NR45 / Possible Directions for Global Governance in a Fragmented World – Examining the Role of Southern Actors and South-South Cooperation in Navigating Shifting Axes of Power

Topic : Research

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Abstract

Countries in the Global South increasingly bear a disproportionate burden of intersecting challenges such as health risks exacerbated by climate change, vaccine inequities due to breakdowns in global health governance, and deepening social and economic inequalities rooted in uneven urban transformation. Existing institutions in global governance have seen limited success in enforcing legal mandates, garnering legitimacy for global normative frameworks, advancing principles of equity and correcting North-South power imbalances, particularly in areas such as global health and climate change. The US exit from key global institutions has pushed these strained environments into further disarray. Southern actors are now confronted with navigating these changing dynamics of global governance, which they must balance with their own developmental imperatives. In this context, studies of South-South cooperation and national/ regional/ cross-regional efforts of Global South countries offer important lessons for the future of governance from a Southern lens. This will strengthen an empirical understanding of how fragmentation in global governance both constrains and enables South-South cooperation. In doing so, the panel not only examines how Southern actors respond to fragmentation but also how they are actively shaping, contesting, and redefining governance norms.

Research Questions

1. What are the institutional arrangements, political strategies, and stakeholders (national/ regional/ cross-regional) that have enabled Global South actors to advance more equitable global governance norms under conditions of uncertainty particularly focusing on the areas of health, climate change and urbanisation?
2. What interdisciplinary methodological approaches are useful to understand global governance fragmentation particularly on areas such as health, climate change and urbanisation?
3. What lessons does South-South cooperation offer to navigate changing power dynamics in health governance with specific impact on climate change and urbanisation?
4. What are some internal and external factors that constrain South-South cooperation [for instance, weak institutions, capacity, political prioritisation (internal); geopolitical asymmetries, global financing gaps, aid dependencies (external)]? What are some possible ways to bridge these gaps?

CALL FOR PAPERS

Abstract

Global governance, broadly understood as the “pursuit of collective interests” (Peters, 2001), in its prevalent structures faces existential challenges across core sectors with established regimes such as health and climate change. These also apply to areas without established regimes such as urban transformation, which are nonetheless shaped by international flows of actors, capital, ideas and politics. Rising protectionism and weakening multilateralism has raised legitimacy questions about key institutions of the system such as the UN and WHO. In the context of global health, Spicer et al. (2020) highlight that fragmentation is caused by– a proliferation of actors, challenges in global leadership, poor accountability and transparency, diverging interests, i.e. misaligned financial interests and priorities of Global North actors and LMICs, and structural power imbalances. This moment of reckoning could also push for a transformation towards an inclusive global order, responsive to the needs of the Global South which has historically remained at the margins. Afterall, as Weiss and Wilkinson (2014) note, power asymmetry was always a hallmark of global governance structures.

Against this backdrop, this panel brings together empirical and methodological contributions to examine how

Southern actors navigate this fragmented governance landscape. We invite papers that focus on intersections between global governance, health, climate change, and urban transformation, where fragmentation presents itself as both a challenge and a possible site for new models of cooperation and shifting axes of power.

Types of contributions: The panel invites methodological and empirical contributions that touch upon one or more research questions stipulated above.

Potential papers:

1. India at the Climate–Health Crossroads: Governing Risk, Resilience, and Equity in the Global South - Neethi Rao, Pooja V Ramamurthi, Priyanka Tomar

2. Navigating a Fragmented Global Health Governance Landscape: Assessing the role of South-South Cooperation within the Pandemic Agreement Negotiations - Priyadarshini Singh and Anoushka Gupta

3. Urban Health Slipping Through the Cracks - Indrani Gupta and Alok V Singh

4. Landscape of Health Networks in Asia: Identifying Opportunities for Regional Action – Nadine Monteiro, Neethi Rao, Sandhya Venkateswaran

Profiles of Co-chairs

Dr. Priyadarshini Singh is a Research Fellow, at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress. Her research focuses on the politics of social welfare policy at the global level with a focus on Global health Governance systems as well as Indian national and regional levels. She is currently leading a three state study on drivers of urban primary care and elementary education state-initiatives in Karnataka, Rajasthan and Odisha. She holds a Phd from SOAS, University of London.

Indrani Gupta is Professor and Head, Health Policy Research Unit (HPRU) at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. HPRU - set up by her in 1998 - is the first of its kind in India. Her areas research work include health insurance and financing, poverty and health, costing and cost-effectiveness, and international agreements.She holds a Phd from the University of Maryland, USA.