureaucracy theory, the panel will investigate how different aspects of identity, including but not limited to gender, influence the policy agenda, program design, and ultimately, development outcomes in the Global South.

We invite papers that examine the role of identity and organizational processes in shaping policy design and development outcomes in international aid organizations, with a particular focus on the Global South. Papers may address, but are not limited to, the following research questions:

- How does the representation of diverse identities (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, class) in international aid organizations influence policy priorities, program design, and implementation?

- What are the mechanisms through which passive representation of marginalized groups in aid organizations translates into active representation, and how does this impact the inclusivity and effectiveness of development initiatives?
- How do organizational processes, such as staff assignment, decision-making, and knowledge networks, interact with identity dynamics to shape policy outcomes in the Global South?
- What are the implications of identity-based representation and organizational processes for aid effectiveness, social equity, and sustainable development in the Global South?
- How can theories, such as the representative bureaucracy theory, be expanded or adapted to better understand the complex interplay between identity, organizational processes, and development outcomes in the context of the Global South?

We welcome papers that employ diverse methodological approaches, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research, to investigate these questions. Papers that focus on case studies of international aid organizations operating in the Global South, particularly in South Asia, are especially encouraged. We also invite papers that explore the broader implications of identity dynamics and organizational processes for policy design, aid effectiveness, and development outcomes in the Global South.

5. Linking Policy Capacity and Policy Process: Explorations and Reflections from the Global South

Convenor	Yifei Yan, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Southampton
Co-Convenor(s)	Kidjie I. Saguin, School of Social and Political Science, University of Melbourne M. Kerem Coban, School of Finance and Management, SOAS, University of London; Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Kadir Has University
Keywords	Policy Capacity, Policy Process, Global South

Call for Abstracts

The aim of this panel is to encourage, facilitate, and provide a platform for the much-needed cross-disciplinary dialogue between the policy capacity and policy process research, so that the respective gaps within each can be filled by drawing on and incorporating the novel insights from one another. This, in turn, can engender a more complete and holistic understanding of the policy process, outputs, and outcomes over time for the policy science discipline.

For this purpose, we invite scholars from diverse geographical backgrounds and methodological orientations to problematise and scrutinise how the following non-exhaustive list of questions can be addressed in a way that simultaneously advances our understanding of policy capacity and the policy process in the Global South:

- How can bridging process theories and policy capacity framework help us better understand capacity deficits or requisites that might be causing long-term policy stability, which may require capacity-building efforts over time to address the stalemate?
- Considering the heuristic value of policy stages (Weible et al. 2022), Mukherjee et al. (2021) noted the possibility of an ‘order’ of capacities. How could this be linked to the stages? How may policy capacity requisites vary, or are there different sets of capacities necessary for different stages in the policy cycle?

- How can mainstream or more recent actor- institution-, ideas-oriented theorisations of policy change shed light on the drivers and mechanisms of the formation, consolidation or mutation of policy capacity?
- How can we employ, mobilise theories of policy process to make sense of policy capacity as a dependent or an independent variable to expand our understanding of the role of policy capacity in outcomes or outputs of the policy process?

Notwithstanding the panel's special focus on the Global South, submissions from scholars doing comparative research between the Global South and Global North contexts are also welcomed. For scholars whose research focuses exclusively on the Global North, submissions can be favourably considered if the relevance of key messages to the Global South can be explicitly highlighted.

6. Unpacking the Public Policy Process in Developing Countries: Contextual Distinctiveness and Policy Capacities

Convenor	M Ramesh, Professor of Public Policy, National University of Singapore
Co-Convenor(s)	Michael Howlett, Professor, Simon Fraser University Satyajit Singh, Professor, University of California
Keywords	Policy Processes, Policy Capacity, Global South

Call for Abstracts

The proposed panel seeks to explore the features of the policy process in developing country contexts and highlight how they differ from what is needed for making better policy choices. The panel will detail critical gaps in our current knowledge base on public policy processes in developing countries and explore new areas of inquiry and methodological approaches needed for bridging the gaps.

Key issues to be addressed include:

- **Contextual Distinctiveness:** Are there salient political, institutional, and capacity constraints that make the policy process fundamentally different in developing countries? How do these contextual factors shape different stages or parts of the policy process, from agenda-setting to implementation and evaluation in developing countries? How can the contextual distinctiveness be integrated into existing mainstream frameworks of the policy process?
- **Strengthening Institutions and Improving Capacity:** What specific institutional reforms are needed for improving the policy process in developing countries? What specific types of policy capacities are required to design and adopt the institutional reforms? Are there differences in the critical capacities (see Howlett and Ramesh, 2016) for effective policy process across sectors and countries?

7. Comprehending the Process of Long-term Changes in Social and Welfare Policies in Global South

Convenor	Chandrasen Kumar, Food Corporation of India and Executive Fellow from Management Development Institute, Gurugram, India
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Keywords	Policy Evolution, Policy Process, Long-term Policy Changes
<p>Call for Abstracts</p> <p>Policy change may be incremental changes in existing structure or new innovative policies. However, major policy changes and intentional intervention may be seen as policy reforms. Similarly, long-term changes in policies may be seen as policy evolution, like cumulative long-term development of policy structure, radical reforms in policy-making institutions, trial-and-error strategies adopted by policy-makers when adopting to policy environment, and bunching of multiple factors that create situations for major policy changes.</p> <p>Long-term policy changes or evolution have been described by existing frameworks like Advocacy Coalition, Multiple Stream, Punctuated Equilibrium and others. However, no description of evolution actually fathoms the size of policy changes or estimate the appropriate time frame for such changes.</p> <p>With the background of theoretical understanding on policy changes in the developed world, the importance of policy process research for knowledge 'of the process' and 'in the process' along with the ongoing debate over continuously changing social and welfare policies under the influence of concepts and arguments of the developed world, this panel invites innovative studies and research on mapping and analysis of the policy process for long-term changes in any social and welfare policy from the global south.</p> <p>This panel welcomes submissions that have been able to describe, map, and analyse the long-term changes with respect to policy process elements such as policy background or legacies, ideas or beliefs, events, goals or objectives, contexts or environment, institutions, networks or subsystems, actors, and tools or instruments following any method, through primary or secondary data.</p>	