P10 / Policy Capacity, Governance Arrangements, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Global South

Topic : COMPARATIVE PUBLIC POLICY

Chair : Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

Second Chair : Alketa Peci (Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) poses complex challenges for Global South nations, where state capacities, policy effectiveness, and implementation arrangements tend to be considered fragile. However, they are essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda. This panel explores the intersection between policy capacity, implementation arrangements, and SDG success, focusing on how governments in the Global South mobilize resources, build institutions, and navigate political and institutional complexities to ensure effective and sustainable policy outcomes.
Drawing on frameworks from public administration and policy scholars, the panel examines how policy capacity deployment and implementation arrangements—involving diverse actors, resources, and instruments—activate policy capacities for SDG implementation. Their approach underscores that policy capacity skills and resources are not static but depend on dynamic governance arrangements and political deployment to ensure effective implementation.
The overarching research question is: How can policy capacity and governance arrangements in the Global South be optimized to enhance the effective implementation of the SDGs?
Sub-questions include:
• What are the critical factors that influence the success or failure of SDG policies?
• How do public sector innovation, dynamic capabilities, and decentralization contribute to the progress of SDG implementation?
• How can policy capacity be politically deployed across different levels of government to align national strategies with SDG?
This panel's scientific relevance lies in its focus on bridging theoretical discussions of state policy capacity with the practical realities of SDG governance implementation. By emphasizing the political and relational dynamics between politics, administrative resources, and policy instruments, the panel addresses a gap in understanding how state capacity is activated through governance arrangements and how these arrangements influence the success of SDG policies.
This panel will cover:
• Governance structures and the role of public sector innovation in supporting SDG implementation.
• The importance of dynamic capabilities in adapting and reconfiguring resources to meet development challenges.
• The impact of political leadership, intergovernmental coordination, and collaboration with civil society and private sector actors in achieving SDG goals.
The panel format will be onsite, allowing for in-person and virtual participation.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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This panel invites empirical, theoretical, and methodological papers addressing the following themes:

· Governance Arrangements and Policy Capacity Deployment: How do the configuration of actors, resources, and instruments in governance arrangements activate or obstacle administrative skills and resources for SDG implementation?

· Policy Capacity Deployment for SDG Success: How can different forms of policy capacity (administrative, technical, and political) be deployed to align national strategies with SDG goals? Papers analyzing political leadership, coordination mechanisms, and institutional reforms in this process are highly encouraged.

· Public Sector Innovation and Dynamic Capabilities: The role of innovation and adaptability within public sector organizations in overcoming SDG challenges and promoting sustainable development.

· Multi-level governance and Coordination: How do national, regional, and local governments coordinate to ensure effective SDG implementation? Papers exploring the role of decentralization and local governance in delivering SDG outcomes are encouraged.

· Collaborative Governance and Stakeholder Engagement: Research on the involvement of civil society, the private sector, and international organizations in the collaborative governance models necessary for SDG success is welcome. Contributions analyzing cross-sectoral partnerships to overcome barriers in policy implementation are also welcome.

· Political Economy and Power Relations: How do political priorities, vested interests, and the broader political economy shape the capacity of states in the Global South to implement the SDGs? Papers analyzing power dynamics and their impact on SDG policy processes are invited.

We encourage submissions employing diverse methodological approaches—such as case studies, comparative analyses, and policy evaluations—to enrich the discussion on state capacity, governance arrangements, policy instruments, and SDG implementation in the Global South.

The panel will be divided into multiple sessions for diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary dialogue.

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Session 1Session 1

Thursday, July 3rd 08:00 to 10:00 (A2)

Discussants

Mariana Ballen (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru)

Alketa Peci (Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil)

Service-Specific Administrative Capacity and collaborative service delivery in Achieving SDGs: A Study of Water, Sanitation, and Waste Management in Peruvian local governments

Mariana Ballen (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru)

edgardo Cruzado (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú)

Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Global South, particularly in Latin America, faces major challenges, with progress stagnating or reversing in some areas (UN DESA, 2024). Meeting SDG targets on public service access and quality, such as water, sanitation (SDG 6), and waste management (SDG 11), is particularly difficult due to varying capacities of local governments.
In Peru, access to public water has slightly declined, and 24% of households lack sanitation services. In solid waste management, 40% face inadequate waste disposal. A particular aspect of the 20-year decentralization process is the creation of 70 additional local governments, based on the premise that this will contribute to a greater allocation of resources and improved well-being of citizens in the new local governments. In 2024 alone, regulatory initiatives have been proposed to create 37 additional local governments, but its impact on service delivery remains unclear.
The research question investigates the extent to which local-level, service-specific administrative capacity influences service performance, and how territorial conditions and the creation of new local governments impact service provision. A local government service delivery capacity index will be developed, providing a tool to identify opportunities for collaborative service delivery between local governments and other stakeholders, thereby contributing to the advancement of SDG targets.
To support the results, we use a panel database of Peruvian local governments for the period 2015-2023. The methodological approach consists of two stages:
i) Estimation and analysis of local government efficiency through the construction of an index using principal component analysis, with inputs from variables related to public services. The dynamics over time will also be assessed to analyze progress or limitations throughout the study period, considering the typology of local governments and their territorial behavior. This will help identify patterns related to local or geographical conditions through spatial autocorrelation measures.
ii) Analysis of the explanatory factors of local government efficiency: This stage aims to understand which factors—such as territorial, economic, or social aspects—may affect or condition improvements (or lack thereof) in efficiency. Special attention will be given to the time of creation of local governments to understand the impact of their increase. Spatial models will be used to capture potential dependencies between territories, accounting for unobservable factors that come with working with spatial units, due to the marked heterogeneity within the national territory.
This paper addresses how local administrative capacity impact service performance, particularly in water, sanitation, and waste management and exploring how new local governments may struggle to meet SDG targets, offering insights into governance arrangements and policy capacity deployment. The study also provides a means to collaborative governance to overcome lack of administrative skills at the local level with the aim of enhancing SDG outcomes in the Global South.

(Virtual) Understanding Policy Design and Integration to Enhance SDGs Implementation in the Global South

Bushra Faizi (Hamad Bin Khalifa University)

Evren Tok (Hamad Bin Khalifa University)

Mohamed Eskandar Shah (Hamad Bin Khalifa University)

Countries in the Global South (developing nations) face significant challenges in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to UN estimates, the Asia-Pacific region alone could fail to meet 90% of the 116 measurable SDG targets if current trends persist. This is particularly alarming for the poorest and most vulnerable communities, including women, children, and indigenous people. Given this urgency, a comprehensive review of existing policies is essential to ensure more innovative policy design and effective implementation. Strengthening policy capacity is crucial not only for advancing SDG achievements but also for benchmarking against the successful policies of the Global North.

Another critical issue is the ambiguity surrounding the transformative potential of the SDGs. Despite years of implementation, many SDGs drive change primarily at the discursive level but fail to translate into substantive allocative and legislative policy reforms (Biermann et al., 2022).Recent research by Kidjie and Howlett (2024) highlights that the SDGs face challenges in policy integration due to the complex, “super-wicked” nature of the problems they address. Addressing these challenges requires capacity-building and improved coordination among stakeholders to better align policy goals. Furthermore, policy integration strategies must be designed in conjunction with the necessary policy capacities to ensure the effective implementation of the SDGs (Biermann et al., 2009).

The objective of this research is to assess the existing policy landscape, evaluate effective policy design, and identify gaps in policy integration to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Global South. This assessment is crucial, as disparities in the region stem from various challenges, including financial constraints, limited institutional capacity, insufficient technology, climate change vulnerability, and a lack of resources and international support. To address these issues, this study examines the design, integration, and implementation of existing policies in the context of the UN’s 2030 SDG agenda. Specifically, it evaluates policy frameworks in Global South nations and their impact on SDG performance. Furthermore, this research evaluates the capacity of these nations to implement SDG policies by analyzing key metrics such as institutional, policy, administrative, governance, implementation, and innovation capacity, as derived from public policy theory and literature.

Building on this assessment, the study aims to highlight critical areas requiring innovation and scaling. Using a mixed-methods approach, it will analyze policy documents, policy evaluation metrics, SDG performance reports, and macro-level data from the UN SDG Partnership Platform. The more specific objective is to provide a broad exploration of sustainable development policy design and examines regional and national case studies to illustrate policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. To conclude, this study directly addresses the panel’s key research question: How can policy capacity and governance arrangements in the Global South be optimized to enhance the effective implementation of SDGs?

State capacity at municipal and state level and student achievement differences the case of Brazil

Natália Sátyro (Federal University of Minas Gerais)

Pedro Cunha (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais)

Filipe Recch (University of Pittsburgh)

Bruno Costa (Fundação João Pinheiro)

Natália Sátyro – Federal University of Minas Gerais

Filipe Reech – Pittsburg University

Pedro Cunha – Câmara Municipal de Belo Horizonte

Bruno Lazarotti Diniz – Fundação João Pinheiro

Public primary and middle schools (1st to 9th grades) in Brazil's complex education system are managed in each state by both state and municipal administrations, noting that we have 5570 municipalities and 26 states). These variety and parallel school administrations in the same school districts generate differences in the quality of schooling. The familiar background and teacher and school characteristics, as well the characteristics of the head of school impact on student performance have a considerable accumulation in

Brazilian literature. However, much less has been analyzed about the state capacity at the municipal and state secretariat level and the state capacity of the municipality as a whole. This paper intends to evaluate the effects of state capacity within the municipal and state secretariat and the state capacity of the municipality beyond the educational area on student performance. Econometric models that consider the hierarchy of data were used and our findings show that specific characteristics of the departments (at municipal and state level), as well as the municipality's planning capacity, influence student proficiency.

(Virtual) Multi-level governance of Brazilian national policy systems: legal innovation in supporting SDG implementation

Isabela Ruiz (Université Panthéon-Assas (Paris II))

In Brazil, the 1988 Constitution determined the structuring of a welfare state, aiming to guarantee social rights to all citizens. Those constitutional objectives are now strengthened by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda.

To achieve those goals, some of the Brazilian social policies are currently organized in the legal-institutional form of systems, that is, with legal instruments designed to split the financing of state activities between the three levels of the federation, coordinate those actions, and ensure arenas and instruments for multi-level governance, with the participation of civil society and government representatives of federated entities in the decision-making process.

This mix of policy instruments was first implemented in the health system and then replicated in other sectoral policies, such as education and social assistance and, more recently, environmental protection, culture, and public security. Even though the policy design is very similar, for some of those sectoral policies, the results in terms of policy capacity, outcomes, and even the federative coordination have not been as effective.

This presentation discusses an ongoing study that compares the policy instruments of six national systems: Unified Health System (SUS), Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), National Education System (SNE), National Environmental System (SISNAMA), Unified Public Security System (SUSP), and National Culture System (SNC). The main objective is to categorize the policy instruments of these systems into six dimensions of policy structuring: organizational (state capacity and managing agencies), substantive (the content of social provisions), participatory (state permeability to civil society demands), financial (economic sustainability of the policy), intergovernmental (relations between different levels of government), and instrumental (policy implementation mechanisms). Additionally, the study examines how legal and institutional frameworks shape the adaptability and responsiveness of these systems to emerging challenges, identifying mechanisms that enhance flexibility and innovation in governance.

Until now, the results show that the legacy of legal-institutional structuring of the different sectoral policies is an explanatory factor for variations in implementation outcomes. While the federal government has been successful in decentralizing programs through financial transfers to subnational entities in health and social assistance, the legacy of local provision of education and public security has posed challenges for federal coordination.

The research analyzes the difference in political capacity when it comes to citizen participation and multi-level governance arrangements across systems. The governance arrangements, constrained by rules, procedures, and institutions, can only be optimized when the institutional and political legacy of each sectorial policy is taken seriously.

This research highlights how legal studies on policy instruments can contribute to the discussion about political capacity, based on the types of norms and the sequence of approval of these norms, and also on the range of actors involved in the decision-making process.

The findings suggest that the legal arrangement of national systems contains policy instruments for intergovernmental coordination and collaboration with civil society and private sector actors that are crucial in organizing policy provision. More importantly, these instruments must be adapted to the specific context of each sector to effectively activate policy capacity and ensure the guarantee of constitutional rights and achievement of the SDG.

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Session 2Session 2

Thursday, July 3rd 10:15 to 12:15 (A2)

Discussants

Alok Ranjan (Indian Institute of Technology-Jodhpur)

Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

(Virtual) Leveraging public engagement to improve healthcare quality: The role of community and stakeholder engagement in Colombia's National Quality of Care Strategy

Kayla Benjamin (University of Toronto)

Abstract: Public engagement, also referred to as community and stakeholder engagement (CSE), and high-quality care are core components of strategies to achieve universal health coverage (UHC), one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. As part of the movement toward achieving UHC, Colombia has developed one of the first national quality-of-care strategies in the Latin America and Caribbean region. However, the degree to which public engagement was considered in the development and implementation of Colombia's national quality of care strategy is not clearly understood. With a growing global consensus on the importance of public engagement in health systems and policy, this article reports on a qualitative case study comprising a document analysis followed by qualitative interviews to explore how CSE has been considered in the design and implementation of Colombia's National Quality of Care Strategy. In an analysis guided by the Lavery framework for CSE, we address the following three research objectives: 1) describe how community and stakeholder engagement is reflected in Colombia's National Quality of Care Strategy; 2) explore approaches undertaken to engage community and stakeholders in the development and implementation of the National Quality of Care Strategy and their perceived effectiveness; and 3) report on strengths and opportunities for improving CSE in health policymaking in Colombia. The study findings demonstrate a strong commitment to CSE in the development of national quality of care policies in Colombia. However, engagement approaches have received inconsistent political and financial support and have been poorly tracked, creating barriers to the meaningful engagement of the Colombian public in the development of the National Quality of Care Strategy. These findings hold important implications for Colombia and other jurisdictions. The article concludes with considerations for the design of effective and meaningful community and stakeholder engagement strategies in public policy relevant to this region and beyond.

Alignment with the T02P10 panel: This paper is relevant for the T02P10 panel as the present case study centers on two core components of strategies to achieve SDG Target 3.8 in Colombia: community and stakeholder engagement (CSE) and high-quality care. As WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, wrote in his Lancet Global Health commentary, "Without quality, universal health coverage remains an empty promise." In addition, this case study aligns with the panel theme 'Collaborative Governance and Stakeholder Engagement,' as we explore methods of CSE in the design and implementation of national health policy. We conclude this paper with considerations for the design of effective and meaningful CSE strategies that lend value to interdisciplinary discussions around improving the implementation of the SDGs in the Global South.

Decentralization and Health Governance in Rajasthan: Insights from India's Aspirational Districts Program

Isha Sharma (Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur)

Alok Ranjan (Indian Institute of Technology-Jodhpur)

Atul Pandey (Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur)

Anindita Dey (Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur (India))

Decentralization has been widely recognized as a critical governance strategy for improving service delivery and achieving sustainable development in resource-constrained settings. In India the Aspirational Districts Program (ADP) serves as a flagship initiative aimed at transforming underdeveloped districts across multiple dimensions, including health, to align with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3). Rajasthan being one of India's largest and socio-economically diverse states, offers a compelling backdrop for analyzing the effectiveness of decentralization in health governance. Therefore, this paper explores the role of decentralization in health governance within the ADP framework, analyzing its impact on improving health outcomes in Rajasthan. The study aligns with the panel's overarching research question on optimizing governance arrangements and policy capacity to enhance SDG implementation in the Global South.

Against this background this study addresses two key questions; how has decentralization under the ADP influenced health governance structures in Rajasthan's underdeveloped districts? and what lessons can be drawn from the ADP in Rajasthan for strengthening decentralized governance models in similar contexts? This paper leverages secondary data including progress reports from the ADP, health indicators from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), referred to as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) in India and Health Management Information System (HMIS), and policy documents issued by NITI Aayog. The study used the third, fourth and fifth rounds of NFHS data collected in 200-06, 2015–16 and 2019–21 respectively. The third and fourth rounds serve as the pre-treatment and fifth round serve as post-treatment data for our analysis.

Preliminary findings highlight both successes and challenges. High-performing districts have demonstrated significant improvements in health indicators, while low-performing districts face persistent challenges, including capacity gaps among local officials, inadequate financial autonomy, and limited technical support. These disparities underscore the critical role of capacity building, financial decentralization, and participatory governance in achieving health equity. Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of fostering participatory governance to enhance accountability and service uptake. By examining the ADP's decentralized health governance model in Rajasthan, this paper provides valuable lessons for policymakers and development practitioners aiming to leverage decentralization as a tool for achieving SDG 3 in underdeveloped regions.

This study contributes to the panel's discourse on governance arrangements and policy capacity by illustrating how decentralization activates administrative and technical capacities at the district level. It aligns with the panel's emphasis on dynamic governance arrangements and multi-level coordination, offering actionable insights for optimizing decentralized governance in the Global South.

(Virtual) SHARED SERVICES CENTERS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE STUDY IN GLOBAL SOUTH

Thaís Villela (Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services)

Joao Glass (MGI)

Wanessa Oliveira (University of Brasília (Brazil))

In the public sector, a Shared Services Center (SSC) refers to a government unit providing support services to more than one agency/ministry. Units that serve only a single agency/ministry are not considered SSCs (OECD, 2010). In a comparative study of SSCs in the public sector, Souza and Silva (2020) define SSCs as "a practice in which Public Administration shares a set of public services and activities, avoiding duplicated functions within their structures, aiming at cost reduction, improved service quality, and increased transparency." SSCs allow governments to focus their efforts on high-impact activities for their core mission, rather than on routine administrative tasks.

According to Ferreira et al. (2010), New Public Management (NPM) has encouraged the adoption of shared services in the public sector by incorporating advancements from private sector business management practices. The first formal SSCs in the public sector were identified in the 1990s, with notable examples in Australia and Canada. Since then, SSCs have become more common globally, with some labeling them as a "global megatrend" (Elston & MacCarthaigh, 2014 apud European Commission & Thijis, 2022). Numerous

studies on SSCs in the public sector have been published, particularly in Europe, Australia, the United States, and Canada – the Global North.

This study addresses the gap in research on SSCs in Latin America and Africa by exploring practical examples in these regions. With a focus on the recent Brazilian federal government SSC (ColaboraGov), several questions are raised: *Is the model adopted by Global South countries similar to that of the Global North? Which countries' models resemble the Brazilian federal government model (ColaboraGov)? In what aspects is Brazil innovating? What is ColaboraGov's potential impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?*

The comparative analysis follows a methodology in three stages: 1) Gathering information on SSCs in Latin America and Africa, identifying key characteristics and services; 2) Comparative analysis to identify similarities and differences between SSCs in Latin America and Africa and those in developed countries from the Global North; 3) Specific analysis of ColaboraGov compared to other countries. The selection of cases for this study was made based on the official language of their government websites, restricted to Portuguese, Spanish, or English.

SSCs, known for over 20 years in the public sector, offer several advantages, including cost reduction and better allocation of resources, allowing agencies to focus on their core missions. However, in the Global South, except for Brazil, SSCs tend to be focused on specific areas (e.g., Information Technology or Human Resources). In the Global North, there are specialized SSCs, but it is also possible to find diverse SSC models offering a broader range of services. Initially treated as a “collaborative arrangement”, ColaboraGov formally became as an SSC in 2023. Nowadays it serves 13 ministries, which are directly aligned with 8 of the 17 SDGs from the UN 2030 Agenda - and indirectly supports the others. By relieving agencies of auxiliary services, ColaboraGov enhances their capacity to achieve their institutional missions, contributing to the global implementation of the SDGs.