



Assessing the Applicability of Multilevel Governance in the India Context: An Analysis of the Smart Cities Mission Programme

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While Multilevel Governance (MLG) and in particular, Hooghe and Marks's (2003) distinction between Type I and Type II governance has been highly influential in understanding governance arrangements in developed countries (Bache and Flinders 2015), MLG has had limited application in the developing country context. Through a focus on India's Smart Cities Mission reforms, this paper analyses what MLG can tell us about India's urban governance, and in doing so, the extent to which the logics of Type I and Type II arrangements hold in the India context. These research questions are therefore in close alignment with the aims of the Public Policy-Making in Developing Countries panel.

In 2015 the Indian national government launched the Smart Cities Mission, a competition to award funding to 100 cities through to 2019/20. In implementing the programme, India's government is explicitly seeking to change the type and configuration of policy networks, the practices of policymaking and the city level policies enacted. For example, on the back of a new approach to how the local level receives national level funding (through competition), the Mission mandates the establishment of public-private 'Special Purpose Vehicles' to implement 'smart' initiatives at the city level (MoUD 2015, 18).

MLG emerged from analysis of the changing role and strengths of the nation state in the context of the European Union. At its core is the recognition that policymaking is a pluralistic and highly dispersed activity whereby actors participate vertically (between levels) and horizontally (across levels) in the sharing of resources to achieve policy objectives (Stephenson 2013, 817). Therefore, as Hupe (2014, 117) notes MLG 'can equally be applied to issues within nation states about the mandating of implementation towards officials on lower layers.'

India has been considered a highly centralized country and previous attempts at urban governance reform have had limited traction. Consequently, the governance literature on India has tended to focus on strong central state dynamics (see Jørgensen et al., 2015). The Smart Cities Mission reforms offer the potential to create new forms of vertical and horizontal interaction amongst different state and non-state institutions and actors. MLG therefore provides a potentially fruitful means through which to understand and interrogate the new changes to the structure and role of different governance actors in light of the Mission's reforms.

The paper draws on a qualitative, comparative case study analysis of four of India's smart cities - Jaipur, Bangalore, Indore and Kochi. We focus specifically on the implications of the Smart Cities Mission reforms on urban transport governance. The case study sites allow us to discern the relevance of differences in the relative importance of the city within the state structure, of state capacity, and policy priorities.

Of particular interest in developing interpretations of MLG in India is the extent to which the top-down goals of the nation state endure through the tiers of regional and local government. In addition, the extent to which the deployment of 'Special-Purpose Vehicles' (Type II agencies) are a specific governance strategy to bypass previous frustrations to governance reform.