NR15 / Digital Data and Policy Evaluation: Role of Contextual Knowledge in Data Driven Governance

Topic : Research

Chair : Nitya Jadeja (Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad)

Second Chair : Navdeep Mathur (Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

There is a growing narrative of implementing digitalisation to collect data and enable ‘data-driven governance’. The stated objective of the digital turn is to enhance efficiency and transparency within the system, as well as creating data that can inform policy decisions.

However, this discussion precludes the foundational questions around why digital data is privileged and why generalised insights are considered more relevant than context-specific observations. Therefore, this panel seeks to understand how digitalisation of policies and the narrative of ‘data-driven governance’ interacts with the experiential aspect of public policy.

The motivation behind this panel is to explore the trend of quantification and datafication in policy, which is understood as a scientific method for policy evaluation. Many scholars state that, despite policy designs, it may be enacted differently by street-level bureaucrats who make discretionary decisions regarding policy implementation. Thus, as contextual factors make policy implementation dynamic, it becomes crucial to understand the experiential aspect of policy and the sociopolitical context where it is being implemented.

Therefore, this panel asks the question of how contextual factors shape policy implementation and how the phenomenon of digitalisation and datafication incorporates or undermines these nuances. It also raises more fundamental questions about the hierarchy of knowledge in public policy and how different types of data (digital, field observations) are used/sidelined to create the narrative around a policy.

References:

Fischer, F. (1995). Evaluating public policy. Nelson-Hall.

Lipsky, M. (2010). Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service (30th anniversary ed.). Russell Sage Foundation.

van Dijck, J. (2013). The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media. Oxford University Press.

Stone, D. (2011). Numbers as political narratives. In G. K. Scherer & J. M. Blomberg (Eds.), The Oxford handbook of political science (pp. xx–xx). Oxford University Press.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel invites research that explores the interaction of digital systems with bureaucrats and policymakers. It also invites submissions that explore policy narrative and the role of digital quantified data in building this narrative. Papers that explore questions around e-governance, data privacy and surveillance concerns as also welcome. We also invite papers that discuss how these policies shape the narrative and experience for the most vulnerable members of the community.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

-The role of digital data in shaping policy narrative and the focus of government in creating and collecting this data.

-Datafication and quantification of policy process and its consequences on policy implementation and evaluation

-Empirical studies on the contextual nuances of policy and how these nuances are considered/erased in the larger quest for generalised, quantified inferences.

-Impact of these data and digital policies on the marginalised communities and vulnerable population, and the phenomenon of digital divide.