PR10 / Design & Public Policy: Exploring Synergies

Topic : Practice

Chair : Akshay Prakash (Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design & Technology)

Second Chair : Ritu Sonalika (Srishti Manipal Institute of Art Design and Technology, Bengaluru)

Third Chair : Rachel Immanuel (Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design & Technology)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Design & Public Policy: Exploring synergies

Context

The service sector in the Indian economy contributes around 55-57% of the total economy in Gross Value Added (GVA) terms (Finance 2024).Driven by enterprises in the areas of IT and telecommunication, e-commerce, quick commerce, hospitality, tourism, financial services, healthcare, and others, they form the backbone of the Indian economy, making it the second largest employer after the agriculture sector.

An integral contribution to the evolution and deployment of these services comes from the field and discipline of Design. Design knowledge, principles and tools from the fields of Product/ Service-System Design (PSS) (Sakao and Lindahl 2009) coupled with User Interface (UI)/(UX) User Experience Design has given services a form, aesthetics and function that are completely different from how services used to traditionally operate and function. It has enabled services to be deployed with remarkable speed and nimbleness, all the while gathering information and user patterns to constantly iterate the service's features and value additions.

Further, with the rapid development and deployment of AI based tools into the PSS and UI/UX ecosystem, conventional iterative processes of design and development are rapidly changing.

While design has contributed to the form and aesthetics of services we see today, it has not adequately addressed system and service level challenges that affect the ecosystem and stakeholders involved. Challenges such as excessive packaging waste produced through products ordered online, fair wages and social security benefits to workers, data privacy, accountability and information asymmetry between consumers and owners of the services, are some of the many aspects that need to be addressed urgently through the design of these services.

Similar contexts and challenges are also being examined from the field of public policy. The Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025 and the recent consolidation of labour laws into four comprehensive labour codes, are attempts to provide social security and rights to workers. However, more needs to be done from a public policy perspective that brings together environmental, economic and cultural priorities to address the issues in this sector.

Hence, this panel seeks to explore the intersections between design and public policy to generate rich perspectives, informed opinions and possible solutions. By blending concepts, ideas and principles of design inquiry, and applying the lenses of public policy and governance, the attempt will be made to make interconnections that open unique opportunity areas for design and public policy based solutions that have a transformational impact for local communities.

Research Questions:

Theme 1: Processes of collaborations and feedback loops between design and public policy:

- What are the processes by which policy informs and guides the design and implementation of products and services such as in e/quick commerce, hospitality, tourism and other service oriented industries?

- How can policy be made simple for designers and how can design be made more accessible for policy makers?
- How can design inform policy when used as a research tool, ideation method, or prototype to validation?

Theme 2: Design & Public Policy interventions for public spaces:

- How can public policy and design inform each other in complex public space design projects? What is the effect of laws such as the Street Vending Act, 2014 and other policies and its implications on the design of public spaces?
- How do we use the tools of design (such as waste to wealth paradigms) to transform waste management at the local level?
- How do we design products, services and system level interventions that have the potential to leave a deeper impact on underserved communities in cities?

Theme 3: Compliance and regulatory mechanisms in designing products and services:

- What are the mechanisms by which companies and related government bodies are able to foresee the impact (environmental, economic, people, livelihoods) of a product or service during its design?
- How can we use design thinking and research as tools and a mechanism by which companies, organisations, governments are able to foresee the impact of a product or service on people, communities or the environment?
- What are the processes by which Government bodies ensure compliance or regulation from the service providers and consumers in this sector, especially in service sectors that generate significant quantities of waste?

Theme 4: Intersections between Design, Policy and Human Computer Interactions (HCI)

- Can contemporary design embedded in digital technologies, spatial systems, and platform strategies be examined through case studies to reveal its impact on people, work ethic, dignity, health and wellness, the environment, and the social and cultural conditions?

For example, by assessing the impacts of digital transformation or digital services on people, livelihoods, urban spaces, and the environment - through companies such as Urban Company, Swiggy, Ola, Namma Yatri, and Yes Madam - how can these everyday services inform the development of inclusive, equitable, and effective public policies?

Bibliography

Finance, Ministry of. 2024. Economic Survey. Government of India.
Sakao, Tomohiko, and Mattias Lindahl. 2009. Introduction to Product/Service-System Design. Springer.

Potential Papers:

The chairs will be contributing one co-authored paper focusing on designing products and services that have the potential to leave a deeper impact on underserved communities in cities.

Biography of the Co-Chairs:

Akshay Prakash: Akshay is a design educator, an engineer and a public policy practitioner. His mechanical engineering and public policy background enables blending of concepts, ideas and principles within the field of design. By keeping contextual- based design inquiry at the core of his practice, he applies the lenses of public policy and governance to make interconnections that open unique opportunity areas for design based solutions that have a transformational impact for local communities.

At Srishti Manipal Institute, Akshay executes projects and courses in the areas of service and systems

design, sustainable material design and engineering, industrial design and social design.

Ritu Sonalika: Ritu is an interdisciplinary designer and educator whose career spans across spatial, product, craft, furniture, learning resources and system design. She strongly feels about the changing role of designers in today's context and that designers must find newer opportunity spaces to design which makes an impact for the larger good.

With a relatively new kind of program BSSD:(Business Service System Design), that she leads, she hopes to bring to this program fresh ways to harness design thinking and methodologies in solving complex societal and business challenges and creating positive societal impact.

Rachel Immanuel: Rachel is a specialized design generalist working across Service Design, Systems and Strategy, human centered design and research, Business Modelling and Communication Design Strategy. Her practice brings together analytical rigor and human-centered inquiry, allowing her to work fluently across disciplines while keeping people, contexts, and relationships at the core of design decisions. Her interests focus on designing systems of care within communities and homes, and on imagining healthier, more walkable, fair and empathetic cities. Through her work, Rachel explores how services, environments, and everyday interactions can be thoughtfully designed to support wellbeing, dignity, and collective care, especially in complex urban and social systems.

Rachel is a design educator at Srishti and is interested in a changing world with respect to technology, culture and society. She uses design as a tool for research and is interested in the impact of design on people, culture and environment.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite academics, practitioners, experts and activists in the fields of design and public policy to submit research papers, case studies, policy briefs, reports, and practice-led insights for the panel titled 'Design and Public Policy: Exploring Synergies". This panel seeks to explore the intersections between design and public policy to generate rich perspectives, informed opinions and possible solutions for product, service and systems-design (PSS).

An integral contribution to the evolution and deployment of products and services comes from the field and discipline of Design. Design knowledge, principles and tools from the fields of Product/ Service-System Design (PSS) (Sakao and Lindahl 2009) coupled with User Interface (UI)/(UX) User Experience Design have given services a form, aesthetics and function that are completely different from how services used to traditionally operate and function. It has enabled services to be deployed with remarkable speed and nimbleness, all the while gathering information and user patterns to constantly iterate the service's features and value additions.

While design has contributed to the form and aesthetics of services we see today, it has not adequately addressed system and service level challenges that affect the ecosystem and stakeholders involved. Similar contexts and challenges are also being examined from the field of public policy.

By blending concepts, ideas and principles of design inquiry, and applying the lenses of public policy and governance, this panel invites contributions exploring interconnections that open unique opportunity areas for design and public policy based solutions that have a transformational impact for local communities.

The panels seeks contributions on the following themes:

Theme 1: Processes of collaborations and feedback loops between design and public policy:

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- How can policy be made simple for designers and how can design be made more accessible for policy makers?
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- Can contemporary design embedded in digital technologies, spatial systems, and platform strategies be examined through case studies to reveal its impact on people, work ethic, dignity, health and wellness, the environment, and the social and cultural conditions?

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Submission Guidelines:

Abstract (400-500 words) outlining the context, relevance, research questions and methodology and possible outcomes.

Final papers (between 3000-5000 words) may be in the form of case studies, research papers, policy briefs, reports, and practice-led insights.