NR46 / Rethinking Regulation: Legal Design for Effective Governance in the Global South

Topic : Research

Chair : Akanksha Bisoyi (Technical University of Munich)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Theme: Governance, Regulation, and Institutional Design

Context and Objectives

Across the Global South, the quality of laws and regulations directly shapes administrative performance, market participation, and citizen trust. Many policy instruments remain overly complex, vaguely drafted, or misaligned with ground-level state capacity. These issues generate wide administrative discretion, inconsistent enforcement, heavy compliance burdens, and even criminalisation of minor economic activities. Such design failures weaken the promise of policy intent and create friction for small entrepreneurs, service providers, and ordinary citizens.

Legal design offers a structured and interdisciplinary pathway to address these challenges. By combining design thinking, legal reasoning, policy diagnostics, and stakeholder engagement, legal design treats legislation as a deliberately crafted product. This approach has shown value in simplifying municipal by-laws, rationalising licensing norms, reducing penalties for petty offences, redesigning education regulatory frameworks, and improving access to welfare through clearer eligibility rules. It lends itself particularly well to environments where institutional capacity, data, and monitoring mechanisms are uneven.

This panel examines how legal design can improve regulatory quality, strengthen predictability, and enhance citizen centred governance. It will bring together contributions from practitioners, scholars, and policy lab professionals who have worked on real-world reform pilots and wish to explore the interface between design methods, regulatory clarity, and system-wide accountability.

Scientific Relevance

Although OECD countries have experimented with plain-language drafting, regulatory impact assessment, and participatory consultation protocols, these tools often assume strong administrative capacity and deep data infrastructures. In the Global South, legal and regulatory systems frequently span multiple overlapping jurisdictions, delegate broad discretion to frontline authorities, and impose compliance obligations that exceed administrative ability.

Legal design scholarship therefore requires contextual adaptation. There is a growing need to understand how design-driven approaches can reduce unnecessary complexity, minimise discretion, integrate monitoring and evaluation at the drafting stage, and support reforms such as decriminalisation of minor offences or simplification of business regulations. This panel contributes to the scientific debate by highlighting how legal design enhances legitimacy, strengthens accountability, and improves the everyday functioning of government.

Research questions

The panel will explore questions such as:
? How do administrative capacity, institutional incentives, and socio-economic context shape the

effectiveness of legal design tools in the Global South?
? What benefits and limitations do plain-language drafting, prototyping, compliance burden audits, and indicator-based templates offer in improving regulatory quality?
? How can co-design and participatory drafting strengthen legitimacy, reduce discretion, and enhance transparency in governance?
? In what ways does building monitoring, evaluation, and data-linked indicators into the drafting phase improve long-term implementation?
? How can legal design approaches support decriminalisation, rationalisation of penalties, simplification of licensing regimes, or improvements in education and welfare regulation?

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite conceptual contributions, empirical studies, and reform-oriented papers that examine how legal design can support more responsive, coherent, and implementable public policy. Submissions may explore:
? Case studies where legal design improved clarity or reduced compliance burdens in areas such as municipal regulation, licensing, social protection, education governance, or urban services;
? Experiences integrating monitoring, evaluation, data indicators, or multi-criteria diagnostics into legislative or regulatory drafting;
? Comparative insights on adapting legal design methodologies across different administrative or cultural environments;
? Analyses of legal design's role in decriminalising minor economic violations, strengthening ease of doing business, or redesigning grievance redress mechanisms;
? Participatory and co-creation models that help align global policy principles with local governance needs;
? Theoretical contributions on regulatory quality, state capability, discretion reduction, and rule of law through a design lens.

Indicative paper themes that would fit well within this panel include, but are not limited to:
? Rewriting municipal vendor licensing codes through user-centred design;
? Designing penalty frameworks that shift minor offences from criminal to civil domains;
? Embedding indicators and Monitoring & Evaluation templates into state education regulatory authorities;
? Prototyping simplified welfare eligibility norms for low-capacity administrative environments.

Selected papers will contribute to a multidisciplinary discussion on how better-designed laws can enhance governance effectiveness, promote predictability, and create more citizen-centred regulatory systems across the Global South.

Biography of each chair:

? **Dr. Akanksha Bisoy**i is a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer at the Technical University of Munich, Germany. Her work examines how legal design can improve regulatory quality and governance in contexts with uneven institutional capacity. She explores the intersection of law and emerging technologies—AI, blockchain, and the metaverse—while developing participatory, human-centered approaches to regulatory reform. Akanksha holds a Master's degree in International Law from the Graduate Institute in Geneva, Switzerland, and has experience working with international organizations and grassroots initiatives. Her research emphasizes simplifying complex regulations, embedding monitoring mechanisms, and designing frameworks that enhance legitimacy, predictability, and citizen-centered governance.
? **Mr. Nitesh Anand** is Senior Fellow – Policy Research & Outreach at Centre for Civil Society, Delhi, India. A Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung Scholar and India Fellow, he holds a Master's in Politics and Technology from Technical University of Munich, Germany, and an engineering degree. Certified as a Liberal Ambassador, Nitesh specializes in political facilitation and multi-stakeholder dialogue. He advises Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports, and has contributed to policy development and social accountability initiatives in India, Cambodia, Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Germany. At CCS, he leads strategies for impact in K-12 education, livelihoods, and governance reforms. Passionate about human-centered and legal design, he envisions a liberal global order of choice and opportunity.