P225 / Territorial governance for social and sustainable development: approaches and practices from the Global South

Topic : Multilevel Governance and Local Policy

Chair : Edward Maia (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), Brazil)

Second Chair : Rasine Ravelo M (Universidad del Magdalena (Colombia))

Third Chair : Lara Laranja (Universidade de Brasília)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In this panel, we explore, conceptually and empirically, how territorial governance can promote more sustainable and social development in the Global South. Our objective is to expand the discussion of governance and alternative development optics, considering social and climate justice for marginalized and vulnerable communities and territories. Presentations are accepted in English, Portuguese, and Spanish.

The current international context reflects a systemic, civilizational, and socio-environmental crisis (Svampa, 2019). New wicked problems are emerging, such as digital security and climate cataclysm. At the same time, persistent problems in the Global South, such as poverty and inequality, are getting worse. In increasingly uncertain scenarios, we argue that one path forward is to strengthen territorial governance mechanisms as a bottom-up development framework.

Decolonial perspectives in development studies reconstruct pluriversal thinking rather than valuing the universality of experiences (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). They place the local community back at the center and mitigate the reproduction of domination and power. Environment, race, gender, colonialism, and modes of economic production are interconnected in understanding local realities and preserving the common good. Global environmental and climate changes affect the Global South unequally and fall more heavily on women and rural communities. Commoning, as a social relationship, becomes necessary for survival and development (e.g., Buen Vivir, ecofeminism, and postdevelopment) (Federici, 2019; Meagher, 2025; Ngcamu, 2023).

Territory is a space of resilience against the threats and vulnerabilities that affect it (Maia et al., 2025). It represents the sum of place, people, identity, actions, and memories (Santos, 2006). Coloniality expresses itself here, as historical and cultural trajectories run counter to the homogenization of public problem-solving. Governance emerges from relationships between actors pursuing shared objectives. It is a practice of public action (Halpern et al., 2014) that goes beyond isolated State action. Territorial governance emphasizes community and relies on horizontal collaboration to solve public problems or plan the territory's future (Dallabrida et al., 2022). It can operate through sociotechnical networks. These networks make the community the protagonist in identifying problems, turn diverse knowledge into action, and strengthen citizen science in dialogue with technical expertise (Maia et al., 2025). Its mechanisms include forms, instruments, and methodologies that bring actors together to improve the territory, such as technologies and solidarity economy arrangements.

We welcome theoretical, methodological, and empirical papers, and we seek to build a research network that cooperates to promote development in the Global South. Proposals may address, in full or in part, three guiding questions:

1. How do territorial governance mechanisms contribute to social and sustainable development in the Global South, and under what institutional and community conditions are they effective or constrained?

2. How do sociotechnical networks and the articulation of different types of knowledge (scientific, technical, community-based, citizen) enable more effective and inclusive public policies for territories in the Global South?

3. What do decolonial approaches and community-based initiatives (e.g., Buen Vivir, ecofeminism, postdevelopment, solidarity economy) contribute to addressing public problems and reducing local and regional inequalities in the Global South?

CALL FOR PAPERS

The current international sociopolitical context reflects the establishment of a systemic, civilizational, and socio-environmental crisis (Svampa, 2019). While new wicked problems emerge, such as digital security and climate cataclysm, old and persistent problems – especially in the Global South – such as poverty and inequality, persist and worsen. Faced with increasingly uncertain scenarios exacerbated by multiple factors (local and/or global), strategies are needed to address this crisis. We understand that one such path is through strengthening territorial governance mechanisms as a bottom-up development framework.

This panel is open to receiving theoretical, methodological, or empirical papers for consideration in improving knowledge of this research topic. We welcome papers that:

a. Analyze local governance arrangements to stimulate territorial governance.
Discuss sociotechnical networks and how different types of knowledge help to construct more effective public policies;

b. Examines decolonial approaches and initiatives to deal with public problems that enlarge local and regional inequalities;

c. Present case studies, especially in the Global South, that demonstrate how territorial governance can boost development.

The panel will bring together scholars presenting both conceptual and empirical case studies. The discussions and activities will be organized so each session can focus on a different topic or approach. A discussant will provide comments on each paper and presentation, and the author will be able to respond to the comments. After the round of presentations for each session, the chair and co-chairs will engage in a more wide-open discussion with the participants, proposing strategies or providing insights to enrich the researchers' papers. By doing so, this panel aims to strengthen research cooperation focused on exploring ways to promote social and sustainable development through territorial governance mechanisms, promoting a decolonial epistemic ground.

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