

Sound Public Policy in India: Needs Dynamics of Policy Making and Implementation

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Abstract

Urbanization is a key barometer of India's social and economic transformation, and understanding its complexities is imperative for public policy. To this end, the Cities, Economy and Society Initiative at CPR looks at the process of urban transformation in India, tracing its evolution spatially, economically and socially, and focusing on how urbanization is managed and how it affects people's engagement with States.

Scholars work on a range of topics including governance, citizenship, migration, housing, infrastructure and the environment. The group's work is characterized by a multidisciplinary approach, participation in Indian and international urban networks and alliances, and the involvement of various state and non-state stakeholders.

“Some people are unhappy with free enterprise if it doesn't work perfectly, but they are happy with government if it works at all.

Politics often determines the dynamics of policy making and implementation, especially in a socially diverse and developing economy like India. As a policy research institute, the Center for Policy Research (CPR) believes that understanding policy needs and priorities is essential. Founded in 2014, the policy initiative aims to provide high-quality research to understand the rapid changes in India's political economy that are now manifesting with significant electoral consequences. From the beginning, the initiative addressed the changing competitive system of political parties, political and legislative institutions, the ideological world view and preferences of political actors, voting behavior and the motivational structures and choices that shape political decisions. In addressing the issues, the initiative seeks to become a leading center for empirically rigorous, theoretically rich, historically grounded policy research that shapes discussions of key policy issues in the country.

Key words: Sound public policy- dynamics of policy making and implementation- policy needs and priorities

India Infrastructures & Ecologies Program

Large infrastructure projects are seen as a critical part of modern societies for the provision of basic services, creation of jobs and to boost economic growth. Infrastructural and industrial projects in modern democracies like India are subject to a complex terrain of federal arrangements, legal compliances, environmental sustainability,

cultural appropriateness and public participation. The political and economic importance of such projects also influences legal standards, regulatory practices and policy outcomes.

This Program seeks to advance multidisciplinary and applied research in the political ecology of large infrastructure projects. It houses a cluster of projects at the intersection of infrastructure development, natural resource management and legal governance frameworks at transnational, national and state levels.

The key themes of the Program are:

- The spatial, social and ecological implications of the form, scale, location, design and operations of large infrastructures in India;
- The development and implementation of environment regulatory frameworks for sustainability and public accountability of infrastructures; and
- The social processes and practices in infrastructure development and operations that could generate better socio-environmental outcomes.
- The Program aims to analyse key challenges in the areas of urban and rural ecologies and infrastructure regulation, track political and institutional responses to these challenges and deepen informed public engagement in policy reforms and implementation in these areas.

TREADS: Transboundary Rivers, Ecologies & Development Studies

TREADs programme encompasses and echoes our research and policy interests in transboundary political ecologies, river water governance and development studies. We are interested in politics and ecologies (relationships) across boundaries – after Neil Smith’s “markers of difference” – at different scales. We pursue our interests in this generic sense of transboundary political spaces, at present focused primarily on transboundary river water governance.

TREADs programme is a cluster of research projects pursuing these research interests. It builds on our earlier work on transboundary river water governance but has taken a consolidated shape with the establishment of the MoJS (Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India) Research Chair – Water Conflicts and Governance at CPR. The Research Chair enables research with policy relevance, for instance, a systematic analysis of India’s interstate river water cooperation record to draw lessons for nurturing and strengthening an ecosystem for interstate river water governance in India. The Research Chair also provides the proximity and avenue for engaging with policy makers.



TREADs programme builds on this opportunity to engage in an expanded scope of transboundary political ecologies, and pursues some critical research and policy questions.

What is the nature of transboundary river water political ecologies? How does this set limits on legal adjudication?

What are the other critical elements in addressing transboundary river water governance challenges?

How does interstate river water governance in India shape transboundary river water relations in South Asia?

Why does the Indian Constitution bar courts' (including the Supreme Court's) jurisdiction over interstate river water disputes under Article 262 of the Constitution?

Why do the river boards in India get constituted outside River Boards Act 1956 – an Act meant for facilitating interstate river water cooperation?

What does an ecosystem for interstate river cooperation entail: politics, policies, institutions and practices?

What is the nature of India's water federalism? What are the means to strengthen its federal governance of water?

The Technology & Society Initiative

Recent technology-powered advances – artificial intelligence and deep learning ecosystems, drones, the app economy, blockchain and crypto-currencies, and quantum computing, to name a few – have transformed interactions between States and citizens, and relations inter se private entities and individuals. On the regulatory front, governments worldwide face the unenviable task of directing innovation by optimally balancing risks and rewards. When deployed for governance, technology also raises concerns around inequitable access to new solutions, exclusionary possibilities arising from unsuitable architecture, and unreasonable restrictions on individual rights such as privacy and personal liberty. The rise of the data economy and the aspirations of industry players to

build network effects and scale rapidly has led to unprecedented consequences for both economic ordering and individual rights.



Traversing well-chronicled problems to under-explored solutions, this new initiative shall critically examine the various tensions highlighted above, particularly focusing on technology innovations, norm- and market-based responses to the same, and a robust, yet responsible, framework for start-ups, incumbents, and innovators of all hues to build, fail, learn, and grow in India. In this endeavour, it places India's current legal and regulatory responses, be it in the realm of individual rights, consumer protection, data security, competition, or operational freedom, within the larger context of freedom and ease of innovating here, evaluating various tensions and structuring optimal solutions.

The above challenges are exacerbated in an emerging economy like India, with problems of weak state capacity to both design timely policies and redress consumer grievances, absence of a robust innovation ecosystem and a well-developed military industrial complex, and a culture of hierarchical and top-down governance and meagre qualitative engagement between the State and other stakeholders. However, addressing these issues in the context of high-technology industries is critical if she needs to build on current levels of investor confidence and the potential offered by a young demographic that can innovate under the right set of background conditions.

Recognizing that the availability of good jobs on the scale that India requires is one of the biggest challenges confronting the nation, CPR partnered with the Just Jobs Network (JJN) to launch The Jobs Initiative. This programme aims to generate fresh and innovative ideas to help tackle the nation's employment crisis. Sabina Dewan, President & Executive Director of JJN and Senior Visiting Fellow at CPR and Partha Mukhopadhyay, Senior Fellow at CPR are leading the initiative.

The Jobs Initiative features research aimed at finding solutions to specific employment challenges related to informality, technology's restructuring of labour markets, migration and differentiated impacts of these forces based on gender and age. As rapid transformations in these areas, coupled with urbanisation and climate change alter the way Indians live and work, this initiative will provide insights on how government policies can adapt to

create jobs and support workers. This initiative will engage the government, the private sector, academia, and grassroots organisations to harvest good ideas and promote collaboration.

To shape research and action on jobs in India, The Jobs Initiative draws from CPR's vast expertise in economic policy and urbanisation, and JIN's specialised focus on issues pertaining to employment such as strategies for job creation, education and skills. Jointly, CPR and JIN look forward to effectively shaping the narrative and action on jobs in the country.

The State Capacity Initiative at CPR is an interdisciplinary research and practice programme focused on addressing the challenges of the 21st-century Indian state. The purpose of this initiative is to place the critical challenges of building state capacity at the heart of the field of policy research in India, where it has always belonged but remains surprisingly marginalised. We therefore start with first principles and ground ourselves in existing realities to deepen and expand the understanding of the challenges and possibilities of building state capacity in democratic and federal India. Our programme of work focuses on the changing roles of the Indian state; institutional design, implementation and administrative capacity especially at the state-level; the particular challenges of regulatory and fiscal capacity; and the complex and changing relations between society, politics and state capacity in India.

Sustaining an ecosystem of engagement:

The Initiative will work across sectors and states to identify and address a number of critical, cross-cutting/transversal issues and it will be both interdisciplinary and comparative in its approach, learning as deeply, broadly, rigorously and responsively as required.

The State Capacity Initiative at CPR is a long-term institutional commitment to developing and sustaining an ecosystem of engagement that will:

- Build an analytical framework for understanding and addressing the challenges of state capacity in India
- Generate a body of research based on high quality evidence, meaningful synthesis and high impact analysis
- Deepen the public debate on state capacity in India and build a shared vision for reform
- Develop and sustain networks and communities of practice across states, sectors and spheres (government, politics, development partners, academia, civil society and the media); and
- Translate into catalytic design-support engagements with the State – across different levels, regions and sectors

Scaling City Institutions for India Initiative (SCI-FI)

The Scaling City Institutions for India (SCI-FI) programme aims to better understand 'governance scale' in Indian cities in tandem with 'sector specific socio-economic scales'. Through research, the programme aims to inform stakeholders, including the three tiers of the government, to develop better informed policies and programmes enabling improved governance and service delivery. It has two key thematic focus in areas of Land, Housing and

Planning, and Water and Sanitation. The SCI-FI programme is nested at the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) since 2013.

The Land, Housing, and Planning (LHP) initiative under the SCI-FI programme aims to deepen the understanding of the interrelated governance and sector specific challenges in the land, housing and, planning in urban areas in India. The SCI-FI: LHP initiative envisages to inform multiple stakeholders, including the three tiers of the government, on demand-driven, sustainable, alternative, and scalable models for delivering and operationalizing housing, basic services, and property rights for the urban poor.

The Water and Sanitation initiative under the SCI-FI programme seeks to understand diverse reasons for poor water and sanitation and to examine how these might be related to technology, service delivery models, questions of institutions, governance, finance, and socio-economic dimensions. The SCI-FI: Water and Sanitation initiative seeks to support national, state, and city authorities to develop policies and programmes for intervention with the goal of increasing access to safe and sustainable sanitation in both urban and rural areas.

Conclusion:

Adopting a multidisciplinary approach, SCI-FI is organized around clusters of legal studies; water science and engineering/planning; economics; and social and anthropological studies to systematically undertake sector analysis, bottom up review and research. It works across thematic clusters to do academic research, programme analysis, action research, strengthen the capacity of government stakeholders, support policy formulation, and programme implementation. The programme continues to engage with various partners, including academicians, practitioners, civil society organisations, donor agencies, and government bodies at the national, state, and city levels.

India faces serious challenges in constructing development paths that are socially inclusive, ecologically sustainable, politically feasible, and in accordance with the Rule of Law. Current resource intensive growth strategies have caused serious environmental degradation and endangered the livelihoods of many vulnerable groups, particularly the scheduled tribes and other traditional communities. These vulnerable groups rely solely on land and the environment for sustenance. However, underneath these lands lie much sought after natural resources.

The CPR Land Rights Initiative was created in November 2014 as an institutional space for building systematic knowledge on land rights issues. The Initiative currently houses research projects on the constitutional right to property, land acquisition, land rights in the Scheduled Areas, and mapping land legislation in India.

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