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**Governance Amidst Uncertainty:  
The Indian PPP Experience with the Bangalore International  
Airport**

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**Governance Amidst Uncertainty:  
The Indian Public Private Partnership Experience with the Bangalore International Airport<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract**

Public Private Partnerships are attracting considerable attention in both scholarly and policy discourses. Politicians, policy makers, bankers, scholars, researchers the world over are talking about them. Industrial economies such as the USA, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada have adopted PPP arrangements to provide public services like roads, airports, education, health and water supply. Though PPPs attract widespread media attention, there is little clarity in the public mind about what is a Public Private Partnership. There is certainly no consensus about what outcomes we can expect from a partnership, or how we can execute them successfully; not just in the popular or policy discourse but even in scholarly debates on the subject. Are PPPs a passing fad, or will they evolve into a useful public policy tool? If PPPs are here to stay, we need to learn how to make them work. Our paper uses an integrative framework of Process, Partnership and Governance to explore the characteristics and issues relating to an infrastructure Public Private Partnership, and the policy processes and the institutional structures to make the PPP an effective and appropriate policy instrument in the Indian context, using the case study of the Bangalore International Airport.

**Keywords:** Public Private Partnership, Governance, Bangalore International Airport

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Public Private Partnerships are attracting considerable attention in both scholarly and policy discourses. Politicians, policy makers, bankers, scholars, researchers the world over are talking about them. Industrial economies such as the USA, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada have adopted ppp arrangements to provide public services like roads, airports, education, health and water supply. The World Bank estimates that the private sector financed about twenty percent of infrastructure investments, amounting to about \$ 850 billion, in developing countries in the 1990s. The growing demand of a vocal public for better infrastructure services, coupled with constrained government budgets, has made PPPs an attractive public policy option (Daniels & Trebilcock, 1996, p. 375) (Trujillo, Cohen, & Sheehy, 1998, p. 1) (Dailami & Leipziger, 1998, p. 1286) (Labuschagne, 1998, p. 133) (Fourie & Burger, 2000, p. 305)(Allan, 2001, p. 1)(Teisman & Klijn, 2002, p. 198) (Grimsey & Lewis, 2002, p. 107) (Finlayson & Peacock, 2002, p. 1) (Pongsiri, 2002, p. 487) (Parker & Hartley, 2003, p. 97) (Leitch & Motion, 2003, p. 273) (Klijn & Teisman, 2003, p. 137) (Dawes & Prefontaine, 2003, p. 40)(Sturgess, 2003, p. 14)(Grout P. A., 2003, p. 1) (Demirag, Dubnick, & Khadaroo, 2004, p. 64)(deBettignies & W, 2004, p. 135) (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004, p. 91) (Bertels & Vredenburg, 2004 , p. 33) (Ahadzi & Bowles, 2004, p. 968) (CCPPP, 2005, p. 1) (Malone, 2005, p. 421) (Flinders, 2005, p. 231) (Norment, 2005, p. 461) (Johnston & Romzek, 2005, p. 570) (Hodge, 2006, p. 1) (Koch & Buser, 2006, p. 548) (Spielman & von Grebmer, 2006., p. 292) (Editorial: ENR: Engineering News-Record, 2006)(Glachant & Saussier, 2006, p. 1)(Downey & Chambers, 2007, p. 1)(Zheng & Caldwell, 2008, p. 334)(Naidoo, 2008, p. 1) (Kwak, Chuh, & Ibbs, 2009, p. 51).

Though PPPs attract widespread media attention, there is little clarity in the public mind about what is a Public Private Partnership. There is certainly no consensus about what outcomes we can expect from a partnership, or how we can execute them successfully; not just in the popular or policy discourse but even in scholarly debates on the subject. Are PPPs a passing fad, or will they evolve into a useful public policy tool? If PPPs are here to stay, we need to learn how to make them work. Scholarship has not addressed this imperative, and praxis is still grappling with it (Fourie & Burger, 2000, p. 305) (Hurst & Reeves, 2004, p. 379) (Hodge & Greve, 2007, p. 545) (Statement of David B. Horner, 2007) (Estache, Juan, & Trujillo, December 2007,

p. 23) (Sagalyn, 2007) (Bharti & Ganesh, 2008) (Bhide, 2008)(Jones & Noble, 2008, p. 109).

Our paper uses an integrative framework of Process, Partnership and Governance to explore the characteristics and issues relating to an infrastructure Public Private Partnership, and the policy processes and the institutional structures to make the PPP an effective and appropriate policy instrument in the Indian context, using the case study of the Bangalore International Airport.

## **2. THEBACKDROP**

At its core, our work concerns one of the central problems of the modern world: how do societies plan the output and delivery of public goods? Our approach is a three-layered one, the national, local and project level. The story of the Bangalore airport from the 1980s onwards is an extraordinary record of long delays and rapid changes, of detailed technical scrutiny juxtaposed with intense political activity, of keen media attention and radical reversals of public attitudes and perceptions. Is it possible to find a rational explanation to this labyrinthine history?

We sought to do this in two ways: first, to narrate the stories of selected episodes in the BIAL drama; second, to interpret them in the light of a catholic body of PPP scholarship culled from the interlocking spaces of public policy, economics, law, finance and organization theory. The first is fairly straightforward. The second was challenging for several reasons, not the least owing to the objective of making the theory accessible to a heterogeneous audience, including scholars certainly, but also practitioners and policy-makers, who otherwise would almost certainly pay no heed to it. So, in a sense, rather than using praxis to fit the theory, we were in fact moulding theory to fit the needs of practice.

Our case analyses studied three decision-stories related to BIAL. Within each episode there exists a specific managerial focus -Location, Partner Selection, Land Acquisition- in conjunction with multiple managerial challenges. As we traced the events that made up these episodes, we looked at explanations common or specific to each, interpreting events in the light of the guiding propositions. Our analyses, in all three episodes, demonstrate that PPP decision and

governance is not a single decision in a point in time but a process. Consequently, whether the formation of a PPP does or does not occur cannot simply be equated with success or failure. A smooth formation process may happen simply because the parties have given insufficient consideration to the risks involved, and the resulting problems will inevitably become manifest in the realization phase. The Location decision is a demonstration of such a far-reaching impact of public decision making. Moreover, there are no hard and fast rules as to what situations work best for PPPs. The Congress government's revival of the airport idea in 1999 indicates that governments are not influenced by economic rationale or other theoretical motivations but a constellation of influences primarily related to availability of budget and their own political image. Nevertheless, PPPs signal a shift in the compulsions of decision making, where contractual governance takes precedence over political governance. The contractual binding to provide exclusivity and close the HAL airport held sway over the vocal protest of highly influential sections of Bangalore society. The decision making space is dynamic, priorities change all the time. In the beginning, there is heavy emphasis on technical and financial aspects, and decision making is restricted to a few chosen bureaucrats and technocrats, as in the site selection and tendering phases. There is little evidence of overt political interference here. Later, political issues dominate, with more and more actors entering the policy space and attempting to influence the process. Public priorities and perceptions alter; at first, it is speedy completion of the project that is the single goal, later ethical and public interest issues become paramount, as in the Land Acquisition episode and the JHC probe.

In such a potentially turbulent scenario, the actors make tactical moves in stylized concert. Decisions arise from a complex process of interactions among actors. The most important definable groups are the community, particularly those members of the community who play an active role in various civil society groups that try to intervene in the decision making process (in the case of the "Save HAL" campaign this was a spontaneous and temporary coming together of diverse aligned interests); the elected politicians, who make promises to the electorate or influential groups, but later become subject to pressures of events, (the newly-elected BJP government of 2008 which started out with the assurance of altering the offending clauses but could not do so); the professional and administrative bureaucracy which must

administer policy but which invariably also plays a large role in shaping it as did the Steering Committee; and the private partners, here the BIAL management, who alternate between keeping their distance from their public counterpart, driving the process with their demands, or seeking protection in situations of conflict. So within the public space, different agencies are contesting for space, primacy, ownership. The government is a multi-lithic entity, with intraorganizational rivalries and a 'them-versus-us' attitude between the state and central governments, and between various executing agencies involved in the PPP process. Amidst these contesting dynamics, the citizen's interests, whether as customer, land loser, or resident, may be ignored or simply fail to be noticed.

This interaction of conflict and cooperation takes place within a larger social space, where different social classes, beneficiaries of and losers from the project jostle each other to capture policy attention and space. The resulting system contains curious contradictions. It is an arena fraught with uncertainty, where the immediate environment, the related milieu as well as the perceptions and values of the citizenry, are all in a state of constant flux. It tends to be unstable in its decision making, especially where such decisions are unpopular with particular groups. But the actual effect of decisions will depend on the balance of the contending forces, and in particular to the relationship of gainers and losers. No outcome is ever decisive, since it can be reversed or can wither away due to non-implementation. Thus the process of decision making is not discrete, but is part of an ongoing complex of interrelated acts; and non-decisions may be as important as decisions.

### **3. IN THE POLICY-MAKER'S SHOES**

Given this understanding, how would a policy-maker execute a PPP regime? What should be the guiding principles and priorities of a PPP policy for India? Here we would like to focus upon areas which have hitherto been neglected in praxis, where improvement and correction is required.

- **Participation**

The problem of ascertaining public preferences has long puzzled economists. For a practitioner, a ready instrument is available for this purpose- enhancing the quantum and quality of public participation. Lack of publicness in decision making can weaken the technical soundness of policy choices, undermine the legitimacy and credibility of governments, and erode the sense of policy ownership so essential for effective follow-up to contractual agreements. In BIAL's case, the entire process of public consultation took place in 2008, well after the completion and launching of the airport. The word 'customers' does not occur even once in the entire Steering Committee proceedings which selected the private consortium. That is a measure, if only symptomatic, of the importance given to public involvement in the project, whether by the government or by the private partner. All the groundwork and the public consultation which should have been done a priori by the project implementers were instead done post-facto by the JHC. By this time, the laissez-faire approach of the early days of the project had been replaced with suspicious scrutiny.

Non-adherence to the tenet of proactive participation cost the government of Karnataka and BIAL dear. One may only speculate on 'what might have been', but in this case the losses are obvious. The "Save HAL" campaign was a consequence of state apathy to participation. A public information exercise would have, at its simplest, helped Bangalore's travelling public get used to the idea of an airport much further away from the city than HAL. The Karnataka government would have been alerted to the inconvenience of access, spurred towards speedier action in connectivity arrangements and saved avoidable embarrassment: "The bureaucrats and the public are playing the blame game for the failure of the government to provide substantial connectivity to the Devanahalli airport" (Bangaloreairport.com, Undated). Indeed, once the public outcry broke out, the lethargy was shed in favour of quick, decisive and multi-pronged action. In the event, BIAL management was also shown in poor light, indifferent to customer complaints and inept in technical expertise, thus undermining the very rationale of a PPP.

Public consultation is not just desirable, but essential in a regime of contractual governance. Once implementation began, it became impossible to reverse policy choices, as demonstrated in the bitter and costly experience of the JHC probe. The highly vocalized campaign, the strikes

by AAI employees, and the continuous media coverage culminated in an over one-year long investigation which involved a considerable drain of organizational effort and resources. Public litigation, parliamentary opprobrium and political backlash followed.

India needs an institutionalised inclusive pre-project discussion process, especially in establishing large infrastructures. This should involve a structured series of public consultation, information and education, beginning well before a project is launched, and running concurrently through its implementation. Not only is it critical to involve all the stakeholders early; it is also important to distinguish between different groups of stakeholders, and represent each adequately. To pick one or more vocal individuals or civil society groups and regard them as representative of the entire population is a convenient but counter-productive arrangement. The participation is therefore expected to be multi-level, at the national, state and local levels, and also sufficiently broad-based. It is particularly important to involve affected employees together with the unions that represent them, land losers, residents of the project area, and user groups. In effect, the state has to 'sell' the project, with an emphasis on visible benefits, and openness about negative repercussions. Project managers and implementers must be capable of dealing successfully with a multiplicity of interests arising from community consultation processes.

- **Planning**

PPP decision making takes place in a dynamic and complex environment. But PPP forecasting is still conceived of as a mechanical exercise in projecting trends. Uncertainty in the planning environment coupled with mechanical quantitative forecasting results in poor assessment of both demand and costs. What are the repercussions of poor planning? The BIAL experience shows us that it did not necessarily stop the project from reaching completion. But underestimation of demand made the state a poor bargainer and led it to undersell the project. The JHC, media and the public cried foul over monopoly profiteering: "The traffic at Bangalore airport is a windfall to BIAL, not anticipated earlier. Let them not look for windfall profit" (a citizen's statement before the JHC (Joint House Committee, Karnataka Legislative Assembly, Thirteenth Assembly, 2008).



Cost escalation, consequent to conservative forecasting, became a central expose of the JHC enquiry. “However, owing to significant increase in aviation traffic, BIAL redesigned the Initial Phase increasing the capacity of the airport to 11.4 million and project cost to Rs 1930.29 crores, so that Bangalore International Airport, at AOD, has the requisite capacity to handle the aviation traffic at the required/prescribed service levels. Subsequently, the capacity was further augmented to about 13 million with supplemental expenditure (Immediate Project Extensions) of Rs 540 crores, taking the total project cost to Rs 2470.29 crores” (Infrastructure Development Department, GOK, 07.11.2008). The AAI capacity assessment reported saturation even at AOD, recommending that: “Immediate action is to be taken to create additional capacity... to avoid further congestion and handle the projected growth”(Airports Authority of India, 2008).

The implications of inadequate planning extend beyond the financial. Conventional planning remains narrow in scope, with planners bypassing the whole morass of political behaviour, whether by politicians themselves, or by bureaucrats and community action groups. It is also not sufficiently appreciated just how far, in time and space, the ramifications of PPP decisions can extend. In some part, the Site Selection Committee report attempted such a broad analysis, but it was oriented only towards making a case for the airport. While BIAL elicited more attention and comment from Bangalore’s intelligentsia than any single issue had done in a long time, not one commentator noted the socio-economic impact of the airport. It was left to a lone journalist to note: “Two years ago, a plot in and around Devanahalli was to be scoffed at—investing in a small town was infra dig and just not lucrative. But today, developers are lapping up land along the highway and beyond, the real estate market is abuzz and prices have zoomed far beyond the imagination (The Times of India, 08.01.2005).

Infrastructure projects and their impacts last for generations. The location of and land acquisition for the airport transformed life in the sleepy town of Devanahalli, for good and bad, possibly forever. “Muniappa, a ragi farmer of Doddasonne village, owns 2.5 acres bordering the

proposed airport. He is eager to sell for Rs 10 lakh per acre. “Earlier, nobody was prepared to pay even Rs 1 lakh. Now, our land is reaping gold,” Muniappa said” (The Times of India, 08.01.2005). Although externalities are a well-recognised phenomenon in public goods literature, there was little done by way of equipping societies and communities of Devanahalli or Bangalore to cope with these changes. Interviews with local officials reveal large-scale social disruption: shooting up of land prices, a land rush by developers, farmers coerced or tempted into divesting their land, and undesirable lifestyle changes brought on by sudden wealth. Lack of socially sensitive broad-based planning has repercussions that defy quantification.

Planning for PPPs ought to be exercises in the art of *imaginative forecasting*. This involves much more than mechanical exercises in statistical trend-extrapolation. We conceive PPP planning as a multi-layered process, marking a conscious effort to forecast the world, or rather the various alternative possible worlds, in which PPPs will play out. Such an approach would contain three main elements: First, planners start by simple forecasting of cost and demand and defined variables through systematic analysis of accumulated past experience in comparable projects; estimates of timing and costing deserve a particularly sceptical look. But instead of concentrating exclusively on the quantifiables, the planner would move on to scan the entire environment to try and isolate the factors that could undermine the project. The heart of the exercise is to produce scenarios to suggest how events-technological, economic, social, cultural, political, will unfold and interrelate in the future. Its essence is an attempt to trace the likely future evolution of the economy, society and technology, internationally and nationally, then in its regional and local application to the project at hand. In the third step, a systematic attempt should be made to identify the widest possible range of approaches. Concentrating on the possible kinds of planning uncertainty, planners evaluate different alternative strategies against goals and objectives, financial and social, thus avoiding costly and cumulative errors. Such a planning approach involves the consideration of alternative courses of action, and a resolution among these through careful evaluation.

Such work may be done by one or more independent outfits; the detailed application might be the work of project-specific specialized teams, seeking to apply the general forecasts to the specific project on hand. Some organizations, DATAR in France, the Science Policy Research Unit

in Britain, adopt this kind of approach. They combine quantitative and non-quantitative methods, but above all they are exploratory and self critical. Such methods will not cause us overnight to avoid mistakes but they can help develop our powers of critical evaluation. India has no dearth of academic institutes to undertake this task; it only remains for them to do so.

This kind of activity is the stuff of history, and it needs a good historian or sociologist to capture it, write history in reverse as it were. In such an exercise, no one technique is an adequate substitute for the broad knowledge of social change and the ability to understand how some social processes influence other processes. The scenario-writer must capture how decisions in one area, by one set of bureaucrats and politicians, affect decisions in another area. He must also try to predict the cultural shifts that may result in changes in values from one social group to others. *The skills needed for this are not the traditional hard quantitative techniques, but imagination and creative understanding coupled with judgment- qualities associated with the 'divergent mind' of a humanities scholar rather than a statistician.* Above all it requires appreciative judgment about the present and future state of the system and about what facts are significant to appreciate and incorporate.

- **Equity**

Forecasting the future environment, including the problems of related areas and of values, is only part of the problem. Even where it is possible to forecast likely developments with accuracy, that would still not produce decisions on its own. This introduces the other critical area in which improvement is needed: evaluation involving a better balance sheet of costs and benefits, and equity judgments. The impacts of the PPP decision need to be viewed in terms of the perceptions of affected individuals or groups. Our third proposition emphasised domain-governance and engagement with society and citizenry. Yet equity is a facet that is neglected both in theory and praxis. Even where there is an express commitment to inclusion, this is implemented selectively. Indian public administrative practice frequently confuses 'interested parties' with 'stakeholders'; the former often passing for the latter. Thus, even while attempting consultation, the Site Selection Committee included only technical and industry

members. But the airport is a mega-project with ramifications that extend beyond its immediate users; indeed, the entire citizenry has a stake in it, not the least the land losers and inhabitants of the airport vicinity who face problems such as noise, traffic, pollution and environmental effects. The exclusionary nature of so-called consultative mechanisms operate subtly, by including members of the educated elite (elected representatives, bureaucrats, technocrats, industry, civil society) but quietly ignoring the poor. It is assumed that *elected representatives will speak for the poor, while the elite are entitled to speak for themselves*. This leaves the poor with few avenues for real participation or 'voice' except through the electoral process; indeed there is a clear class categorization in the practice of democracy, elections for the poor and participation for the elite. When such unrepresentative modes lead to inevitable disputes, especially in a contractual governance paradigm, matters are settled through litigation, which again is too expensive an option for the poor. This slippage between professed policy and popular practice forebodes a dangerous tendency of taking issues outside the realm of democratic participation and keeping it firmly in the hands of the educated elite.

Interest in equity as a pro-active concern was not evinced by KSIIDC, BIAL, the Steering Committee, Site Selection Committee or any major agency associated with the project. As a direct consequence, the impact is most clearly manifest in land acquisition. It was the initiative of the local officers and leaders that ensured even a fair compensation to the land losers. But, with regard to the extent acquired, decision making at higher levels ensured a progressive increase in the land requirement assessments: from 2500 acres (Site Selection Committee, 1992), 3500 acres (Karnataka Cabinet decision, 25.10.1996), 4009 acres for airport + 44.27 acres for TI (handed over to BIAL, JHC Report (21.12.2009)) 4417 acres 33.5 guntas (total land assembled as reported to JHC (KSIIDC, 29.04.2009)). In the extensive deliberations on land assembly and acquisition, there is no mention of the land loser and loss of livelihoods. About 400 acres of the land assembled lies unutilised in KSIIDC's custody, another estimated extent of 2170 acres lies unutilised with BIAL. Considering the HUDCO loan and repayments contingent on land purchase, and non-airport revenue foregone by non-utilisation (estimated by one observer at INR 4302 crore (John, 2005, p. 1016)), there are significant financial consequences to the neglect of equity considerations.

Such unconcern, however, had even less direct impact on bringing the airport project to completion than lack of planning. Particularly given strong political backing, as in BIAL's case, it is easy to sidestep the demands of equity or social cost-benefit. Given the short-term objective of speedy airport launching which apparently motivated the public managers, and the clamour of multiple vocal stakeholders, they simply did so. But one is compelled to question whether equity considerations matter only at a pragmatic level, or do they have larger implications with regard to ethical governance by the state, and practical considerations of elections. Land loser resistance can delay a project indefinitely, which did not happen with BIAL but with other mega-projects in Karnataka and elsewhere in India. The Congress government which spearheaded the airport was voted out of power. While this can hardly be attributed to the project, political analysts read a verdict of perceived elitism in the overall orientation of its governance.

Rather than leave concerns of equity to the vagaries of individual attentiveness, it is proper to institutionalise it as a mandatory part of the process. This would mean that (on the lines of environmental clearance) mandatory equity clearance is insisted upon before any major PPP is taken up. Equity clearance would examine a wide-ranging array of concerns, including land acquisition, affordability, residents' concerns, land-use, local employment and similar matters appropriate to particular projects.

Social cost-benefit analysis, neglected in BIAL's case, should also be incorporated as a mandatory step in the PPP process. But merely including it is insufficient; it needs execution with imagination and sensitivity. Where there are two or more alternatives each with chains of likely consequences, on what criteria should the choice be made? How are one individual's or groups' gains to be measured against another's losses? How would we trade greater efficiency against greater equity, rank gains in the near future against losses in the more distant future or vice versa? Any choice involves some commitment of resources that might have been spent on something else. It will bring a set of consequences including benefits and costs. Behind this there is the dilemma that costs to some individuals or groups may be benefits to others. In such a scenario, we recommend that the decision should be made on the basis of two concentric

circles of evaluation. The first, or inner circle, would comprise a narrow financial and technical evaluation. The second, or wider circle, would set this financial evaluation within a wider cost-benefit framework. This would consider externalities, some of which might be quantifiable in terms of money, others in non-financial terms, others may not be quantifiable at all. Nevertheless, they should all be included, and an attempt should be made to judge their relative importance. Further the analysis should identify the groups on which costs and benefits will fall, so that an attempt can be made to judge the distributional consequences. The results of this exercise may well be different from those of the purely financial-technical analysis. A cost-benefit analysis could never include all the factors relevant to the decision. But it could provide a framework within which all the evidence could be brought together and weighed. This entire process is not neat and tidy, it requires the exercise of judgment every step of the way. In fact the final verdict will emerge as cost-benefit analysis with the application of the decision-maker's judgment. Such a method would still be far from perfect; it may not silence criticism or debate. But it enables decision making that is more conscious, more mindful, with more regard to likely consequences, and above all more democratic.

- **Accountability**

PPPs provide limited opportunity for meaningful levels of transparency and public participation. Formidable barriers to transparency are inherent in long-term contracts which are highly technical and complex documents that require specialized expertise to draft and enforce. When lay persons without legal and engineering training cannot readily understand the key provisions of a contract, simply making the contract documents public will not suffice to ensure transparency. The BIAL concession agreement stayed on the MOCA website for months with hardly a ripple, until the location controversy forced a JHC probe. Commercial confidentiality can become an excuse to withhold information, as happened in the tendering and state support decisions. Disincentives to disclose accurate information can be strong for both government and its hired specialists, whose explanations tend towards obfuscation than clarification. The implementing agency develops a vested interest in secrecy; documentation is either shoddy or non-existent. In the absence of accurate, complete information on the financial and operational

implications provided by the government, the public generally relies on the media for information. Unfortunately, the media has even less capacity than the bureaucracy to interpret the complex clauses.

Structural arrangements exacerbate the PPP's hybridity and complexity. Being neither public nor private, PPPs sidestep traditional accountability structures, subject to neither electoral and ministerial accountability like public organizations, nor the disciplining mechanisms of the market like private organizations. PPPs are a particularly compelling case of a general conundrum: different sectors being accountable, each in their own complimentary way, can yield greater accountability across public institutions overall. But arrangements that straddle sectors inherently blur the distinctions between the sectors, thereby undermining the accountability of each sector, and public accountability overall. BIAL, for instance, challenged the jurisdiction of the Right to Information Act over it. PPPs are overseen and regulated by secondary quasi-autonomous organisations, to which government delegates the responsibility. This creates a phenomenon of distributed public governance. In our case, KSIIDC was appointed nodal agency, I-DECK appears to have been responsible for monitoring financial aspects related to release of state support, AAI oversaw the technical parameters during the construction phase, while the Infrastructure Development Department, GOK (and prior to IDD's formation the Commerce & Industries Department) was the administrative department. It is possible, therefore, to trace a complex web of independent organisations, each of which enjoyed an autonomous relationship with the political leadership; compounded by little capacity at the centre of government to monitor or control these organisations. This added to public confusion surrounding where responsibility actually lay. BIAL thus illustrates the problem of achieving clarity of accountability within the complex webs of a multi-lithicstate.

For this danger to be overcome, designers of partnerships must ensure that public policy and public interest are not altogether submerged by the demands of the market. Governments need new accountability and transparency structures and policies to ensure that their long-

term business decisions are sound and will benefit the public long after the decision makers have left public office. As the Karnataka Information Commission decreed in its landmark BIAL judgment: “In this case we have a public private partnership project, taken up in the interest of general public, where the financing by the Government promoters (directly and indirectly) is more than that by private promoters. The project is also subject to audit by the CAG. It will be a negation of fundamental rights of the citizens if information about the project is not provided to them” (Karnataka Information Commission, 14.05.2008).

One challenge is to locate independent, unbiased public managers who protect the public interest as meticulously and aggressively as their private sector counterparts protect the interests of companies. Additionally, continuous oversight and monitoring of public-private agreements are key responsibilities, as are effective mechanisms for informing and engaging the public. A continuous, regular and open monitoring mechanism would have enabled government to cope better with latter-day controversies. It is advisable that screening is concurrent through the course of the project, rather than a preliminary step as advised in literature or a final step as actually happened in the case.

It is important that the PPP regime is integrated into the quotidian processes of governance, instead of projects developing as discrete stand-alone preoccupations of individual politicians or bureaucrats. Most studies of public policy issues, regardless of the issue under examination, recommend the creation of some special dedicated agency to implement/oversee/monitor that particular aspect of government work. Creation of insulated agencies such as ad-hoc task forces or committees with special functions is also a favourite tool of politicians, and popular with the media. We saw that the Karnataka Government created ad-hoc task-specific committees-Site Selection Committee, Steering Committee, Evaluation Committee, Negotiation Committee, and appointed KSIIDC as a project-specific nodal agency- all of which made the administrative structure increasingly dense. Contrarily, we argue that the creation of new institutions should be an option exercised only sparingly; while ad-hoc mechanisms resorted to almost never, except perhaps in the emergent management of natural disasters. For routine, continuous, important functions, and infrastructure creation is certainly one such, existing structures are



more than adequate. The tendency to set up new institutions, structures and laws, and alter them when in doubt, may appear glamorous or even deliver results in the short-term, but is self-defeating and unhealthy in the long term. It leads to a complete lack of application of mind at the lower, and concentration of responsibility at the higher level. It creates confusion and instability, especially among personnel at the lower levels of administration, who find themselves cut off from the decision making process but still having the formal responsibility of inscribing their opinions on the file. It constitutes a waste of the tremendous institutional memory and native wisdom available within the hierarchy. The normal structure of government work and process is disrupted and scope for corruption increases. India has a large, well-established, intelligent politico-administrative executive structure with wide-ranging skills. What we need is to hone and refine it to better cope with the new challenges that partnerships bring. We already have the form, what we need to improve is the content and quality of our functioning.

- **Capacity**

In the Infrastructure Conference at Delhi in March 2010, we posed a question to the Prime Minister of India on the importance of capacity building; and received an assurance of this being a critical element in India's PPP policy approach. The ground reality hardly bears out this commitment. Though called partnerships, PPPs are approached with the traditional procurement mindset and a conventional set of skills. Public sector managers used to the traditional annual public expenditure planning horizon pay insufficient attention to the growth of contractual commitments in the future, which they are simply unable to foresee. There is incongruence between the long-term policy implications of partnerships and the shorter time horizons of elected officials and profit-seeking firms. Therefore, it falls incumbent on public administrators to keep the partnership focused on long-term public interest. They are the gatekeepers who recruit firms with access to private capital into public service. Transforming the roles, responsibilities and thinking within the public service thus becomes crucial to the success of PPPs.

Lack of capacity within the government led to hiring of professional expertise on an ad-hoc

basis, for even quotidian processes of project implementation like evaluation and negotiation. Even site selection was not done by the administrative department responsible for the project, but an assorted committee put together for the purpose. This recourse has implications for accountability. Expertise is expensive, and raises the possibility of conflicts of interest. The Steering Committee's efforts to hire suitable expertise were stymied when the bidders objected to drawing from perceived competition: "The member, Steering Committee, felt that it was desirable to have one of the renowned airport operators on the panel, as this would help in deriving benefit of hands-on experience of airport operations during the evaluation process. It was explained that extensive discussions were held on the constitution of expert panel in the earlier meetings of the steering committee. Efforts were made to identify and obtain an airport operator on the panel. Of the two airport operators approached, Hongkong International Airport had conveyed their inability to depute their representative. Airports-de-Paris had agreed to participate in the panel but certain apprehensions were raised on their inclusion by one of the bidders as explained above. Most of the other renowned airport operators such as British Airport Authority (through their associates speed wings), K.L. International Airport, Changi International airport, Zurich Airport, Düsseldorf Airport, Amsterdam Airport, Berlin airport, etc. were associated directly or indirectly with other bidders or with the Hyderabad Airport and hence they could not be considered (Chairman, Steering Committee & Principal Secretary, Infrastructure Development Department, 20.07.2000, p. 3). Inattention to capacity building proved financially expensive and administratively problematic for the project implementers.

Governments need to invest in creating specialized expertise within the public sector to analyze their options and make informed decisions. In a changed scenario, public managers too need to change, from being owners and operators of assets to becoming canny purchasers of long-term services. "The current noise [over the new Bangalore airport] is because a public sector monopoly has been replaced by a private sector monopoly. A public sector monopoly is a relatively known devil and it is a devil with whom the industry and consumers can negotiate. In a public sector monopoly, there is some sense of public propriety. The private monopolies, on the other hand, are there only for profit. That is their guiding principle" (President,

Infrastructure Committee, Bangalore Chamber of Industry & Commerce in (Anonymous, 03.04.2008)). This scenario necessitates both appropriate training programs for existing managers and recruitment of specialised personnel. Officials need to have the ability to read, understand and apply the contract terms and also design contracts. There is also an immediate need for a strong central unit to assist departments and agencies in structuring effective transactions; a role that can be performed by the Planning Commission.

Thus public officials not only need to be smart buyers who know what they need, they need to be astute and knowledgeable players who possess a thorough command of industry strategy, especially project financing. Capacity building has to go beyond equipping public managers with a set of quantitative skills however. There is need to overhaul the whole manner of decision making. Public decision makers need to go beyond the tyranny of a financial year to be able to envision a long-term future. The *quality of anticipation*, that is to foresee not just the contractual but the public policy and political repercussions of contractual decisions is a skill that is insufficiently appreciated in the Indian context. In fact, it is a quality that is subtly discouraged; in a project like BIAL that had active political support at the highest level of the government, foreseeing and articulating '*what might go wrong*' would be considered negativity and nay-saying. There develops a conspiracy of silence among decision makers, and the negative aspects of a major initiative are not pointed out or researched. Smaller problems are ignored until there is a crisis or controversy. Larger issues such as land-acquisition are left to fester until they erupt as a major socio-economic problem. When this happens, we have a state baffled and bewildered, hastily changing policy under pressure.

The modern world of governance is complex, messy, resistant to central direction and in many respects difficult for key policy-makers let alone members of the public to understand. The Location decision demonstrated the mechanisms of unanticipated social actions. To manage such a domain requires technical competence complemented by a capacity to 'make sense' of the change events of the partnership; foresee not just the positive but the negative ramifications of a project, and the courage to take adequate precautions.

## ▪ **Authority**

PPPs are a by-product of a world-view that believes that the state's role should be diminished. This, along with the lack of clarity and terminological sloppiness in debates about PPPs, fosters convenient ambiguities in defining the roles and expectations of each partner. This encourages the public partner to renege on its monitoring role, at times in tacit collusion with the private partner. PPP practice, however, is unlike wholesale privatization. Partnerships are also more deeply rooted in political collaboration than conventional procurement. Therefore we cannot afford to equivocate on the need for strong, alert, engaged, even interventionist governance in a PPP regime. Unfortunately, this view has not permeated Indian policy, media and corporate discourse, which continue to propagate the NPM mantra of minimal government presence. Therefore, the first need as a guide to policy is a clear statement of the roles that only a government can readily perform, and of those that it can perform more efficiently and effectively than other agencies. The prescription for the enabling role of the state must clarify which tier of government is intended to play what role and why.

The peculiar dichotomies in the state's role impacted on the course of BIAL story. At times the government was pro-active and engaged, as in the early events leading to the formation of the Site Selection Committee or during the Tendering phase. But once the agreements were signed and the airport construction handed over to the private partner, lethargy appears to have set in. This resulted in avoidable embarrassment to the Karnataka Government, when it was found that toilets were insufficient, seating space congested, and the conventional reserved lounge was deemed unnecessary. A sampling of customer complaints to the JHC highlights that the obvious and the serious were equally overlooked:

- "Insufficient lounge area after security-check".
- "There are no medical facilities".
- "Toilets are not sufficient".
- "Cargo operations (which gives 30 % revenue) is totally ignored".
- Majority of the lands acquired @ Rs. 5 lakhs an acre has been kept vacant" (Issues Raised in

JHC public consultation(2008).

State involvement is to be operationalised by a slew of measures. As an astute negotiator, government should rely on its own expertise. Given the array of detail in large-scale infrastructure ventures, there are lessons to be learned about strategic nuances in the negotiation and operational phases. Public officials need to foresee potential policy problems inherent in partnership financing and execution and take corrective action. The public partner should also seek a pilot age role that defines the tenor of the partnership, especially as it encounters any number of public interest conundrums during the lengthy contract periods. Public managers can exert strong leadership in cultivating appropriate institutional routines that support public service values such as due process, ethical conduct, and disclosure. Continuing involvement on the part of public officials can assist their private counterparts in establishing proactive mechanisms such as ombudsman functions, ethics training, and citizen grievance processes to protect the stature of the partnership over time. The political executive should empower public managers to proactively cultivate such institutional arrangements. By honing their political, more than their production or systems management skills, public administrators can assume essential roles that reconcile the strategic nuances of partnerships with public service priorities.

#### **4. Potential Pitfalls**

It is not easy to convert ambitions into actions in public administration. Because long-term contracts are complex, risky undertakings, governments that hope to garner the theoretical benefits of long-term contracts with the private sector will continue to confront difficult management and governance challenges. Despite the best of intent and action, experience suggests some problems will continue to dog PPP mega-projects, at least until a streamlined process is institutionalised in practice. Some such anticipated challenges are listed below. Authority in the public sector is much more dispersed, reflecting the pluralistic pressures within liberal democracies. Decision-makers are not always a homogenous group with consistent and commonly shared goals, objectives, and values. Such a domain of pluralistic pressures, conflicting goals, and learning difficulties becomes the setting for implementing large projects

of such technical and financial complexity that only a limited number of private actors, financiers and developers, possess the knowledge and means to engage in them.

- **Manage Change**

PPPs are long-gestation projects. The decision making and construction alone can take over a decade. The contractual period can stretch over several decades. Over such durations, perceptions, decisions and attitudes alter. In the early stages, the Karnataka government, media and the public of Bangalore were focused solely on speedy completion of the project. When controversy broke out, however, the process, finances, location, ethics and every other aspect became important. The agencies of the Union government, initially against the project, later changed their attitude to support it, the reverse happened with the Karnataka government. During construction, it followed a laissez-faire approach, with little or no monitoring; much later every procedural, technical and managerial aspect came under scrutiny. The media added to the cacophony, first applauding the project and project leaders, then criticising them, with little effort at consistency or informed argument.

- **Balance Conflicts**

The emotional connotation of the term partnership conveys an image of egalitarian and conflict-free decision making. This is hardly the case. While literature focuses on private-public conflicts, it fails to realise that conflict within the public sector is equally a reality. In fact, given that most PPP projects in India are still in their infancy, we need a passage of time through the operations phase before public-private conflict can be profitably studied. Another promising area is conflicts within private consortia, which was beyond the scope of our thesis but offers a potential area of research. In the formation stages, which were in our purview, intra-government relations are more relevant. One problem is that implementation of the ambitions that are formulated at the national level are operationalised by local actors. There is a 'them-versus-us' attitude between the state government on one side and the Union Government on the other. Government is a multi-lithic entity. Institutions and agencies are numerous and varied. Execution of infrastructure projects requires the active cooperation between several

departments as well as among various ministries. Competency conflicts between ministries are frequent. Rules that help to determine and demarcate agricultural land-ownership, for instance, are very different from those that promote industry with subsidised land. Project implementation, shifting of power lines, water lines, sewer lines, cutting of trees, environmental clearances and other such activities are the jurisdiction of different agencies. Execution of these activities is dependent on joint and timely efforts of all the departments involved. However, interdependence of effort means that it is easy for departments to shirk responsibility and indulge in passing the blame. So, infrastructure projects in India are vulnerable to intra organizational as well as intra organizational failures.

- **Minimize Delay**

Delays are endemic to PPPs for several reasons. In the Indian context, PPP policy-making is iterative; the enabling frameworks are still being put in place. The airport began in 1989, the civil aviation policy amendments came in 2003, and the Infrastructure policy of Karnataka came in 2007. Planning started well in advance with the Site Selection Committee, and all the issues were anticipated, discussed and well known to all. But due to the intermittent nature of decisions, pursuant action at various action points got stalled as actions were co-dependent. For instance, the Finance Department of the Karnataka Government was not in favour of heavy investment for land acquisition until MOCA cleared the project. Infrastructure projects generally require much more active cooperation of several departments and laxity on the part of just one department or dereliction by a few officials can hold up the entire project. The controversies which such infrastructure projects evoke also cause delay. One strategy that politicians use is to ride out the storm, until it subsides and it can be business as usual once again.

- **In Summary...**

The pitfalls we have listed indicate that there is no one easy and reliable way by which we can avoid errors and hurdles in our execution of public private partnerships. The BIAL experience is

an object illustration of the importance of good process, collaborative partnerships and a larger domain governance approach. But the actual project implementation also exposes nuances within each of these; and throws up new revelations hitherto unaddressed. The attempts of the Site Selection committee to adhere to good process were confounded by inadequate attention to public participation. The Steering committee emphasized procedural correctness, but was frustrated by the disharmonious intraorganizational relations of a multi-lithic state and consequent delay in creating an enabling policy framework. An inclusive partnership approach of bidder consultation during tendering provided valuable inputs on bidder concerns. Failure of such inclusiveness with respect to the government's own personnel resulted in strikes that added weight to the opposition towards the government's model of civil aviation infrastructure development. Without a clear planning agenda by trained competent public managers, the clamour of multiple stakeholders resulted in a looped back and forth process and avoidable delay. Far from being 'on-top-of-the-situation' and in control, dexterously bringing the project to a successful completion, public managers coped with multiple constraints, zigzagging and negotiating their way through obstacles, quite akin to two-wheeler riders on an Indian road. Lacking in-house capacity, the government resorted to external expertise and ad-hoc insulated agencies, with both financial and accountability implications. A realization, if belated, of its domain responsibilities impelled the government to action on access and connectivity; yet a similar concern was not exhibited in respect of equity in land acquisition, with electoral repercussions as well as larger consequences that defy immediate comprehension.

It would be incorrect to say that lacunae in one or even all of these aspects will result in project failure. BIAL itself demonstrates that political will and persistence can take the project forward, albeit with hiccups. And while the policy agenda of participation, planning, equity, accountability, capacity and authority that we have laid out provides for systemic reform, the decision-maker will still find his task confused by the uncertainty of the future; by the complex relationships between his own actions, those who affect the decision and are in turn affected by it; by the basic difficulty of reaching a solution that seems to combine efficiency of resource allocation with equity. Such questions are endemic to public policy, and will impact on PPP regimes as well. In such scenarios, it is responsive administration, rather than systemic



improvements, that holds the answer. What we can do is to develop various approaches and strategies, piecemeal improvements that can be stitched together to help obviate the grosser mistakes. As we pointed out, government's relationships with the private sector are not self-administering; they require aggressive management by a strong, competent government. It behoves on the government to be alert, and act speedily, to manage such crises as they arise.

**Table 1 of Policy Recommendations**

Lacunae	Manifestations	Consequences (to BIAL)	Consequences (to PPP regimes in general)	Policy Recommendation	Elements	Implication for Scholarship.
Neglect of public participation.	Non-inclusive implementation. Selective Participation. Post-facto participation (JHC). Lack of customer focus. Difficult to revise policy choices.	Save HAL Controversy. JHC probe. Dilemma between public demand and conditions of contractual governance. Public inconvenience owing to poor access. User complaints. Public suspicion. Media criticism. Delay.	Lack of transparency. Mid-course policy changes. Clash of contractual and popular paradigms. Drain of organizational resources. Erosion of legitimacy & credibility.	<b>Participative Implementation.</b>	Institutionalised. Structured. Multi-level. Pre-project. Concurrent. Inclusive-all stakeholders, larger citizenry. Education. Information. Consultation. Openness about benefits & costs.	Relevant to Process, Domain-governance. Importance recognised in literature but in a rhetorical /conceptual manner. Detailed nuanced study of actual practice required.
Poor/ Mechanical Planning.	Mechanical trend-projection. Quantitative forecasting. Ignored social context. Bypassed political	Does not affect project completion. Underselling project. Cost escalation. Demand overshooting	Financial implication of cost & time overruns. The local society ill-equipped to	<b>Planning</b>	Imaginative forecasting. Multi-layered process: Quantitative forecasting with emphasis on	Relevant to process; should be extended to domain governance. Not a glamorous subject of study.

	behaviour. Communities ill-equipped to manage change.	assessment and capacity. Public criticism of monopoly profiteering. JHC probe. Large-scale unquantifiable socio-economic changes largely ignored by the government. Political fallout in elections.	handle large scale socio-economic changes. Poor governance. Political cost.		demand, cost & time; environment-scanning with alternative scenarios; variety of strategies. What can go wrong? Combines quantitative & qualitative methods. Exploratory. Self-critical. Public managers trained and equipped for the purpose.	Not much scholarship on PPP planning. Nuanced study required on inner workings of planning agencies. Scholars should take a pro-active role.(UK, France). Knowledge of social process & social change.
Equity in rhetoric but not in process.	Inequity both in consultative processes and administrative action. Land Acquisition. Confusion between stakeholder and interested party. Left to individual officials. Not integrated into	JHC probe. Excess acquisition and handing over of land. Financial cost of land purchase and non-utilisation. Public Controversy. Delay.	Resistance of affected groups. Failure in role of public partner. Public disaffection. Project failure. Undermining of a just	<b>Equity</b>	2-step process: Financial-technical evaluation followed by wider cost-benefit analysis. Look into Land acquisition, affordability, residents' concerns, land-	Relevant to partnership, domain-governance. Equity important at a conceptual level in policy discourse & scholarship. Structures and process to operationalize

	PPP process. Social cost-benefit not done. Equity not a priority for any agency.		social order.		use, employees, unions, local employment. Mandatory equity clearance. Mandatory cost-benefit analysis.	equity in policy practice not examined.
Lack of Accountability.	Poor documentation. Complexity & technical detail deterrent to public understanding. Hired specialists, public servants and private sector obfuscate than clarify. Commercial confidentiality convenient screen. Not subject to public or private accountability structures. Creation of ad-hoc Insulated Agencies (task-forces).	Public confusion on responsibilities. JHC probe. KIC complaint and ruling. Save HAL Controversy. Disconnect between higher and lower bureaucracy.	Erosion of credibility. Poor governance. Public suspicion.	<b>Accountability</b>	Integrate PPP process into quotidian process of government. Continuous screening & monitoring. Avoid ad-hoc creation of insulated agencies. Concurrent public education and participation.	PPP accountability ignored in finance, legal and economic literature. Recognised in public policy and organization theory research but the practical issues are not fully understood. Practical accountability issues need study along with workable recommendations.
Lack of capacity in polity & bureaucracy.	Recognised as policy-value but not practised. Traditional	Hiring expensive private expertise. Ad-hoc insulated agencies with	Mid-policy changes. Delay. Poor	<b>Capacity</b>	Quality of anticipation. What might go wrong?	Relevant to partnership and process. Pro-active role in

	procurement mindset. No match for private sector. Financial year/electoral cycle mindset. Caution discouraged.	accountability implications. Lack of anticipation. “What might go wrong”: not asked. Non availability of independent expertise. Search cost & effort.	accountability. Conflict of Interest.		Training and procurement expertise. Need to be canny purchasers, negotiators, operators. Recruitment of specialized personnel.	providing training and skills to public managers.  Study into precise bundle of skills required.
Self-effacing state.	NPM mindset.	Public interest jeopardized. Customer/user complaints.	Public discontent. Poor governance.	<b>Authority</b>	Strong, competent, engaged and interventionist state. Leadership by public officials. Integrate public service values into PPP process.	Relevant to process, partnership, domain-governance. Positive and negative implications of state role need study. Political rather than production skills.

## **5. THEORISING AMIDST CONSTRAINTS**

Our object in this thesis is to begin an exploration, not to end one. There are daunting constraints to our modest endeavour. There is no magic formula, no all-embracing model that will perform a miraculous transformation of our approach to PPPs. PPPs are multi-faceted entities, no single template will deliver comprehensive sustainable results. We therefore carefully eschew providing a laundry list of policy recommendations or key success factors, in the usual mode of public policy work. The scale of our literature review and the scope of data analysis are vast; yet it is important that we do not make inappropriate generalizations from the experience of a single project. The Indian scenario, political and economic, is in a state of flux and transition, so we paint on a dynamic canvas. There are regional variations, and given the strong contextuality we have emphasised throughout, a pan-Indian model cutting across regional distinctions is unrealistic. In commenting on contemporary history, the researcher risks offending strongly-held opinions of her readers. Our recommendations are appropriate to large stand-alone hard infrastructures; social sector PPPs operating at micro-level, such as in health and education, require quite a different approach. Nonetheless, in the absence of a body of compelling research evidence concerning the PPP process, documented experiences such as BIAL are the building blocks of an iterative and evolving policy approach to PPP praxis in India. Even given the constraints, valuable conclusions can be drawn and implications developed which lead us through intriguing theoretical lanes and also useful policy approaches.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

Public policy concerns are sharpened, not muted in a PPP. For some public administrators and corporate managers, PPPs are a way to sidestep constraints that have traditionally dogged public projects. They believe that PPPs should be allowed unfettered liberty, so as to avoid the inefficiency associated with government implementation. This is very much a reaction to the state-dominated planning style that characterized pre-liberalization India. The peril today, to judge from the experience of BIAL, is the opposite: that of doing nothing, or almost nothing, at

all. Far from ushering in a hands-off state, PPPs demand greater and more alert state involvement. Any mega-project involves a range of public concerns which cannot be sidestepped by a decision to develop the project through a partnership. These concerns can be classified into those related to organizational and institutional aspects of PPPs and those that go beyond into questions of social values and justice. The former bear upon structures, processes, and practices of PPPs per se and can be addressed through mechanisms designed around how particular PPPs are conceptualised and operationalised. The latter have implications for policy and the domains that private and public organizations should inhabit in a country where fundamental inequalities still characterize the social, economic, and political spheres. Steering mechanisms at the apex level, such as the Planning Commission at the Union level and the Infrastructure Development agencies at the state level have traditionally paid more attention to standardization, documentation and micro-management. Instead they need to focus on domain-governance and the art of imaginative judgment.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY**

Our learnings are not limited to practice. Their implications for scholarship are significant. Our work makes a modest contribution to extending the academic discourse on infrastructure PPPs. Collaborations of all kinds are an intellectually challenging phenomenon for researchers, given the many complexities to which they give rise, and the wide range of theoretical perspectives from which they can be viewed. Yet scholarly understanding of PPPs has been constrained by the limited range of theoretical perspectives that have been applied to their study. We began our analyses with a conceptual framework distilled from extant literature, to study the nuances of its application in practice. This framework is three-pronged, and emphasises the criticality of process, partnership and domain-governance. As we applied this to the Bangalore International Airport through a three-layered analysis of project, local and national levels and a longitudinal perspective of its two-decade history, we found points of convergence and divergence. Such a dynamic approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of the case, but also forced us to venture beyond our framework. The richness and complexity of practice in an already complex governance arrangement was such that are many theories we drew upon, leading to

insights that are still insufficiently addressed by extant PPP scholarship.

It follows that one cannot take an off-the-shelf model and apply it to PPP implementation. We need to integrate not just different disciplines, but different streams and theories, drawn from varied scholarly and non-scholarly sources. More eclectic analysis would require an understanding of processes of public policy, finance, law, economics and organisational behaviour, and meticulous observation of what people, businesses, and governments actually do. Above all it implies a pragmatic thinking employing many tools, a world-view simultaneously generous and nuanced, allowing for alterations and inconsistencies, and open to revision in the light of new data or experience; never succumbing to torturing data to demonstrate consistency with an a priori world view, or ignoring deviations from theory as being too insignificant to matter.

Looking at research design, a central aim of our research is to establish an independent research position for PPPs which recognises and understands the special characteristics of public-private organizations and services. PPPs, as a particular inter-organizational form, have their own distinctive characteristics and dynamics. Such a research approach is multidisciplinary and integrative, combining several strands of theory including economics, management, law, finance, organizational theory, and public policy research. Although PPPs are widely studied it is rare to see studies that actively combine theoretical frameworks and practical insights. Moreover, public policy research tends to restrict itself to a single stratum of the state, national, regional or local levels, despite the fact that most public policy implementation evolves from the interaction, cooperation and conflict of these several levels; it also tends shy away from the organizational focus, preferring to deal with relatively generalized concepts such as democracy and community. Our method of embedded agency breaks away from such conservatism to study each stratum independently as well as in interaction with the others. We also strike a balance between the opposite poles of system and individual, and view individual actors as both influencing and influenced by their setting. Central to this the arising is the inherent tension between human action in the face of constraining environmental forces and the political process, setting up a mutuality of action and constraint. Despite its evident applicability in public policy research, we have not come across scholarship that studies this



phenomenon in public organizations particularly in the Indian context. To that extent our work is a methodological first. We propose that in the twenty-first century value lies more in the micro-activities of managers and personnel in public organizations than in the traditional macro-focus of the public policy literature. Our purpose is to link the theories of individual agency and organizational practice with the current body of economic and public policy research in order to advance our understanding of the PPP phenomenon. PPP research can be enriched by considerations of how key actors make sense of their complex social context within PPPs, and influence other actors in the PPP network at each stage of the process.

The exploration of how to create new governance arrangements, more mature forms of popular participation, and effective public-private partnerships has only just begun. Our work has shed light on hitherto opaque areas of public decision making and policy process. For the rest, the way is pointed to a lifetime's work. In order to understand the abilities of and problems with governance arrangements, scholars first should shift from the tyranny of a theoretical lens toward a comprehensive holistic understanding of the richness of reality, its difference, its variety, its contradictions. It is our faith that it is here that the future of PPP research lies.

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