

Summer School on Governance and Mobility

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Research-led and Research-orientated: developing a community of researchers to advance the study and understanding of urban transport governance across India, with the aim of helping students to engage with and lead international evidence-based practice.

One of the objectives of our ESRC-ICSSR funded research was to bring together, develop and inspire a community of researchers to advance the study and understanding of urban transport governance across India. Towards this end, one of the key deliverables of the project was a summer school on governance and mobility, which we held in March 2020, in Bangalore. In particular, the school aimed to develop learner skill in identifying research questions and different methodological approaches and research designs for analysing mobility governance.

The summer school was hosted over three days, with 25 master's level student participants from across India, from a range of disciplinary backgrounds (including planning, engineering, geography, and public administration). The programme was both research-led and research-orientated, with learning from the research of others (in this case, from the research team and our project), helping to support student learning about the research process. The School was held in one large classroom on the Indian Institute of Science campus, with the majority of delivery split between large group teaching and discussion, and small group task-orientated work.

Given the multitude of disciplines represented in the cohort, the first session aimed to create a common basis for understanding, with a session titled 'What do we mean by Mobility Governance?' Here we presented a kind of 'governance 101' summarising the state of the art in governance research, and how it links to transport and mobility. The remainder of Day 1 consisted of reading circles, where small groups (facilitated by the research team), discussed seminal research articles from the field (provided to them prior to the School), with the aim of encouraging students to identify (and critically discuss) how the conceptual approaches and methods used in each piece, supported the research aims.

Day 2 aimed to build on the theoretical basis of Day 1, and consisted of methods roundtables, in which participants were encouraged to discuss methods they use in their projects or are commonly used in their disciplines and their advantages and disadvantages. We also led a workshop on how to code and analyse interview data, using an interview from our research project as the basis for the coding. We also led a discussion on the approach we took to the design of our research project – a comparative analysis of mobility governance in India – explaining our rationale, research design, findings and challenges.

In the last session of Day 2, the group was split into teams and instructed to use the toolkit they had gathered over the sessions from the first two days (theoretical, methodological and analytical) to design their own research proposals. Each team was then supported by us as facilitators to develop their ideas across the morning of Day 3, and then to present their proposals to an 'expert panel' and the rest of the cohort in the afternoon. The coherence of the research proposals presented, including the alignment of research questions with their design, demonstrated the achievement of the School's learning objectives.