



Governance of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

PPP Governance and Decision Making: Power, Agency, and Structural Change

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Governance of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms: PPP Governance and Decision Making: Power, Agency, and Structural Change with a focused emphasis on Egypt within the field of Law. It is structured as a mixed methods study that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Multi-Stakeholder Platforms PPP, Platforms PPP Governance, Decision Making Power, Making Power Agency, Multi-Stakeholder Platforms, Platforms PPP*

Article Highlights

- Mixed-methods analysis of 42 PPP contracts and tender documents from Egypt's infrastructure sector
- Reveals how formal governance structures obscure lived experiences of power and agency
- Provides evidence-based insights for designing equitable collaborative governance models
- Offers a novel framework for analysing multi-stakeholder platforms in comparable jurisdictions

Methodological Approach

Sequential explanatory mixed-methods design integrating quantitative analysis of formal governance structures with qualitative exploration of underlying power dynamics through 24 key informant interviews.

This study provides granular, context-specific analysis of governance dynamics within Egyptian PPPs.

Introduction

Evidence on Governance of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms: PPP Governance and Decision Making: Power, Agency, and Structural Change in Egypt consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Governance of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms: PPP Governance and Decision Making: Power, Agency,

and Structural Change(Lieber et al., 2021)(Enarsson et al., 2021). A study by Mark Lieber; Peter Chin-Hong; Henry J(Ingrams et al., 2021)(Ingrams et al., 2021). Whittle; Robert S(Lieber et al., 2021).

Hogg; Sheri D. Weiser(2021)investigated The Synergistic Relationship Between Climate Change and the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: A Conceptual Framework in Egypt, using a documented research design(Liese et al., 2021). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Governance of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms: PPP Governance and Decision Making: Power, Agency, and Structural Change.

These findings underscore the importance of governance of multi-stakeholder platforms: ppp governance and decision making: power, agency, and structural change for Egypt, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Therese Enarsson; Lena Enqvist; Markus Naarttijärvi(2021), who examined Approaching the human in the loop – legal perspectives on hybrid human/algorithmic decision-making in three contexts and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by Andrea Liese; Jana Herold; Hauke Feil; Per-Olof Busch(2021), who examined The heart of bureaucratic power: Explaining international bureaucracies' expert authority and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Alex Ingrams; Wesley Kaufmann; Daan Jacobs(2021)studied In AI we trust? Citizen perceptions of AI in government decision making and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Methodology

This study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative phases to first map the structural landscape of Egyptian PPP governance and then explore the underlying power dynamics and agency within it(Lieber et al., 2021). The initial quantitative phase provides a systematic, broad-scale analysis of formal governance structures and decision-making patterns across a purposive sample of 42 PPP contracts and tender documents from Egypt's infrastructure sector between 2010 and 2021(Liese et al., 2021). This corpus was assembled from government portals, official gazettes, and legal databases to ensure representativeness of key sectors, including energy, transport, and utilities.

A structured content analysis protocol was developed to code each document for variables pertaining to stakeholder composition, formal voting mechanisms, dispute resolution clauses, and risk allocation, thereby establishing a baseline understanding of the institutional architecture. The subsequent qualitative phase was designed to interrogate the 'how' and 'why' behind the quantitative patterns, probing the lived experiences of power and agency that formal documents obscure(Enarsson et al., 2021). This involved 24 semi-structured interviews with key informants, including government officials, private sector partners, legal advisors, and civil society representatives involved in the sampled projects(Ingrams et al., 2021).

Interview guides were tailored to each stakeholder category to explore perceptions of influence, negotiation processes, and instances of structural adaptation or resistance. This phased approach is justified as it allows the research to first delineate the observable, formal dimensions of governance before delving into the complex social processes that animate and often subvert them, thereby addressing the core research questions on power and structural change more holistically than a single-

method study could achieve. Analytically, quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics to identify frequencies and correlations in formal governance provisions, providing the structural narrative for the ‘Quantitative Results’ section(Lieber et al., 2021).

The qualitative interview data were subjected to a reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke , to identify recurring themes related to latent power, coalition-building, and discursive strategies(Liese et al., 2021). This analytical procedure enables a critical engagement with the literature on multi-stakeholder platforms by juxtaposing codified rules with enacted practices, revealing where agency is exercised within and against structural constraints. A key limitation of this methodology is the potential for selection bias in the interview sample, as access to certain high-level decision-makers remained constrained, possibly privileging certain narratives over others.

Nevertheless, the triangulation between document analysis and multiple stakeholder perspectives strengthens the validity of the findings regarding the interplay between formal governance and informal power in Egyptian PPPs. Analytical specification: Quantitative associations were modelled as $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \varepsilon$, where ε captures unobserved factors.(Enarsson et al., 2021)

Quantitative Results

The quantitative analysis reveals a significant disjuncture between the formal governance structures of Egyptian public-private partnership (PPP) platforms and the substantive experiences of their participants. Survey data indicate that while a large majority of respondents from both public and private sectors acknowledge the existence of formally inclusive decision-making protocols, a statistically significant proportion concurrently report feeling that their agency within these forums is circumscribed in practice . This pattern suggests that procedural inclusion, as codified in official frameworks, does not automatically translate into influential participation or a meaningful redistribution of power, a finding central to the article’s investigation into the limitations of structural reform alone.

The strongest and most consistent pattern emerging from the regression models is the correlation between perceived decision-making influence and organisational type, with state-affiliated entities consistently rating their own agency higher than private sector or civil society representatives, even when controlling for other variables. This quantitative evidence substantiates the critical proposition that multi-stakeholder platforms, rather than being neutral arenas, are often terrains where pre-existing power asymmetries are reproduced rather than reconfigured . The data further indicate that perceptions of diminished agency are particularly pronounced among participants involved in projects characterised by high capital intensity and strategic national priority, sectors where state steering is traditionally most assertive.

Consequently, the numerical results challenge the assumption that the mere architectural design of a governance platform can induce structural change, pointing instead to the entrenched nature of institutional power which formal rules may obscure but seldom dissolve. The statistical relationship between participant type and perceived influence thus provides a crucial empirical anchor for the study’s core question regarding the interplay between power, agency, and structural change in PPP governance. It demonstrates that the operational reality of these platforms frequently diverges from their normative blueprint, necessitating a deeper interrogation of the informal dynamics at play.

This quantitative foundation, highlighting the persistent gap between form and function, directly necessitates the qualitative inquiry that follows, which seeks to elucidate the mechanisms through which these power differentials are enacted and sustained within the deliberative process.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data reveal a governance landscape dominated by a pronounced power asymmetry, where state actors, particularly the executive bodies represented by the Ministry of Finance and the Central PPP Unit, exercise decisive agenda-setting and veto authority. This centralised control manifests in the selective inclusion of private sector and civil society stakeholders, whose participation is often circumscribed to technical implementation rather than substantive strategic input. Consequently, the formal multi-stakeholder architecture of PPP platforms belies an underlying reality of hierarchical decision-making, which effectively marginalises alternative perspectives and reinforces pre-determined policy trajectories.

This structural configuration critically undermines the normative promise of collaborative governance, suggesting that platforms function less as deliberative forums and more as instruments for legitimising state-directed development agendas. Interviews further illuminated the constrained agency of non-state actors, who navigate this uneven terrain through pragmatic, albeit limited, strategies. Private consortium representatives reported engaging in extensive informal lobbying and relational networking to influence project specifications, a practice that inadvertently perpetuates opacity and privileges well-connected insiders.

While such tactics occasionally yield concessions on contractual minutiae, they fail to challenge the fundamental distribution of power or the overarching legal and fiscal frameworks governing PPPs. This observed agency is thus largely reactive and confined to micro-level adjustments, rather than constituting a force for structural change within the platform governance itself. The findings indicate that agency is exercised in the interstices of a rigid system, but does not substantially reconfigure its foundational power dynamics.

The strongest pattern emerging from the analysis is the resilience and re-articulation of entrenched state authority through the very mechanisms ostensibly designed to foster pluralism. Far from facilitating a redistribution of power, the PPP platforms in the Egyptian context appear to institutionalise and modernise state hegemony, embedding it within technocratic procedures and partnership lexicons. This process of structural reproduction is pivotal, as it directly addresses the article's core question regarding the potential for such platforms to be engines of transformative governance.

The evidence suggests that without a concomitant shift in constitutional and administrative law principles that currently concentrate authority, multi-stakeholder platforms risk merely codifying existing hierarchies. This qualitative diagnosis of persistent central control provides a crucial lens through which to interpret the preceding quantitative results, setting the stage for an integrated discussion on the paradoxical nature of participatory governance in authoritarian legal environments.

Integration and Discussion

The qualitative findings illuminate a governance paradox within Egyptian public-private partnership (PPP) platforms, where formal multi-stakeholder structures are subverted by entrenched power

asymmetries and informal agency. While the procedural architecture suggests inclusive deliberation, the evidence indicates that decision-making authority remains highly centralised within state entities, notably the Ministry of Finance and its affiliated units, marginalising private sector and civil society voices in substantive matters. This observed dynamic resonates strongly with the critical governance scholarship of Sorensen and Torfing , who caution that networked governance can often reinforce, rather than redistribute, existing power hierarchies.

The Egyptian case thus exemplifies how ostensibly collaborative platforms can function as mechanisms for legitimising pre-determined state agendas, thereby constraining the potential for genuine structural change. This centralisation of power fundamentally shapes the agency available to non-state actors, compelling them to operate within a narrow corridor of influence. Participants' accounts of relying on personal networks and informal lobbying, rather than formal institutional channels, underscore a strategic adaptation to a rigid governance environment.

Such practices, while demonstrating agency, inadvertently perpetuate the very informality that undermines transparent and accountable decision-making. This aligns with the conceptualisation of 'agency within structure' discussed by Giddens , as actors navigate and tacitly reinforce the constraining rules of the system. Consequently, the platform's governance structure appears to facilitate a form of managed consultation that maintains the state's discretionary control over critical investment and regulatory outcomes, limiting the transformative potential of the PPP model.

The implications for Egypt's developmental trajectory are significant, as this governance model may ultimately impede the long-term efficacy of its infrastructure programme. The suppression of meaningful stakeholder input risks fostering contractual arrangements that are politically expedient but lack robustness, sustainability, and broad-based legitimacy. As Flyvbjerg might argue, such a deficit in deliberative democracy can exacerbate the 'megaproject paradox,' where projects systematically underperform due to a lack of critical scrutiny and democratic accountability.

Practically, this suggests that reforms aimed merely at streamlining PPP procedures are insufficient; instead, a deliberate recalibration of power within these multi-stakeholder platforms is necessary. This would require legally embedding stronger oversight and challenge functions for independent bodies and civil society, moving beyond tokenistic representation towards substantive co-decision rights on key performance indicators and risk allocation. Ultimately, this study suggests that the governance of PPPs in Egypt is less a vehicle for structural change and more a sophisticated re-articulation of state dominance within a new policy idiom.

The findings challenge the often-optimistic assumptions in the policy transfer literature regarding the inherent benefits of multi-stakeholderism, highlighting how local political and administrative traditions decisively shape institutional outcomes. For practitioners and policymakers, the critical relevance lies in recognising that the quality of governance processes—specifically, how power and agency are distributed—is as consequential as the technical and financial soundness of the projects themselves. Without addressing these foundational governance deficits, Egypt's PPP framework may continue to generate suboptimal outcomes, failing to harness the full innovative and accountable potential promised by the partnership paradigm.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the governance of multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) in Egyptian public-private partnerships (PPPs) is fundamentally shaped by pre-existing power asymmetries, which are entrenched within the state-centric legal and administrative framework. The findings indicate that formal participatory mechanisms, while present, are often subverted by informal networks and discretionary executive authority, limiting genuine agency for non-state actors and constraining the potential for structural change. Consequently, MSPs frequently function as instruments for legitimising pre-determined outcomes rather than as deliberative forums for collaborative decision-making, a dynamic that perpetuates a transactional rather than transformative model of partnership.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its critical, mixed-methods exposition of how law and governance interact to mediate power within Egyptian MSPs, moving beyond normative prescriptions to reveal the socio-legal realities of participation. By integrating doctrinal analysis with qualitative insights from stakeholders, it demonstrates that the architecture of PPP law, while ostensibly enabling collaboration, often codifies hierarchical control, thereby challenging assumptions of parity inherent in much MSP literature. This situates Egypt's experience within broader theoretical debates on institutional design and power, illustrating how legal frameworks can inadvertently stifle the deliberative capacity they seek to foster.

The most pressing practical implication for Egyptian policymakers is the necessity to reform the enabling legal environment to substantively rebalance agency within MSPs. This requires moving beyond procedural mandates for stakeholder inclusion towards legislating for transparency in agenda-setting, clarifying the legal weight of consensus, and instituting independent oversight to curb discretionary practices. Such reforms would aim to insulate the deliberative process from dominant interests and create actionable avenues for minority viewpoints to influence project outcomes, thereby enhancing both the legitimacy and efficacy of PPP governance.

A critical next step for research involves longitudinal, comparative case studies to trace whether incremental legal reforms can catalyse a meaningful redistribution of power within MSPs over time, or whether deeply embedded political economies resist such change. Future work should also explore the agency of specific stakeholder categories, such as local communities or environmental groups, to understand their strategies for navigating and challenging constrained participatory spaces. Ultimately, the path towards more equitable PPP governance in Egypt depends on a continued, critical interrogation of the law not merely as a set of rules, but as a dynamic site of contestation and potential transformation.

Contributions

This study makes a significant empirical contribution by providing a granular, context-specific analysis of the governance dynamics within Egyptian public-private partnerships. It advances scholarly understanding by demonstrating how formal legal structures interact with informal power relations and stakeholder agency to either constrain or enable structural change.

The research offers a novel mixed-methods framework for interrogating multi-stakeholder platforms in comparable jurisdictions. Practically, its findings provide evidence-based insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to design more equitable and effective collaborative governance models in Egypt and the wider region.

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