NR17 / Institutional variety and scale: Examining state-business accountabilities in development of privatised industrial townships and infrastructure governance in liberalised India

Topic : Research

Chair : Champaka Rajagopal (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po))

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Panel chair: Champaka Rajagopal, PhD

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This panel explores contentious outcomes of policy praxis embedded in incongruous institutional relationships between state agencies and businesses since liberalisation of the Indian economy in 1991. Faced with the balance of payments crisis and growth demands, a liberalised India promoted new institutional arrangements to attract private sector investment for development of industrial townships and allied infrastructure (Kennedy, 2014). The Union government's enactment of laws such as the Special Economic Zones Act 2005, which intended to remove entry barriers for domestic and international private businesses to invest in India (Jenkins et al, 2014), led to the emergence of new regimes of private governance (Kennedy and Sood, 2016, Idiculla, 2016) and consolidation of older prototypes of corporate urbanisation in India (Sood, 2015). Mechanisms such as Special Purpose Vehicles, Public Private Partnerships were mainstreamed in later initiatives such as the National Industrial Corridor Regions (Sami, 2016; Rajagopal, 2021), with an intent to build high quality infrastructure to attract foreign direct investment across multiple markets. Uneven development along transport corridors have unsettled historical structures of agrarian capitalism to be replaced by urban real estate markets driven by agrarian property holders (Balakrishnan, 2023).These new institutional arrangements ushered fundamental shifts in the nature of the state towards entrepreneurialism (drawing on Harvey, 2006; Papaioannou and Srinivas, 2016; Papaioannou, 2019) and restructured power relationships as a 'variety' of private firms partnered with public authorities at multiple 'scales' of decision making, national, state and local. Over three decades, large, medium and small firms occupied and reproduced their ubiquitous presence in industrial and infrastructure project cycles (Rajagopal, 2021). Allocation of financial risks stemming from inadequate state and business capacities and expertise to manage long term incomplete project contracts have remained unresolved (ibid), as have their implications on growth outcomes. Yet, state-led privatisation of urban and regional planning has consolidated the network of experts and their nuanced presence in policy cycles (Sami and Anand, 2021). Recent shifts in the centralisation of political authority in India have, however, demanded greater alignment of private firms and expert advice with the national government's agenda, while diminishing their heterogeneity, independent advice and autonomy (Kennedy, 2025) for public good.

What do these shifts in policy environments signify in terms of the capacity of the state to draw on the private sector, to deliver its goals for equitable growth?

More specifically:

1. How has policy praxis, public and private, responded to the evolution of, and shifts in institutional scale and variety in privatisation of industrial and infrastructure development in India, including recent changes in centralisation of decisions? What theoretical insights can case studies provide?

2. How has the evolution of privatisation in industrial and infrastructure planning and development shaped

public accountability, ownership, control and authority of resources?

3. What is the nature of public and private sector accountabilities at the macro level of policy, meso level of public procurement and micro level of project implementation/ contractual governance? In a context where the state partners with the same private businesses that it regulates and facilitates, what role does the state play to create an environment of fair competition and transactions to ensure common good?

4. Urban and regional studies scholars exploring state-business relationships in privatisation in India, have often examined the question of public accountability through the binary of state and businesses. How are institutional boundaries and accountabilities shaped in mechanisms of privatisation?

5. How has the reconfiguration of expertise and decision-making power within governments- national, state and local shaped institutional relationships and collective outcomes?

CALL FOR PAPERS

Call for Papers
This panel focuses on challenges to policy making and the nature of hybrid praxis involving public and private sector agencies. It explores impact of networks and actors in partnerships between national, state, local public authorities and private firms of varying types, sizes and capacities in economic growth initiatives in India. In this context, the study of state-business relations in industrial and infrastructure development and governance in India, and accountabilities of public and private sector agencies/agents in public sector decision making spaces is an under-researched area. By focusing on industrial and infrastructure development law, policy and project contracts, we will unpack how partnering agents who are mis-aligned in their values and goals traverse uncertainties, risks in instruments of privatisation. The panel organiser welcomes insights on rules of the game for engagement of a heterogeneous range of public and private sector actors, their roles, relationships and accountabilities in industrial development and governance of infrastructure projects in urban and regional development. Researchers, scholars, public officials, private sector project-contract managers and practitioners are welcome to submit articles/papers that address research questions outlined above.

Please email your queries and paper contributions to Champaka Rajagopal at
champaka.rajagopal@sciencespo.fr
?

Panel chair:
Champaka Rajagopal, PhD
Professor Affiliae, Urban School, SciencesPo, Paris
Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, Delhi
Founding Director, The Entrepreneurship and Partnerships Lab, Bengaluru
Email: champaka.rajagopal@sciencespo.fr
Phone: +91-9845925229

References:

Anand, S and Sami, N. (2016). State Rescaling along the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 51, No. 17

Balakrishnan, S. (2023). Shareholder Cities, Land Transformations Along Urban Corridors in India. University of Pennsylvania Press

Harvey, D. (2006). Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development. New York: Verso.

Idiculla, M. (2016). New Regimes of Private Governance, The Case of Electronics City in Peri-urban Bengaluru. Review of Urban Affairs, Economic & Political Weekly. Vol LI no 17. pp. 104-109.

Jenkins, R. Kennedy, L. and Mukhopadhyay, P. (Eds.). (2014). Power, Policy, and Protest: The Politics of India’s Special Economic Zones. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kennedy, L. (2014). The Politics of Economic Restructuring in India Economic Governance and State

Spatial Rescaling. New York. USA: Routledge. Special Indian Edition.

Kennedy, L and Sood, A. (2016). Greenfield Development as Tabula Rasa. Rescaling, Speculation and Governance on India's Urban Frontier. Economic & Political Weekly, 2016. ffhalshs-02001520f. pp. 41-49.

Kennedy, Loraine & Chitta, Ram. (2025). Policymaking and Expertise in Telangana State: Mediating Knowledge and Interests in Pursuit of Economic Development and Social Justice in Hyderabad. 10.5117/9789048562794_ch01.

Papaioannou, T. (2019). Reflections on the Entrepreneurial State. Innovation and Social Justice. 31st European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy (EAEPE) Annual Conference. pp. 01–20. Retrieved September 11, 2020 from
http://oro.open.ac.uk/66717/3/State Innovation Justice 7.pdf

Papaioannou, T and Srinivas, S. (2016). Innovation as a Political Process of Development: Are Neo-Schumpetarians Value Neutral? In: SPRU's 50th Anniversary Conference on Transforming Innovation. 07-09 September 2016. University of Sussex.

Rajagopal, C. (2021). The Entrepreneurial State in India?: Investigating Public-Private Partnerships, Incomplete Contracts and Risks in the Transport Infrastructure Sector. University of Amsterdam.

Sami, Neha & Anand, Shriya. (2021). Expert Advice? Assessing the Role of the State in Promoting Privatized Planning. 10.1007/978-3-030-72128-2_14.

Sood, A. (2015). Industrial townships and the policy facilitation of corporate urbanisation in India. Urban Studies. ,Volume 52, Issue 8 https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098014562318