How Think Tanks Shape Social Development Policies

James G. McGann, Anna Viden, Jillian Rafferty

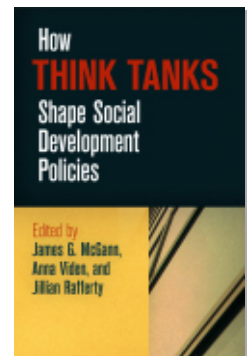Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

➡ For additional information about this book

Chapter 3

Centre for Public Policy (CPP): Indian Institute of Management Bangalore

Rajeev Gowda, Ashwin Mahesh, and Sridhar Pabbisetty

This chapter examines the impact of the Centre for Public Policy (CPP) on public policy in India through a specific case study. CPP is part of the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, one of India's leading business schools. CPP is a think tank engaged in research, consultancy, teaching, training, and outreach. CPP was established in 2000 to address the gap between research and public policymaking in India through a collaborative effort between the Department of Personnel and Training, the government of India, the United Nations Development Programme, and the institute. The CPP also received an endowment grant from the government of Karnataka.

In addition, this chapter examines the context of public policy formulation in India, various activities undertaken by CPP, membership of CPP faculty in influential committees, and direct and indirect policy impact of research projects at CPP, and finally it takes a close look at a direct policy change triggered by the intervention of a CPP faculty member in the domain of urban public transportation in Bangalore. This type of intervention could easily be replicated across India.

The Centre for Public Policy

India liberalized its economy in 1991, which provoked a dramatic transformation in the challenges faced by the government of India. Many goods

and services that were earlier being delivered by public sector were now being entrusted to private companies. In sectors like health, waste management, electricity distribution, and telecommunications, the public sector was competing with private companies. This transition from the state to the market demanded that civil servants and the large number of managers in public sector organizations reorient themselves to the changing socioeconomic dynamics. A negative outcome of liberalization was the increase in societal inequalities, worsening the divide between the rich and the poor. Liberalization presented a variety of opportunities for CPP, particularly in the new kinds of knowledge needed by policymakers and practitioners.

Thus CPP's initial mandate was to train the highest levels of civil servants in India to attune them to the policy challenges they faced in the postliberalization environment. CPP therefore launched a master's degree equivalent Post Graduate Programme in Public Policy and Management in 2001. The program aims to strengthen the policy and managerial skills of senior civil servants, and now professionals from social, infrastructural, and private sectors. This two year program helps professionals tackle new challenges in the context of liberalization, globalization, and rapid technology change along with India's traditional challenges such as the continuing burden of poverty and social exclusion.

Apart from the postgraduate program, CPP conducts midcareer civil service training. Examples include the Phase IV Program for Indian Administrative Service bureaucrats with fourteen to sixteen years of experience and the Phase V program for senior Indian Forest Service officers with twenty-six to twenty-eight years of service. In addition CPP has conducted over one hundred short duration programs of one to two weeks' duration for Indian Administrative Service officers.

CPP has moved beyond the bureaucracy to also focus on elected representatives, who play a central role in policymaking in India. CPP has created an orientation program for first-time state legislators and policy workshops for legislators from across India. It has recently launched a course for aspiring women political leaders in anticipation of Parliament's passing a law mandating that a third of its seats and of those in legislatures be set aside for women (already, there is a 50 percent reservation of seats for women at the level of local government). Through these training programs, CPP is able to engage with policymakers and implementers and thus have an indirect influence on how government discharges its responsibilities.

The Context of Public Policy Formulation in India

In the context in which policies are formulated in India, it is important to take into account that the Constitution of India outlines the roles of legislature, executive, and judiciary. While the legislature responds to the popular and political aspirations of the people of India and leads policy formulation, the executive plays a collaborative role in ensuring that the policy is implementable, translating it into effective programs and ensuring its delivery. The judiciary interprets and clarifies the law and has the power of judicial review.

To quote the report written by Chapal Mehra on *Think Tanks and the Policy Landscape in India*: the legislature "reacts to a perceived demand and in order to fulfil this demand it initiates the process of creating policy. The policy is in turn prepared, scrutinized, debated, adopted (or not) and published; . . . the executive bodies conceptualize programs under policy and supervise its delivery" and the "judiciary engages in policy making through judgments and directives to both government and administrative machinery on the policy or the nature of its implementation. It may change the law through judgements on critical aspects of policy." The report observes that "while we see the perceptible opening up of policy discussions in the government, it has been restricted to a few individuals and institutions. The initiative to engage in plural and diverse sets of perspectives has not been done through institutional mechanisms that can naturally facilitate this process."

In order to have an impact on government policy, given the centralized and top-down nature of the government, CPP focuses on being part of the government process. This is possible through membership on influential committees and boards that help in policy formulation. In addition CPP does create direct policy proposals and often its research output has indirect policy impact. CPP does not typically engage in policy advocacy outside formal engagement with government.

CPP Faculty Membership on Policymaking and Other High-level Committees

CPP faculty members serve on various committees and on the boards of national level organizations. These appointments reflect the government's

recognition of their expertise and the value of their inputs for public policy. The following are examples of such appointments of CPP faculty members.

> Professor G. Ramesh: Government's Performance Evaluation
>   Committee
> Professor Gita Sen: Mission Steering Group, National Rural Health
>   Mission, and High Level Expert Group on Universal Health Cov-
>   erage, Planning Commission of India
> Professor Rajeev Gowda: Director, Reserve Bank of India
> Professor Nayana Tara: Karnataka Knowledge Commission
> Dr. A. Ravindra: ABIDe Task Force, and advisor on urban policy to
>   the chief minister of Karnataka
> Dr. Ashwin Mahesh: ABIDe Task Force, and advisor on urban policy
>   to the chief minister of Karnataka
> Professor M. S. Sriram: Director, National Bank for Rural Develop-
>   mentFinancial Services Limited

Concrete and Indirect Policy Inputs

From time to time CPP faculty members develop concrete policy proposals through the studies they engage in, particularly through projects that they undertake on behalf of government. Professor Rajeev Gowda initiated and was part of a Karnataka government committee that looked at the redevelopment of the two-hundred-year-old but now defunct Kolar Gold Fields. The committee proposed that the land owned by the mining company could be redeveloped into a center for automotive production, an education city, a site for governmental offices, and other facilities, and elaborated on how the existing town and its population could be provided new economic opportunity.

Professor Gopal Naik and his team have been involved in action research in using innovative technology to develop a sustainable model of delivering services for the rural economy through an e-governance initiative delivered through computer kiosks located in rural settings.

Some of the research at CPP has had indirect policy implications and also has served as an early warning bell indicating the need for policy intervention. Professor Rajalaxmi Kamath and Professor Arnab Mukherji conducted innovative research with poor households using financial diaries.

They showed that the poor were subject to loans from competing microfinance organizations, and this served to alert policymakers to a problem in the microfinance sector. This study was reported in August 2009 in the *Wall Street Journal* and subsequently became the subject of policy interventions by the governments of Andhra Pradesh and India.

While delivering the nineteenth convocation address of North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, the vice president of India, Shri M. Hamid Ansari, while advocating gender equality, quoted at length the findings of Professor Hema Swaminathan and her team's work on "Measuring the Gender Asset Gap in Ecuador, Ghana and India."

Case Study of CPP Policy Impact: Direction-Based Bus Services in Bangalore—Big 10

Bangalore is the capital of the state of Karnataka and is the fifth largest urban agglomeration in India. According to the 2011 census, Bangalore urban district has a population of 9.6 million, of which 85 percent fall under the jurisdiction of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike. The public transport system in Bangalore has been based on buses. Only in October 2011 was the Bangalore Metro launched, which caters only to a small number of travelers in Bangalore.

With the continued boom in the information technology, biotechnology, and education sectors, the affluence of Bangalore has been rising, resulting in an extraordinary increase in private transportation. Streets are thus congested, and managing traffic load is a huge challenge. The radial routes are also facing congestion because of urban sprawl. According to statistics from the Bangalore Traffic Police, "The number of motor vehicles registered in Bangalore increased from 236,000 in 1983 to 684,497 by 1992 and 2.1 million by December 2004, phenomenal rates of increase by 289% and 278% respectively. Out of these vehicles, 1.5 million are 2 wheelers and .33 million are cars, i.e., 88.17% of the total vehicles are personal vehicles. This does not include the floating vehicle population." Thus getting people out of private transportation options and into buses (and eventually the Metro, once more routes are in place) is a key policy challenge, along with the intermediate challenge of improving the efficiency of bus transportation.

In order to improve public services across domains in Bangalore, the chief minister established the Agenda for Bengaluru Infrastructure Development (ABIDe) Task Force. It was an independent body with the mandate

to provide a clear strategy for improving the infrastructure in the city. Its remit is thus wide ranging, including roads and public transportation as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure; urban governance; and security. The task force is made up of politicians, prominent business leaders, and technical experts from academia and industry. ABIDe consulted with transport planning experts were by to deliver the public transport recommendations found in its main planning document, the *Plan Bengaluru 2020*.

Dr. Ashwin Mahesh of CPP was a key member of the ABiDe Task Force, which examined Bangalore's bus transportation challenge. He observed that the traditional design of the bus transport network in Bangalore has been point-to-point bus routes, also known as destination-oriented services. With over 2,300 operational routes, the government-owned Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) had the problem of managing the ever-increasing routes that were a combination of origin-destination.

This problem presented various challenges for the users of public transport. Because buses for specific destinations were not frequent on particular routes, waiting times at bus stops were high. Thus, trying to figure out an optimum travel route for commuting within the city was difficult.

The Solution

Mahesh proposed the design and implementation of a direction-based bus service initiative. Named Big 10 (because the service was introduced on the ten major arterial roads that connect the center of the city with the outlying areas), this service simplified the user experience and helped to decongest the three main bus interchanges. In this system, users simply have to identify the route that heads in the direction of their final destination. High-frequency services mean that they can quickly catch a bus going in the general direction of their travel, and then transfer to another service that takes them closer to their final destination.

The introduction of direction-based bus services required very little in the way of infrastructural investment, with no extensive new road or terminal infrastructure necessary. The primary cost for the project was the acquisition of buses for the variety of services. These costs were minimal, since the buses used were appropriated either from the existing BMTC fleet or

Figure 3.1. The "Big 10" Logo

from existing orders for fleet expansion. Mahesh also introduced the idea of "fully branding" the vehicles used for the Big 10 operation, so as to distinguish them easily. The logo of the brand reads "Big 10" in English as well as in Kannada, the local language in Bangalore, and was widely hailed by the design community in the city. In Bangalore, historically there has been a conflict between groups that insisted that bus signage should only be in the local language and others arguing that multiple language signs were critical to improving patronage. The novel logo solved this problem (Figure 3.1).

The cost of branding the buses for the new services was also negligible. In the case of new buses, these were painted in the new design at the point of production. When older buses were appropriated for the new services, they were repainted when they came in for recertification of their operational effectiveness—buses are painted anyway during the recertification process and therefore this did not lead to any additional costs.

Bus Route Network

There are currently several types of direction-based services, and feeders to those: Big 10 routes that travel along the major arterial roads leading into and out of Bangalore, connecting major suburbs and residential areas with the central business district (Figure 3.2). Although initially planned for ten major arterial roads, services are now available on twelve roads. This service is still popularly referred to as "Big 10." They are also known as "green routes" because of the color design of the buses serving these routes. In addition, "blue routes" will connect two Big 10 routes, running through the city center. They thus will provide mobility through the central business district and facilitate suburb-to-suburb travel. Currently there is only one operational blue route, although more are planned for the near future. These buses sport a blue paint design. Despite the difference in colors, these blue buses are also branded as "Big10" services. Big Circle bus routes run on the Outer Ring Road of the city, providing circulatory services. There are currently twenty-four routes in operation, twelve each in the clockwise and counterclockwise directions (numbered C1–12 and D1–12 respectively). In each direction, the route number refers to the road on which the corresponding Big 10 route number runs. For example, the D-4 Big Circle route is a counterclockwise service beginning at Bannerghatta Road, along which the G-4 Big 10 service operates. Each Big Circle route makes a half ring from its starting point to the terminus point on the opposite side of the city. These buses have a multicolored design on a white background. K bus routes run in an inner circle within a four-to-six-kilometer radius of the city center, starting from three major terminus points. Each route covers one-third of the circle from its starting point and overlaps with its next route. Routes are numbered counterclockwise, but buses run in both direction. These routes are the present incarnation of the Kendra Saarige circulatory service, which was revamped as K Routes after low usage in the initial months. Their design is similar to that of the Big Circle buses. Finally, Big Connect routes are feeder services that connect different neighborhoods to the nearest Big 10 route. These have been introduced in the peripheral areas of the city, and are also different from typical services provided earlier in these areas. Whereas BMTC had been running buses very infrequently from these neighborhoods to different major destinations like the city market and the railway station, the Big Connect service instead simply connects the neighborhood to the arterial Big 10 service instead, and does so more
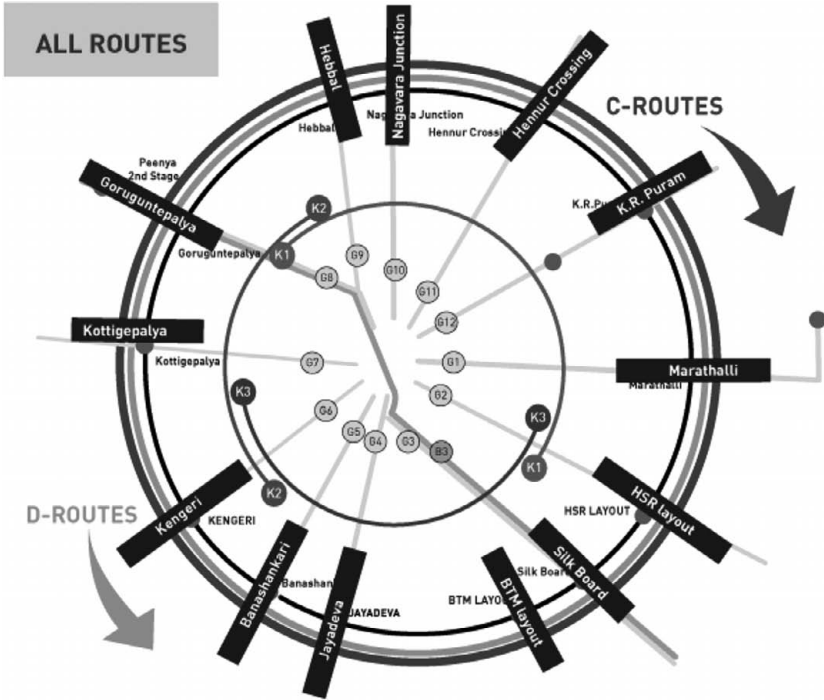
Figure 3.2. Direction-Based Service: Route Diagram. Source www.btis.in/dbs.

frequently. This trade-off between direct service and frequency is one that passengers appear to like—it means that users have to change buses to complete their journeys, but they benefit by being able to travel at a time convenient to them, rather than when the bus is available.

Implementation and Success

As in any large publicly owned bus system worldwide, the main hurdles in implementing the project were issues of general institutional inertia and resistance to change. Furthermore, there is also usually pressure in such cases to cancel any new services if there are no signs of immediate success. Advocates of direction-based services were able to overcome these road-blocks. Providing the direction-based services with their own unique branding and the buses with their own color designs introduced a degree of

irreversibility to the process—scrapping the program and reintegrating the fleet with regular BMTC services would not be costless.

In the first few weeks after the introduction of the direction-based services, use of them was low. This led to pressure to abandon the services, as the prospects for breaking even or making profits were thought to be slim. ABIDe remained committed to the initiative, however, and insisted that the services remain in place as long as ridership and revenue figures showed month-to-month improvements. This persistence was rewarded as these figures continued to rise. Mahesh also discovered a flaw in the method that BMTC was using to determine the profitability of each route. This not only helped BMTC understand Big 10 revenue better, but also helped it understand its data from other services. The direction-based services were ultimately hailed as a successful innovation in Bangalore's public bus system. These and other innovations of the BMTC received praise in not only the local press but also at the national level, receiving an award for excellence in urban transport from the Ministry of Urban Development in December 2010.

The success of direction orientation in BMTC has subsequently led to an even more important development—the focus of other departments is now aligning with that of the transport system. For instance, the traffic police are considering a proposal to prioritize their enforcement efforts, ensuring they keep the Big 10 roads and the ring roads of the city moving while giving less attention to congestion elsewhere. This change will help push traffic onto these larger roads that have the capacity to handle them, whereas a lot of traffic now uses smaller roads, cutting even into residential neighborhoods, because the major ones are often clogged.

Similarly, the municipality and the land-use planning authority are considering a transit-oriented approach to zoning land use, by which higher densities of utilization would be promoted along the arterial Big 10 corridors.

Conclusion

CPP has been able to use a mix of approaches in order to exert influence on the policymaking process in India. As highlighted in the case study of direction-based services, CPP faculty have been able to engage successfully in the process of analyzing the policy problem, coming up with a solution,

bringing in smart and quick implementation methods, and developing a road map to solve the problem. While many interventions in the form of concrete policy inputs may be provided, some eventually become implemented in actual policies while some do not. In instances of indirect policy inputs, by continuing to align research with emerging social problems, CPP will be able to build its credibility as a policy problem spotter before situations become full-blown crises. Overall, CPP has managed to work within the constraints of India's complex policymaking system to influence the content and direction of public policy.

References

ABIDe: Home. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://abidebengaluru.in/.

Agenda for Bangalore Infrastructure and Development Task Force. *Roads, Traffic Management and Transportation*. Accessed March 21, 2011, http://abidebengaluru.in/report/show/7.

''A Global Surge in Tiny Loans Spurs Credit Bubble in a Slum.'' *Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2009. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB1250 12112518027581.html.

''BMTC Bags Excellence Award.'' *Deccan Herald*, December 6, 2010. Accessed March 21, 2011, http://www.deccanherald.com/content/118700/bmtc-bags-excellence-award.html.

''Buses Add to Growth of Public Transport.'' *Deccan Herald*, December 29, 2009. Accessed March 21, 2009, http://www.deccanherald.com/content/43971/buses-add-growth-public-transport.html.

''Direction Based Bus Services in Bangalore.'' Bangalore Transport Information System. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://btis.in/dbs.

''Directors.'' NABARD Financial Services Limited. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://www.nabfins.org/Director.

''High Level Expert Group on Universal Health Coverage.'' Planning Commission of India. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://uhc-india.org/about_hleg_members.php.

''IIMB Paper Awarded ICEGOV Certificate of Merit.'' Indian Institute of Management Bangalore. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://www.iimb.ernet.in/node/2281.

''Karnataka Knowledge Commission.'' Karnataka Jnana Aayoga. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://jnanaayoga.in.

Mahesh, Ashwin. ''Big 10: Good Idea, Better Execution.'' *Times of India*, Viewpoint column, March 23, 2009. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://www.epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From = Archive&Source = Page&Skin = TOINEW&BaseHref = TOIBG/2009/05/23&PageLabel = 2&EntityId = Ar00200&ViewMode = HTML&GZ = T.

"Mission Steering Group." National Rural Health Mission. Accessed April 30, 2012,
    http://www.mohfw.nic.in/NRHM/msg.htm.
"Namma Metro." *Wikipedia*. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
    Namma_Metro.
"Organisation and Functions." Reserve Bank of India. Accessed April 30, 2012, http://
    www.rbi.org.in/commonman/English/scripts/organisation.aspx.
Policy Landscape and Think Tanks in India: Paradigms, Processes and Future Directions.
    New Delhi: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2009.