
FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

Welcome back to *The Public Sphere*!

As Dean of the Institute of Public Affairs, I have had the pleasure of overseeing the Institute's flagship MPA programme as it continues to develop. Although our Institute is young, we have already established ourselves as an outward-looking, yet rigorously academic, global center for public policy training and analysis. Continuing the tradition established by last year's inaugural issue, this new edition of *The Public Sphere* beautifully encapsulates that description. The authors of the articles assembled here have clearly done their homework. And the result – as you, dear reader, will discover – is a beautifully presented collection of well-researched policy-focused contributions that could only have been written by our students. Collectively, they are a showcase for the IPA as well as for the wider LSE community in which our Institute is so deeply enmeshed.

As the editors note in their introduction, we are living through an extraordinary time of 'global transition and increasing uncertainty'. With so much in flux, one might question the practical utility of theoretical analysis. Theories are simplifications, after all, and yet the world we inhabit is anything but simple. Theories – or good ones anyway – are also systematic, and yet the daily events we read about in the newspapers are systematically *un*-systematic; when examined in isolation, they appear random, if not totally chaotic.

One of the many virtues of the articles published in this edition is that they challenge boldly and directly this common misconception about theory. It is precisely because the authors do *not* look at events in isolation that they are able to discern the larger underlying forces that shape them. Stepping back from the day-to-day bombardment of events requires a theoretical mindset that is a hallmark of our MPA training. As for the theories themselves, our degree is interdisciplinary to the core. Our students' comparative advantage in tackling policy questions springs from their intimate familiarity with (and vigorous enthusiasm for) the theoretical tools of all social sciences, not just of any one discipline. It's this expansive political-economic-sociological-historical toolkit that lies at the core – the theoretical crossroads – of the entire MPA curriculum.

Everything you are about to read and, indeed, the very inspiration for the journal itself came from our students. Thanks to this year's editorial board, and to those of their fellow students who submitted such a stimulating and diverse collection of essays and analyses, we have reached a new Pareto-improving equilibrium. Long may it continue.

Happy reading!



Lloyd Gruber
Dean, Institute of Public Affairs