

Public Policy Research in the Global South

Heike M. Grimm
Editor

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A Cross-Country Perspective

 Springer

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Foreword

For my generation, scholars of public policy were analogous to immigrants. We were typically educated in a traditional academic discipline, such as political science, sociology, or economics. Our research topic, however, led us to depart from our comfortable academic homeland to the new, unknown, and unexplored terrain of the unchartered territory of public policy. The scholars venturing into this new territory of public policy brought with them the academic values, norms, and methodologies from their native discipline. What did it take to be a public policy scholar? As in many other important matters, the answer was provided by the giant of a scholar, poet, writer, and philosopher, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, some two centuries ago, “The greatest thing a father can give his son is roots. The second greatest thing is wings to escape those roots.”

On a good day, public policy research exhibited diversity, tolerance, creativity, and a coming together of the different views, perspectives, and academic disciplines inherent in public policy research and thinking. On a bad day, it was more like the Tower of Babel.

This book shows how far public policy research has come. As the editor, Heike Grimm, makes clear in her introductory chapter, public policy has emerged as an academic discipline. Thanks to the development of formal and systematic research and education, programs such as the Willy Brandt School of Public Policy at the University of Erfurt have spawned a new generation for which public policy research is their native academic discipline. Skeptics looking for a common methodology and approach, as has been claimed to be the gold standard of academic disciplines such as economics, will be disappointed. However, as the author Mark Twain once responded that “rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated,” so too perhaps the primacy of a common methodology and approach has been overstated. Back when Heike and I were colleagues in the Max Planck Society, my concern about a paucity of methodological coherence in public policy research led me to ask two colleagues, one in physics and the other in chemistry, what actually constitutes a *bona fide* academic discipline. Without hesitation, the answer from the natural sciences was, “It’s obvious—money and interest.”

There is no shortage of interest in public policy issues, challenges, and problems. However, as this book makes clear, most of the resources, i.e., “money,” have been skewed towards addressing the problems and challenges confronting public policy in the developed countries, or the North. Even while the globalization of the past two decades has convinced us that no man or country is an island, public policy research remains fixated on the North. This book breaks the mold by providing a gateway to a fertile new frontier and context for public policy research—the South.

Public policy research consists not just of theory and methods but also context. This book not only ushers in the emergence of public policy as a *bona fide* academic discipline, but also a new context which has been ignored for far too long for public policy research—the South. It has been a long time coming but will, without doubt, be appreciated for a long time.

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I wish to acknowledge the many individuals that, in various ways, have supported me in composing and publishing this book. First, my gratitude goes to the authors of the chapters of this volume; they have always responded straight away when submitting their chapters and revising them. Without their commitment to and enthusiasm for the idea and mission of this publication, the project would not have been realized. Some authors displayed great patience during the publication process because we aimed for the best results. Thank you for your collegiality and patience.

My deep appreciation goes to Richard Rose and David B. Audretsch for contributing to this volume and for supporting the endeavor in creating a platform for researchers from the Global South. Both scholars stand out as distinguished scholars who further developed public policy research in the last decades in an innovative and trail blazing way in different fields. Richard Rose taught us about the lesson-drawing approach in policy designing and policy making decades ago, which served as an eye opener to me when I started teaching students in a public policy program, often coming from the so-called less-developed and fragile countries. Instead of giving standardized and, therefore, rather useless recommendations, the art of lesson-drawing helped to grasp severe and complex problems in very specific contexts for which there are no easy solutions. David B. Audretsch advanced entrepreneurship, growth, and public policy research in all dimensions and facets during the last decades, and it was always such an honor and a pleasure to participate in some of the many projects he pursued and pushed forward. He has pointed to the magic and importance of entrepreneurship and start-ups for job creation and development since the early 1990s. Quite a few countries of the so-called Global South managed to develop substantially in the last years due to bottom-up entrepreneurial activity without depending on state or donor support and advice from the Global North. His excellent and profound research influenced this process, demonstrating that entrepreneurship results in development, at last.

I thank Donovan Gregg for revising the contributions with care and diligence and an amazing sense of language. It was quite some task to align all contributions from diverse backgrounds and countries to one style. Donovan managed to succeed

without influencing and changing the streaming of writings and style of the papers. With patience, constructive comments, and friendly reminders, he supported our publication outcome a lot. Without Donovan, this volume would not have been finalized in such a professional way.

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