P10 / Reconstructing Public Policies: Addressing Inequities in Education, Housing, and Healthcare to Enhance Urban Planning and Sustainable Development

Topic : INEQUALITIES AND PUBLIC POLICY

Chair : Vibhore Bakshi (School of Planning and Architecture)

Second Chair : Arindam Biswas (Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Public policies demystify a constructive role in shaping the social and economic facets of spatial development trajectories, in juxtaposition; they can also inadvertently create or exacerbate inequalities. In today's era, public policies, particularly in areas such as education, housing, healthcare, and criminal justice, often reflect and reinforce existing power dynamics and trigger socio-economic disparities. We have tried to explore the policy failures and a need of devising a restructured approach in public policy in the education, housing needs, healthcare and contesting urban planning failures.Literature reveals that educational policies have proven to induce significant disparities in school resources and quality of education between affluent and low-income neighborhoods (Attewell et al., 2013). The financial grant policy model of education inculcates diverse backgrounds and perpetuates educational inequities, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities (Rapoport & Schneck, 2018).Housing policies also contribute to social inequalities, particularly through zoning laws and land use regulations that favor single-family homes and suburban developments (Rothstein, 2017). These policies often restrict affordable housing options, forcing low-income families into under-resourced areas with limited access to essential services and amenities. Many inhabitants witness social-exclusion in education and healthcare due to disjointed and biased public policy (Rothstein, 2017). In healthcare, public policies impact marginalized groups, especially when policies do not account for socio-economic disparities as witnessed during pandemic outbreak (Kearns & O'Connor, 2020).Moreover, healthcare facilities are often concentrated in affluent areas, making it difficult for low-income populations to access services. The intersection of these policies reveals a pressing need for comprehensive reform aimed at promoting equity in healthcare access and outcomes.

Public policy concerns in urban planning are crucial for creating equitable and sustainable cities. The prime concern for urban planning contestation is promoting equity and inclusiveness in spatial development process. (Attewell et al., 2013). The polarization and biasness in the urban development and micro-scale questions the current policy applicability with a reflection on re-structured approach for urban planning (Rothstein, 2017). However, there are debates embarking on contextualizing the process of localization of SDGs; however there appears to be the policy challenges in reinforcing the SDGS in developing nations (Rapoport & Schneck, 2018). We need a more nuanced understanding of how public policies are reconstructed a reinforced with a focus on education, affordable housing, healthcare; with impetus on efficient and effective urban planning. Therefore this panels focus on the plethora of following objectives, research questions and scientific relevance: pertaining to Educational Policies; Housing inequalities; health care disparities; urban planning issues community participation under the aegis of Sustainable development goals-

General Objectives:

- Investigate how existing educational policies affect resource distribution and learning outcomes across various socio-economic groups, aiming to identify disparities and recommend equitable policy adjustments
- Assess the influence of zoning laws and land use regulations on the availability of affordable housing and the resultant social segregation, seeking pathways to reform for enhanced inclusivity
- Explore the accessibility and fairness of healthcare services in marginalized communities, particularly during and after public health emergencies, to highlight systemic gaps and propose equitable solutions
- Identify and evaluate urban development practices that foster social equity and sustainability, emphasizing the need for stakeholder engagement and community involvement in planning processes
- Investigate the local challenges and opportunities in implementing SDGs, particularly in developing nations, to understand how these global frameworks can be effectively localized to address specific urban issues.

Research Questions:

- How do current educational policies affect resource allocation among different socio-economic groups?
- What are the measurable impacts of these policies on educational outcomes in under-resourced communities?
- In what ways do zoning laws and land use regulations contribute to or mitigate housing inequalities?
- How can policy reforms promote greater access to affordable housing and reduce social segregation?
- What barriers exist to accessing healthcare services in marginalized communities, particularly during public health crises?
- How do healthcare policies need to change to ensure equitable access to services for all socio-economic groups?
- What inclusive urban planning practices have been successfully implemented in various cities, and what lessons can be drawn from these case studies?
- How can urban planning integrate social equity considerations to promote sustainable development?
- What are the key challenges faced by developing nations in localizing the SDGs related to urban development?
- How can local stakeholders effectively engage in the localization of SDGs to address specific urban social and economic issues?

Exploring the Scientific Relevance

The conference will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights into how public policies intersect and influence various aspects of urban life, thereby affecting overall social equity and economic development. The panel will try to embark on developing evidence-based strategies for addressing inequalities in urban settings. It promotes dialogue among researchers from various disciplines of sociology, urban planning, public health, and economics to develop comprehensive approaches to urban development challenges through restorative and efficient policy design measures. The contribution of researcher will demystify research gaps from a global perspective attuned with the strategies under the aegis of sustainable development goals.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to submit papers for an upcoming conference focused on the role of public policies in shaping the social and economic facets of urban development. Our goal is to explore how public policies can inadvertently exacerbate inequalities and to identify strategies for creating more equitable frameworks in education, housing, healthcare, and urban planning.

1. Educational Policies: Analyzing how current policies impact resource allocation and educational outcomes in diverse socio-economic contexts.

2. Housing Inequalities: Examining the effects of zoning laws and land use regulations on affordable housing access and social segregation.

3. Healthcare Disparities: Investigating the accessibility and equity of healthcare services in marginalized communities, particularly in light of recent public health crises.

4. Urban Planning Strategies: Exploring inclusive urban development practices that promote social equity and sustainability.

5. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Assessing the challenges and opportunities in localizing SDGs within the context of developing nations.

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Session 1Housing and Well-Being: Aspirations, Policies, and Inequalities

Wednesday, July 2nd 13:45 to 15:45 (B5)

The correlation between property status and subjective well-being in China - An Empirical research grounded in the 2021 CGSS sub-data

Min Gong (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

As China’s urban landscape evolves, disparities in property ownership increasingly shape social equity and sustainable development. This study explores the complex relationship between property ownership and subjective well-being, focusing on how housing status influences individual happiness within broader socio-economic structures, and its implications for addressing inequities in urban development. Using empirical data from the 2021 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), key findings include: (1) Household property ownership has a stronger positive correlation with well-being than individual ownership, highlighting the role of family stability in enhancing life satisfaction. (2) Critically, the positive impact of housing improvements is disproportionately felt by vulnerable groups – women, those with lower incomes, and individuals with less education – suggesting that housing policy can play a key role in reducing well-being disparities. (3) The research also explores the pathways through which property ownership affects happiness, including financial security, perceived social status, marital stability, and child-rearing prospects. These findings emphasize the need for inclusive housing policies and provide evidence-based insights for more equitable urban planning and sustainable development strategies.

Aspiring for more, settling for less? The housing aspirational gap among young adults and the welfare state demand

Julia Furtado (University of Luxemburg)

Recent shifts in housing patterns—characterized by declining homeownership, the residualization of social housing, and the expansion of the private rental sector—have deepened generational and class divides in housing access. Raised in homeowner households and socialized to expect similar trajectories, many young adults now face prolonged stays in parental homes, rental housing, or shared living arrangements due to financial constraints. This misalignment between aspirations and structural realities fosters disillusionment as historical norms clash with contemporary economic barriers. This study empirically investigates the “housing aspirational gap,” defined as the disparity between young people’s housing aspirations and their objective opportunities, and examines how this gap influences welfare demands, housing preferences, and voting behavior. Grounded in relative deprivation theory, the paper provides a framework for understanding the frustrations of younger generations navigating today’s housing markets compared to their parents and peers. Drawing on data from an original cross-country comparative survey, this research employs quantitative methods to explore the intersections of age, class, and inequality, identifying how feelings of dissatisfaction and perceived unfairness shape political behavior and welfare preferences. By situating housing aspirations beyond homeownership and within broader debates on intergenerational inequality and welfare sustainability, the study positions the housing aspirational gap as a modern form of relative deprivation and offers critical insights for policymaking aimed at addressing generational and economic divides.

Marketizing Shelter: The Impact of Neoliberal Housing Policy on Housing Quality in Canada

Nora Ottenhof (Toronto Metropolitan University)

This paper explores how the neoliberalization of Canadian housing policy has shaped individuals' experiences of housing quality. Neoliberal reforms, including reduced government intervention, the deregulation of housing markets, and the financialization of housing, have redefined housing provision in Canada over the past three decades. These policy shifts have prioritized market-based solutions, leading to declining housing quality and exacerbating inequities in access to adequate, affordable, and secure housing.

Using a multidimensional framework, housing quality is defined through the elements of adequacy, affordability, suitability, security, accessibility, service level, and cultural competency. The paper draws on a critical analysis of neoliberal housing policies and their impacts on these dimensions, with a particular focus on how marginalized communities have been disproportionately affected.

Quantitative data from the 2023 Canadian Housing Survey is used to examine how experiences of housing quality vary across demographic groups, highlighting the intersections of race, gender, and income in shaping these experiences. The findings reveal that neoliberal policies have not only contributed to the commodification of housing but also deepened systemic inequities, leaving vulnerable populations at greater risk of inadequate and precarious housing conditions.

This paper argues that the neoliberalization of housing policy has fundamentally undermined the right to quality housing, emphasizing the need for a shift toward equity-focused policy interventions. By critically assessing the consequences of market-oriented housing reforms, this study contributes to broader discussions on housing policy, social justice, and the role of the state in ensuring access to quality housing for all.

Rental Housing: The solution for Shelter for All

Arti Jaiswal (School of Planning and Architecture)

Urbanization in India has led to the rental housing demand. A large section of short term migrated households are living in residential rental accommodation. This article reviews international rental housing provisions and highlights the initiatives taken by Indian government for residential rental housing. The research aims to assess the challenges of residential rental housing market in Indian cities. The chapter lists down various challenges for affordable rental housing delivery in India and highlights the opportunities for the rental housing schemes. It attempts to propose improvements in urban rental housing policies by analyzing the perception of relevant stakeholders for the case of Bhopal and Mumbai.

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Session 2Urban Housing Dynamics: Gentrification, Connectivity, and Social Capital

Wednesday, July 2nd 16:00 to 18:00 (B5)

(Virtual) Program for Urbanization of Precarious Settlements: a cost-benefit analysis

Ludmila Bandeira (Penn State University)

Mauro Guilherme Cappellaro (Center for Sustainable Development / University of Brasilia)

The Urbanization of Precarious Settlements (UAP) program, launched by the Brazilian National Government in 2007, aims to enhance urban quality of life for vulnerable populations by improving safety, habitability, and access to public services. By providing financial support to states and municipalities, the program prioritizes low-income families residing in unsuitable housing conditions. Since its inception, UAP has positively impacted 1.9 million families through an investment of BRL 22 billion. Despite its success, challenges in implementation persist, necessitating further evaluation and improvement.

This study conducts an ex-post Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) to assess the program's efficiency and inform future policy decisions. CBA quantifies the net benefits by comparing program costs to economic and health-related gains in monetary terms. Key health benefits analyzed include reductions in deaths, hospitalizations, anemia, respiratory diseases, and mental health issues. Economic benefits examined include increased productivity, job creation, and GDP growth. The cost data provided by the National Secretary of Human Settlements were adjusted to December 2022 values.

The study examined a sample of 1,335 UAP projects completed by December 2022, covering urbanization, technical assistance, housing provision, and requalification efforts. These projects benefited 824,323 families and entailed a total cost of BRL 7.516 billion in current values or BRL 5.060 billion when discounted at a 10% rate. The total health benefits amounted to BRL 2.443 billion, while the economic benefits reached BRL 4.384 billion. The resulting net benefit of BRL 1.767 billion and a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 1.35 indicates that the program's benefits exceed its costs by 35%.

Based on these findings, we recommend continuing the UAP program in future policy cycles. However, to maximize its impact, two key policy recommendations are proposed. First, strengthening the program's monitoring and evaluation framework is essential. Some benefits could not be quantified due to gaps in implementation data; thus, enhancing data collection and supporting further research, such as randomized control trials (RCTs), would improve program assessment. Second, fostering interagency collaboration, particularly with education and social development departments, is recommended. Literature suggests that urbanization and improved housing conditions significantly affect educational performance, poverty reduction, and income equality. By reinforcing evaluation mechanisms and cross-sector partnerships, UAP can further enhance its contributions to urban development and social equity in Brazil.

(Virtual) A contextual exploration of how gentrification impacts housing phenomenon in the neighborhoods of metro stations

Chahak Thakur (School of Planning and Architecture)

Vibhore Bakshi (School of Planning and Architecture)

We have seen the evidence of "Transit-Oriented development policies" and various "national and state housing polices" is proliferating rapidly in the developing nations. However, the utopian picture of creating a

mixed use in the congested spaces has questioned several aspects pertaining to spatial development. There are several challenges and complexities associated with the housing policies. There is a transforming land dynamics in the proximity to the major metro stations, which induces various facets of spatial development; land use, burgeoning land value, trigger on the high-rise residential areas, demographic shift and socio-economic aspects of the inhabitants in the neighborhood of metro stations.

In this paper, there is an attempt to explore “what are the determinants for transit induced gentrification that impacts housing phenomenon in the vicinity of metro stations”. It incorporates the analysis from the primary surveys as emerged from the neighborhoods in surroundings of the metro stations. Lastly, the chapter demystifies the predictive modeling for gentrification factors through multiple linear regressions for exploring the housing phenomenon.

(Virtual) Connectivity and Homelessness in Subnational Networks

Ken Docekal (University of Kentucky (United States))

This study examines why homelessness in the United States is more concentrated in some states compared to others. Investigation of the relationship between the distribution and magnitude of homelessness and subnational network connectivity between US states is conducted through utilizing network modeling alongside statistical techniques including multilevel and panel regression models and quadratic assignment procedure. These approaches are used to look at the relationship between the regional connectivity of US states based on capital flow and migration, and corresponding levels of homeless individuals, by employing data drawn from US Census, Internal Revenue Service, and other government sources. Networks of state nodes connected by edges weighted by population migration and capital flow are developed, which captures the strength and direction of the economic and population connections that subnational regions have with one another. Known systemic level causes of homelessness, such as housing markets, labor markets and capital, institutions, social stratification and inequality (Batterham, 2019), may be affected by non-local inflows and outflows of capital and population made possible through their connections with other regions. Additional prior research (Kaur et al., 2021) highlights the role of regional connectivity in unsafe housing, showing how being evicted from housing usually pushes residents to move to housing with even lower standards, thereby potentially starting a continuously downgrading cycle of living situations where individuals and families have to keep moving to increasingly worse housing. This study builds on these findings by accounting for the same factors in developing a model of subnational connectivity’s effect on homelessness.This approach facilitates observation of variation in connectivity and homelessness overtime as well as better discernment of the role of important state policy and characteristics such as the availability of housing and homeless support service centers (Continuums of Care). Examining the relationship between subnational connectivity and the systemic determinants of homelessness enables researchers and policy makers to better craft and coordinate policies which promote greater access to affordable housing by clarifying what factors lead to increased homelessness by state, how different state policies and conditions' impact on housing inequalities may be influential outside their jurisdictions, as well as better understand the role regional connections play in changes in homelessness.

Linking migrant-local mental health inequality to disparity of neighborhood social capital: Comparative evidences from Bangladesh, India and Philippines

Yunxia Liu (Lanzhou University)

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated mobility restriction measures have exacerbated mental health disparities among different social groups, particularly between locals and migrants who have relocated from rural areas or other cities to new urban neighborhoods. However, existing studies have often overlooked the role of neighborhood social capital when investigating mental health disparities. Based on first-hand questionnaire data (N = 2079) and focus group data from Bangladesh, India, and the Philippines, this study aims to dissect the impact of neighborhood social capital on mental health, with a specific focus on its role in the mental health gap between migrants and local residents. The results reveal that: (1) Migrants experience significantly poorer mental health outcomes compared to local residents; (2) Migrants exhibit lower levels of neighborhood social capital in both the cognitive and structural dimensions than local residents; (3) Neighborhood social capital in the cognitive dimension has a positive impact on mental health, and migrants’ disadvantage in this dimension exacerbates the mental health gap. In contrast, the relationship between structural neighborhood social capital and mental health is more complex, with a significant negative impact observed on migrants’ mental health, reducing the mental health gap within the explainable effects, but exacerbating it within the unexplainable effects. By linking neighborhood social capital (rather than differences in individual characteristics) to the mental health gap, this study deepens the understanding of the mechanism through which neighborhood social capital affects mental health.

Concurrently, the findings offer policymakers a novel perspective to comprehend and narrow the mental health gap between migrants and local residents, thereby contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 3 (ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all ages) and 11 (promoting inclusive and sustainable communities).