P05 / Policy Transfer in the Global South

Topic : COMPARATIVE PUBLIC POLICY

Chair : Kidjie Saguin (University of Melbourne)

Second Chair : Niklas Weins (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In the past 10 years, policy transfer studies have increasingly accommodated Southern approaches and views on the transnational movement of policies. The notion of South-South cooperation (SSC) is built on the idea that policies are deliberately circulated within and among nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. South-North policy transfer (SNPT) is also intensifying but often happening unnoticed because of asymmetries in power, resources and authority that privilege Northern countries as the legitimate sources of innovative policies (Kemmerling 2023). Incorporating knowledge generated from Southern experiences can not only challenge these asymmetries but it can also transform the understanding of policy transfer, more specifically and public policy, more broadly (Stone et al 2020).

Central to expanding the epistemic coverage of policy transfer studies is the understanding of how ‘reference societies’ or “a nation from which to borrow elements” are created (Waldow 2019, 2). Traditionally, reference societies are constructed as Northern countries based largely on historical, colonial and cultural affiliation. However, recent studies shed light on new patterns of constructing reference societies. The use of large-scale performance-based metrics has established Singapore and Shanghai as a source of successful education policies because they topped global quantitative rankings. Elites from Northern countries express negative reception or ‘shock’ against being ranked below their Southern counterparts, prompting a contentious reform process. These developments present new forms of contestations.

Recently, Brazil and China emerged as a powerful source of new instruments, knowledge, ideas (Waisbich et al. 2021). They come as the ‘two main protagonists in the context of SSC’ as they actively peddle their different policy paradigms undergirded by different political systems (Oliveira and Romano 2022, 5). China has exerted influence in the Global South on environmental policies through varying strategies including conventional development aid (Ray et al 2015, Weins et al 2023). Brazil has served as inspiration for many social policy innovations largely through SSC with the help of many international organizations (de Oliveira 2022). More recently, less economically and politically powerful countries have also become ‘reference societies’, holding power and capacity to transfer policies within specific domains. Bangladesh’ anti-poverty policies like microfinance and graduation of the ultra-poor has spread through SSC (Halder and Mosley 2004). The Philippines is the primary source of innovation on labour migration policy (Saguin and Shivakoti 2023). Similarly, there is a decidedly local element to the construction of reference societies (Saguin and Sha 2023). Best practices are often experimented on and mastered by local governments and scaled up for transfer to the transnational level (Montero 2016).

This panel seeks to bring together researchers who examine old and new reference societies in the Global South at the local, national and transnational levels. It aims to build an interdisciplinary conversation around the multi-scalar contestations that occur around the reconstitution of reference societies. It hopes to invigorate studies that unravels the theoretical foundations of the factors that drive for policies to be constructed as successful, and for nations, cities or localities to be perceived as legitimate sources of policy lessons in the Global South.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel seeks contributions from various researchers working on the multi-scalar dimensions of policy transfer in the Global South. We are interested in papers that investigate similar notions of ‘reference societies’ – their construction and reconfiguration. Papers that dwell on the politics of (old and new) reference societies are particularly welcome. Specifically, we invite papers that analyse how policies are being transferred at the local, national and transnational levels that pay attention to the contestation around the source of the policy and the subsequent translation in the ‘recipient’ society.

Some of the research questions the panel seeks to explore are the following:

· How do countries from the Global South emerge as new ‘reference societies’? How is this process

contested?

· How are reference societies constructed at the local level? Is there any specific pattern to how policies from ‘local reference societies’ are transferred?

· Why are certain countries and their policies likely to be constructed as a reference society or ‘best practice’ rather than others?

· How are new reference societies accepted in the Global South? Is there a similar ‘shock’ to their introduction as noted in traditional reference societies?

This panel embraces methodological pluralism and so we invite papers following different disciplinary traditions – geography, environmental studies, local government, among others – but the main focus is on policies that have been transferred at different scales – transnational, national and local. Both empirical (quantitative and qualitative) and conceptual studies are welcome.

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Session 1Policy transfer in the Global South

Friday, July 4th 08:00 to 10:00 (A5)

Discussants

Lhawang Ugyel (Australian National University)

Policy Transfer from the European Union to Vietnam: The case of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

Thu Nguyen Hoang Anh (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

As the world's largest importer of fishery products, the European Union (EU) has adopted a “zero-tolerance” approach towards Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Under the EU’s IUU Regulation, the European Commission (EC) has assisted Vietnam in reforming its fisheries policies. This paper applies the policy transfer framework to investigate the transfer process of anti-IUU fishing policies from the EU to Vietnam. A qualitative research approach is adopted, with primary data collected from interviews with key stakeholders. The interview data is supplemented by official legislation, policy documents, and relevant secondary literature. Data analysis reveals that the EU has transferred policy ideas, goals, and instruments to Vietnam. The EU-Vietnam dialogue on IUU fishing represents a form of voluntary yet indirect coercive transfer using the mechanism of conditionality. The policy transfer process has resulted in substantial improvements in Vietnam’s fisheries policies and laws. However, it remains incomplete, as some policy goals set by the EC have not been achieved. Four recommendations are proposed for Vietnam to better address the IUU problem: (1) continuing to revise fisheries laws; (2) enhancing law enforcement at the local level; (3) providing timely and effective support for fishers; and (4) accelerating cooperation with relevant stakeholders, such as Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, non-governmental organisations, and neighbouring countries. This paper empirically expands the literature and contributes to the growing number of studies on policy transfer outside the OECD, in Asia, and in developing countries.

Beyond Rivers: The Policy Transfer and Institutionalization of the N-Chief System in China

Weiquan Chen (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

As a locally initiated, bottom-up innovation in watershed governance, the River Chief System (RCS) was incorporated into national policy by the central government after demonstrating significant effectiveness. The RCS has undergone extensive horizontal spatial transfer across regions and vertical diffusion across administrative levels, reflecting its adaptability and scalability. Beyond its geographic and administrative expansion, the RCS has also achieved conceptual spillover, extending its governance principles to various environmental and resource management contexts. This has led to the formation of the broader N-Chief System, a governance mechanism characterized by a ‘responsibility contracting’ approach. This system includes the Lake Chief System and Bay Chief System for watershed governance, the Island Chief System and Mountain Chief System for terrestrial environmental management, as well as the Forest Chief, Grassland Chief, and Farmland Chief Systems for resource governance. This study aims to collect and analyze secondary data, such as policy documents, and adopt a comparative case study approach to explore the trajectories and characteristics of policy innovation transfer across different contexts. The research seeks to identify and summarize the mechanisms of conceptual spillover during the policy transfer process of the N-Chief System framework. Moreover, recent studies suggest that China has become a powerful source of new governance instruments, ideas, and knowledge, particularly in the context of South-South cooperation (Waisbich et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022). China has also exerted influence on environmental policy frameworks in the Global South through various channels, including bilateral cooperation and development initiatives (Ray et al., 2015; Weins et al., 2023). Given its effectiveness,

adaptability, and scalability, the N-Chief System holds significant potential for policy transfer and adoption in the Global South, particularly through mechanisms such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As China's environmental governance models continue to evolve and gain international recognition, the country may increasingly play an active role as a future reference society in global environmental governance.

Divergent epistemologies for policy transfer: Comparative Examination of the disciplines of 'Development Studies' and 'Public Policy'

Sony Pellissery (National Law School of India University)

Smriti Das (XLRI Delhi-NCR Campus)

Richu Sanil (Foundation for Ecological Security)

Over sixty years, precisely since the end of World War II, 'Development Studies' (DS) as a discipline had dominated to inform the policy advice in the countries of Global South. United Kingdom, where the discipline originated and thrived, primarily trained development professionals and researchers and provided epistemic basis for interventions in its erstwhile colonies. Many other countries of the Global North (USA, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Scandinavian countries and many others), which provided development aid, also shared this epistemic basis. Though the attempt for decolonizing DS was made, it has not been successful, and scholars themselves were divided on this aim.

Since the beginning of 21st century, DS is facing a crisis (Harriss 2019), and epistemic shift to post-development policies have accelerated since then. Many Global South countries which were recipients of development aid (China, Brazil, India) have become donors. It is around the same time, the discipline of Public Policy (PP) emerged in the countries of Global South, which had its evolution since 1930s in the Global North, more specifically in the United States. Economic liberalization that many of the countries adopted after 'Washington Consensus' (interestingly, many scholars consider this as the watershed for the crisis of discipline of DS) created a favourable condition for embracing PP as source of knowledge for interventions. A positive role for private enterprises in achieving public good is also visualized in PP (Mazzucato 2013), compared to DS which viewed State as the primary vehicle for public interventions.

The foundational difference between PP and DS lies in their origins- While DS was designed to generate knowledge for development in the Global South, PP emerged as a response to domestic problems in the Global North (with an emphasis on market-oriented governance). As the discipline of PP is emerging in the South, there is significant knowledge transfer in PP domain from North to South. There is a gap in scholarship as to how the divergent epistemic basis of DS and PP are contributing to the knowledge transfer (and policy making).

In this background, this paper is an attempt to trace the overlapping and divergent features of both DS and PP. Our empirical evidence for these arguments come from two sources. First, we examine six case countries. These case countries are 'elite Northern countries', namely United States, United Kingdom and Japan and three 'emerging Southern donors', namely, China, Brazil and India. In all case countries we examine the institutional spaces/frameworks that shape the values underlying policy advice, considering the divergent DS and PP traditions. Second, we look at one area – environment interventions – as informed by development discourses and public policy discourses in all six case countries. Through such an inquiry, we can show how divergent value systems shape the epistemic basis in respective disciplines, advice giving and policy transfer.

References

Harriss, J. (2019) "Great promise, hubris and recovery: A participant's history of development studies", in Uma Kothari (ed) A Radical History of Development Studies, London: Zed.

Mazzucato, M. (2013) The Entrepreneurial States. London: Anthem Press.

Traditional donors and transnational networks in the process of transferring evaluation to Cameroon: understanding the twists and turns of the circulation of a public action instrument.

Celestin Rodrigue Ebede Koungou (Université de Douala)

The evaluation of public policies perceived as an instrument of public action in the sociological sense of the term appears in a Cameroonian context made of political and administrative reforms, and in an international context marked by a change in perceptions of development aid which tends to favor more an allocation of aid oriented towards managerial requirements than on an approach of equity. In view of the place occupied

by this public action mechanism within the system of public development aid, it therefore constitutes the reference system from which the dynamics of transfer and dissemination of the evaluation of public policies develop in African countries, in this case in Cameroon.

The complexity of the aid system, due to the multiplicity of actors and intersecting logics, tends to relativize the role of traditional actors whose control over the process of construction and dissemination of standards and practices on the evaluation of public policies is increasingly
relativized by the emergence of new actors. The case of Cameroon is revealing of this
restructuring of the positions of actors in the transfer process, where national and transnational professional evaluation networks manage to position themselves as major actors in the dissemination of evaluative practices, either by establishing themselves as intermediaries between traditional actors and the local context, or by developing their own logics in the transfer process, to the point of competing with actors formerly positioned as a reference model.

Conducting this work required the mobilization of a plurality of methodological approaches. First, the mobilization of the institutionalism of rational choices allowed us to understand the dynamics of actors who are built and rebuilt throughout this process in order to gain influence or not lose control of the transfer process. In addition, the operational methodology consisted of mobilizing data collection techniques such as interviews with agents of certain institutions such as the World Bank, evaluators of national and transnational evaluation networks. In addition, the documentary review and participant observation within certain actors of the transfer process made it possible to collect most of the material.

Finally, this study first revealed the context of development aid, particularly traditional donors such as the World Bank, as the central system for the construction and transfer of evaluation in Cameroon. Subsequently, the multiplicity of transnational and national actors tends to relativize this central position in the dissemination of evaluation practices.

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Session 2Policy transfer from the Global South

Friday, July 4th 10:15 to 12:15 (A5)

Discussants

Sony Pellissery (National Law School of India University)

1. From Transfer Agents to Transfer Institutions: The Internationalisation of the Concept of Gross National Happiness

Lhawang Ugyel (Australian National University)

Carsten Daugbjerg (University of Copenhagen)

On 19 July 2011, and in its 65th session, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development” as a resolution (UN, 2011). The UN recognized that GDP did not adequately reflect the happiness and well-being of the people, and that the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental human goal. The resolution passed by the UN General Assembly welcomed the offer of Bhutan to convene during the following session of the General Assembly a panel discussion on the theme of happiness and well-being. In this paper, we analyse how the policy of “happiness”, more specifically Bhutan’s development philosophy of GNH, became an international policy agenda through the UN’s resolution to pursue happiness as a goal. Despite its size and development status, Bhutan is able to play a major role in agenda-setting of happiness at an international level. We argue that this unique case of how a global South country can be a successful policy transfer agent is through the role of institutions and how these institutions enabled Bhutan to be a transfer agent. In our study we show that it is the policy of GNH, and not just the concept of happiness, that is being transferred. The government acts as a transfer agent in this case, and it primarily acts through two key institutions: the Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) and the GNH Commission (GNHC). This study delves deeper into the role of institutions and examines how their establishment enables them to act as transfer agents. The setting up of policy transfer institutions, such as, the CBS and GNHC in Bhutan, provides them with the mandate and resources to facilitate policy transfer process. In Bhutan’s case, these two institutions were responsible for developing the GNH Index that served as a precursor and basis for the development of the GNH policy screening tool. With all policies in Bhutan required to go through the policy screening tool since 2010, developing and implementing the policy of GNH built a centre of expertise. Thus, enabling Bhutan to take the philosophy and policy of GNH abroad.

Climate cooperation in a multipolar world: China’s environmental policy exchange with Africa and Latin America

Niklas Weins (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

Annah Zhu (Wageningen University)

Climate change requires global cooperation, as decision makers leverage resources and expertise to address shared environmental challenges. Typically, the Global North has been seen as the main reference point, with environmental policy models being transferred to Global South settings. As contemporary geopolitical tensions are threatening this existing dynamic, new alliances are emerging that will likely strengthen South-South policy exchange. Global South countries such as China are emerging as the source of new policy transfers as much as they were once the destination. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for ecological restoration and sustainable urban development are two examples of emerging policy tools that are beginning to be exchanged through South-South cooperation. In this research, we examine channels for environmental knowledge and policy transfer from China to Africa and Latin America. All three regions face similar environmental issues and are eager to develop South-South exchange to scale up solutions in line

with their international commitments. China's experience in NbS, particularly its large-scale ecological restoration initiatives, holds policy lessons for countries in both regions. Under the political slogan of Constructing an "Ecological Civilization," China has developed techniques and knowledge that could be adapted by its partners through different channels of bi- and multilateral cooperation, as well as measures to green Chinese-funded infrastructure projects. Similarly, the concept of *sponge cities* – first developed in China – integrates NbS to address climate change resilience, air quality, and social benefits and could serve as a blueprint for urban development policies in regions experiencing rapid urbanization and climate-related challenges. Moreover, China's active engagement in the UNEP International Ecosystem Management Partnership, FAO-China South-South Cooperation Program, and the Great Green Walls for Cities all provide channels for policy exchange with the rest of the Global South. These channels are an indication of China's emerging role as a global reference for environmental policies, ultimately challenging the status quo of North-South policy transfer.

Policy design through transnational policy networks: Mainstreaming graduation in social protection in the Global South

Kidjie Saguin (University of Melbourne)

It has long been recognized that transnational policy networks have an influence on the policy-making process in the Global South. Similar concepts like global policy community and policy transfer networks have shed light on the transfer agents and their interactions that facilitate the movement of policies from one jurisdiction to another. However, these communities are defined as cohesive set of actors whose primary concern was to effect policy change and so leaving a more detailed conception of the role of policy networks in transnational policy processes largely underdeveloped. To address this gap, this chapter develops a framework to better understand transnational policy processes by disaggregating policy transfer network into three constituent sub-systems. Adopting a differentiated policy subsystem approach, it builds on recent developments in the policy sciences that conceptualize the policy process as facilitated by such sets of policy actors dealing independently with multiple streams – problem, policy and political. The chapter then applies the framework on the case of the Ultra-Poor Graduation model to show how it can help us better understand the narrower process of transnational policy transfer of social protection policies in the Global South.

BRICS Plus core policy beliefs, ideas and goals in multilevel financial governance

Flavia Bellieni Zimmermann (University of Melbourne)

With the creation of BRICS in the mid- 2000's, there is a gradual shift towards a Global South international financial governance. In the last 24 years, BRICS countries – an economic grouping of emerging Global South emerging economies comprising of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – contributed to the creation of alternative international financial organisations such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Asian Infrastructure and Development Bank (AIIB). Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, there is a significant shift in BRICS countries main policy goals, ideas and norms. During the BRICS Summit 2022, the five members agreed upon expanding the grouping from economic cooperation to strategic cooperation. In the 2023 BRICS Summit, under the theme "Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism" there are more substantive changes in the core values and norms driving BRICS policy goals. The main outcome of this summit was the unanimous decision to expand BRICS membership, including membership to Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In 2025 the grouping of developing countries welcomed Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda and Uzbekistan. In this paper I explore how BRICS plus multilevel governance is designing a new financial architecture as an alternative to US-led financial institutions. The paper explores what are BRICS plus country members core policy beliefs, ideas and goals, and how multilevel governance is developing a financial architecture that addresses more effectively these policy objectives. The paper also teases out ways in which BRICS plus multilevel governance is paving the way for financial policy innovation.