P190 / Policy Design, State Capacity, and Local Governance for Water and Climate Resilience

Topic : Policy Design, Formulation & Instruments

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Effective and efficient policy actions require consideration to be given to the constraints and challenges of implementation—preferably even as the policy is formulated. The design of good policy and implementation failure has been a dominant theme in the policy design literature. Some argue that policy design alone cannot facilitate behavioral change and achieve effective outcomes. To address design and implementation concerns, the state capacity literature offers pertinent insights. Using concrete examples, it clarifies mismatches in policy design and implementation, as well as in policy transfer, replication, and diffusion. It also helps us understand that a “best practice” (of policy design and implementation) in a specific context is not replicable in another setting or can be taken to scale. This literature shows that design must be accompanied by capacity development. A broader concept of demand-based capacity development (as opposed to supply-driven training) works in a circular manner, incorporating inputs from the vertical state structure, as well as horizontal linkages with key stakeholders, non-state actors, and private service providers. Further, rather than a static, one-time exercise, policy design, implementation, and capacity development form a dynamic cycle that incorporates local institutional and capacity specificities, as well as uncertainties arising from social, economic, and climate change upheavals.

The recent focus on empowering citizens offers an important juncture for designing innovative, inclusive, participatory, and bottom-up institutions for local governance. Institutions should be democratic rather than prioritizing administrative hierarchy in policy prioritization and design. Climate change mitigation and adaptation require innovative policy designs to make local governments more effective. They provide a platform to bring together water-related administrative departments that work in silos, share local expertise and knowledge with line departments, and develop innovative mechanisms to integrate climate responses by bringing existing water and climate policies together. In addition, they are tied to a fiscal transfer structure that can ensure sustainable financing and capacity support for community-led water initiatives.

Concerns about water and climate highlight how worsening water scarcity and distress affect livelihoods, threaten the poor's survival, and harm biodiversity. The combination of water stress and climate change drives significant hydrological changes, creating major economic and societal risks. It increases vulnerability across agro-climatic zones, particularly among the most disadvantaged. It affects many aspects of life and livelihoods, including drinking water, sanitation, health, irrigation, and agriculture, aquaculture, forests, and commons. Given this wide range of water-related problems, centralized governance structures are overburdened. It therefore makes sense to move certain aspects of policymaking to the last mile, giving local constituents a greater role in articulating their policy needs and in designing and implementing strategies. Apart from effective governance, local governments are better equipped to provide stronger safeguards for the most vulnerable and marginalized social groups (indigenous populations, women, the landless, among others) who are most affected by climate change, climate-induced uncertainty, and disasters.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel invites proposals from around the world, especially developing countries, that explore local government institutions and their role in mitigating the effects of climate-induced water scarcity. The panel will collectively highlight the complex maze of policy design, state capacity, and implementation needed to mitigate and adapt to climate-change risks. Individual contributions focusing on local and subnational solutions worldwide will underscore the importance of context and process in addressing governance challenges and solutions. Papers reflecting the following concerns are encouraged:

(i) Policy designs to strengthen institutions directed at enhancing democratic deliberations for water and climate resilience

(ii) Policy design reflexivity and capacity enhancement in the face of uncertain outcomes related to climate

change

(iii) Challenges and examples of a dynamic policy design, capacity, and implementation design framework to address the challenges of local water governance

(iv) Policy design at the local level that focuses on sectoral convergences – e.g. agriculture, drinking water, industry - for local governance

(v) Examples of policy deliberations that give voice to water use for non-humans, e.g. nature and biodiversity conservation

(vi) Technological innovations and practices for adaptation and mitigation related to water for vulnerable sections

(vii) Rights to water over market-based technological solutions

This panel brings together evidence of diverse livelihood disruptions across regions and presents different emerging and innovative adaptation initiatives, as well as local governance challenges. Papers in the panel will explore how climate-resilient institutional and policy designs can strengthen water resources, infrastructure, and water-use practices to address the needs of the last mile, which are increasingly being left behind due to existing and climate-related water scarcity. The papers have a problem-solution orientation that links design, capacity, and implementation. These engaged solutions aim to strengthen local governance policy frameworks and address policy design challenges to mitigate increasing climate vulnerabilities among poor communities facing growing water stress. As water governance across sectors and diverse micro-climates requires different approaches, the papers will highlight design challenges to achieve an integrated, local-centric approach that fosters greater policy coherence and coordination. We are also mindful that policy design concerns around water are not seen as a centralization vs. decentralization issue, but rather in terms of functional responsibilities across various tiers of government—national, sub-national/provincial/state, and local.