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The Role of State and Public Institutions in Pollution Management and Eco-Development

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Abstract

This research paper examines the role of state and public institutions in pollution management and eco-development from an interdisciplinary and political science perspective. It explores how governments formulate environmental laws, policies, and institutional frameworks to regulate pollution and promote sustainable development. The study highlights the significance of legislative instruments, administrative capacity, enforcement mechanisms, and interagency coordination in addressing environmental degradation. It further analyses the contribution of public institutions through public-private partnerships, community participation, and multilevel governance in ensuring effective environmental management.

The paper discusses the importance of financial support, environmental monitoring, and transparent reporting systems in strengthening pollution control measures. Comparative perspectives from different countries, particularly India, illustrate how institutional effectiveness, political commitment, and policy implementation shape environmental outcomes. Furthermore, the study evaluates challenges such as weak enforcement, fragmented governance, poor compliance, and inadequate institutional coordination that hinder successful pollution management. Eco-development is presented as a governance objective that integrates sustainable urbanism, green infrastructure, circular economy practices, and resource efficiency to achieve environmental sustainability. The study concludes that strong state capacity, institutional accountability, and collaborative governance are essential for balancing environmental protection with socio-economic development and ensuring long-term ecological resilience.

Keywords: Pollution Management, Eco-development, Environmental Governance, State Institutions, Public Policy, Sustainable Development, Environmental Regulation, Public-Private Partnerships

1. Introduction

Pollution management entails the regulation of environmental contaminant discharges from various economic activities, including agriculture, industry,

transportation, and resource extraction. The term eco-development refers to promoting modes of economic growth that protect the environment, conserve natural resources, ensure human well-being, and enhance societal resilience. In the wake of an uptick in pollution-related illnesses and an increase in water and air pollution levels, a significant body of literature has emerged analysing the roles of state and public institutions in pollution management and eco-development, with the aim of addressing the following questions:

- What legislative and policy instruments do states implement to regulate pollution?
- How do state administrative capacities and institutional configurations shape pollution management?
- What enforcement mechanisms do states employ to ensure compliance with pollution regulations?
- What are the roles of public institutions in coordinating interagency efforts and promoting multi-level governance on environmental issues?
- How do public institutions facilitate pollution management and eco-development through public-private partnerships and community engagement?
- What avenues do public institutions pursue to secure financing for pollution management and eco-development?
- In which ways do public institutions promote transparent measurement, monitoring, and reporting on pollution and its impacts?

Theory on pollution management and eco-development remains emergent and disparate (A. Ashford & Caldart, 2008). This exploration adopts a governance lens, investigating state and public institutions as principal policy actors and the concomitant control instruments shaping pollution management and eco-development policy trajectories. Governance, referring to the means through which actors with diverse interests coordinate and craft collective responses to policy challenges, encompasses the various processes, organisations, policies, and instruments involved in environmental governance. The investigation proceeds from the premise that the effectiveness of policy instruments is contingent upon the legislative and policy frameworks established by states. Controlling instrument selection, state capacity further shapes the design and implementation of pollution management and eco-development initiatives, determining their breadth and effectiveness. Public bodies, especially those residing at the municipal or provincial level, have emerged as widely acknowledged contributors to pollution management and eco-development; public institution actions further complement and reinforce normative processes at national scales.

2. Conceptual Framework: Pollution Management and Eco-Development

Pollution management denotes a state-driven regulatory endeavour to curtail the generation, emission, and discharge of pollutants deemed hazardous for human health and the environment. It encompasses legislative, administrative, enforcement, and public-market mechanisms employed by public institutions, whether central, regional, or local, with the goal of establishing environmental standards, monitoring compliance, deterring violations, and promoting pollution abatement. In contrast, eco-development designates the progression towards sustainable urbanism, circular economies, and green infrastructures, contributing to pollution abatement and environmental sustainability. By allowing for the substitution of institutional quality indicators, pollution management and eco-development jointly capture state and public institutional abilities to foster sustainable development (Pattnaik et al., 2019).

Envisaged as a governance objective, pollution management relies on routine measurements of distributed standards and pollution levels—policies being capable of exerting direct influence on the latter—or on the presence of state capacity indicators associated with legislative, administrative, and enforcement dimensions. Moreover, eco-development is linked to sustainability, as indicated by prior studies highlighting the correlation between spatial planning and resilience capacity or the inverse relationship between resource consumption and circularity or the positive association between green coverage and urban-warming mitigation.

Complementary to governance measures, feedbacks can emerge from inter-governance effects, as eco-development policies and practices adopted at one domain can exert differential effects on the development of subsequent governance system stages. For instance, implementing green infrastructures progressively generates landmarks, which subsequently start to feature in spatial planning mandates. Similarly, circular economy initiatives targeting component recovery diminish the quantity of materials that need to be separated at demolition, thereby simplifying resource opportunity assessments within subsequent governance systems.

3. State Roles in Pollution Regulation

Pollution management consists of regulations that aim to deal with pollution and environmental problems. Pollution management is considered as one responsibility of the state when the regulation of pollution becomes mandatory on behalf of the affected citizens. Pollution management also links to the sustainable development of the human race. The second aspect of the study is to review the role of the state with respect to eco-development policies. Pollution management and eco-development are defined as the objectives of regulatory and governance interventions in support of environmental management in this study. Pollution management includes pollution control, pollution prevention and eco-development; although eco-development is not included in the analysis, pollution control itself is governed as pollution management. Pollution management and eco-development are further discussed with respect to the concept of public welfare and the basic human needs framework of sustainable development.

The state plays the most important role in pollution regulation. Legislation and policy established by the state set the overall direction and policy framework of pollution management, while the institutional capacity of the state determines the effectiveness of implementation. The central and local state has the authority to establish the legal framework and policy objectives governing pollution. The state plays the role of designer, formulator, and initiator of legislation. The state may decide on the wide scope of materials to be regulated, the type of pollutants to be controlled, the level of reduction required, and the justifications and reasons to be provided. Central pollution control regulation was extensively analysed, including statutory laws and regulatory instruments, administrative capacity and institutional design of environmental authorities as well as enforcement mechanisms and compliance (P. Morriss et al., 2001).

3.1. Legislative and Policy Instruments

Many countries have a rich legislative framework mandating sustainable natural resource management and instituting pollution control, soil conservation, space utilization, encroachment management, and solid waste management policies. These statutes can be broadly categorized into substantive, procedural, institutional, and promotional laws (Saroj Gupta, 2015). The substantive laws detail the manner in which resources are to be utilized, the standards which are to be complied with, and the privileges and rights which are conferred upon the citizens. The procedural laws clarify the procedures and mechanisms for acquiring privileges, entitlements, and permits. The institutional laws define which are the various institutions of the country and the

roles and functions of these institutions in natural resource management. Finally, the promotional laws specify any promotional or incentive measures which the state has taken in the area of natural resources. Further, there are policies or programs, in addition to the legislative mandate, which aim at encouraging eco-development and which supplement the existing legislative framework.

3.2. Administrative Capacity and Institutional Design

From a public administration perspective, formal arrangements assign state agencies mandates, prescribe regulatory instruments, delineate the authority and jurisdiction of public institutions, and, by extension, influence the design and quality of policy instruments (Thu Tran et al., 2023). Alongside these formal arrangements, the organizational structure of state agencies offers critical insights into the political economy of pollution management. Within the institutional design of governing bodies, the configuration of agency units for pollution management, eco-development, and other environmental domains, as well as the anticipated inter- and intra-institutional interactions among them, shape technical and political capacities for enacting eco-development. Moreover, the allocation of state budgets—including core funding vs. non-core funding rules, the degree of permitting revenue appropriated for operational expenditures and restrictions on specific funding for intended purposes—directly determines the level of operational resources available to public institutions, which further affects bureaucratic capability (Chen & Rasool Madni, 2023). Lastly, political incentives created through formal institutional design, such as the underlying rules for engagement between the legislature and the executive, alongside the distribution of formal authority among different public institutions, affect the elasticity in managing eco-development issues and the extent to which non-pollution eco-development objectives can be prioritised.

3.3. Enforcement Mechanisms and Compliance

Industry compliance with pollution regulations depends on the enforcement mechanisms in place (S. Rangata & O. Odeku, 2014). The most common enforcement mechanisms are inspections and penalties. A well-designed inspection regime increases compliance as firms strive to avoid penalties, while severe penalties enhance the deterrent effect (Kattumuri & Lovo, 2018). For industries at high risk of non-compliance and pollution, a well-designed inspection and enforcement regime is critical. The fairness, due process, and legitimacy of enforcement mechanisms also affect compliance. A perception of arbitrariness leads to evasion and non-complying behaviour.

For extensive timeframes across global regions, minimal emphasis appears given to enforcement mechanisms, including inspection and compliance rates. Instead, focus typically rests on regulation stringency and administrative capacity. Considerable variation persists concerning enforcement across countries worldwide, despite similarly stringent regulations.

4. Public Institutions and Environmental Governance

Non-state entities are gaining increased prominence in environmental governance, from public-private partnerships (PPPs) to local government collaborations, community-led initiatives, and global networks. Reforms to expand such arrangements in pollution management can be introduced without major changes to the state's regulatory or administrative roles. With governance configurations still in flux, many emerging collaborative arrangements remain informal and broadly defined, limiting their effectiveness as a coordination mechanism. Prevention and mitigation can help meet pressing urban environmental challenges by enhancing opportunities for public finance (Niu et al., 2022).

4.1. Interagency Coordination and Multilevel Governance

Multi-level governance is considered an essential requisite for addressing problems arising from multiple jurisdictions. Due to the cross-boundary nature of many environmental challenges, including air and water pollution, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity, inter-agency and inter-governmental coordination is critical for the design and implementation of effective policy response. Multiple public institutions, at various levels of government, share responsibility for environmental regulation. These include the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) at the national level, various ministries in charge of sectorial pollution (e.g., Ministry of Industry and Information Technology), and agencies responsible for water, land, and other related environmental sectors at the provincial and local levels (Newig & Fritsch, 2008) (Newig & Fritsch, 2008).

In many countries, the outcome of these dual state architectures, irrespective of their technical design, is a phenomenon called overlap without synergy or governance fragmentation (Mandal & Govinda Rao, 1970) (Mandal & Govinda Rao, 1970). Within the context of eco-development, the interaction of various public institutions has significant implications for the design and delivery of the relevant state policy. The multi-level governance systems that delegate responsibility to different jurisdictions, even on the same environmental issue, within a single administrative boundary, complicate the analysis. Community-level institutions responsible for rural and urban planning and environmental protection operate in parallel with those charged with the oversight of industrial and enterprise emissions, thereby producing the same effect of limited complementarity. Several institutional mechanisms, centered on cooperation, information-sharing, joint schemes, and integration, exist for enhancing systemic coherence across similar tiers among the various institutions and for providing higher-order inputs to the sub-national level (Newig & Fritsch, 2008).

4.2. Public-Private Partnerships and Community Engagement

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have emerged in Ethiopia as valuable governance and management tools for urban environmental services. These partnerships embrace collaboration among government authorities, private companies, and communities, with models including build-operate-transfer and design-build-finance-operate arrangements. By delineating responsibilities and risks among public and private entities, PPPs enhance service delivery. Urban residents share access to common resources such as streets, parks, and public spaces yet these assets risk overuse and misuse without effective management. Urban challenges frequently stem from inadequate management, planning, and coherent policy frameworks, problems exacerbated by urbanization and informal settlements (Hussen, 2013).

While the government in Ethiopia has invested in various community-engagement initiatives, simply establishing participation systems does not guarantee the capacity to engage effectively. Stakeholder mapping and capacity assessments can help identify eligible stakeholders and determine how to empower them through negotiation, capacity building, trust development, and additional resource provision.

4.3. Public Finance for Pollution Control and Eco-Development

Public finance for pollution management encompasses financial resources collected or made available by governments and public institutions through their operations, budgetary processes, and existing laws, to prevent, abate, and control pollution or to mitigate its detrimental effects on human beings and the environment. It also includes the financial resources that the government devotes to supporting eco-development, even if that financing does not have an explicit pollution component. Constituting an

important segment of environmental governance, public financing supports the implementation of national environmental policies. In relation to governmental operations, the distribution of funds to these agencies plays a key role in determining the authority and effectiveness of regulation. Budgeting priorities for control spending can be indicative of a general commitment to pollution management, and the presence of separate funding streams for eco-development and pollution control can determine the extent to which these two aspects are pursued in tandem.

Management of industrial waste water pollution constituted the focal pollution challenge in Romania. It was addressed through three parallel and mutually reinforcing sets of regulatory interventions within environmental law: formal legislation and norms that define the contents of official documents, reports, and public information at different levels; compliance and facilitation measures aimed at improving the capacity of polluting firms (mostly small and medium enterprises) to comply with national pollution requirements; and changes to the regulatory regime governing permits, inspections, penalties, and fines to improve transparency, reduce opportunities for corruption, and change the incentive structures by which inspectors and firms operated. Each action stream relied heavily on the role of public or publicly accessible information and of channels through which that information was disseminated (Oncioiu et al., 2020).

5. Measurement, Monitoring, and Data Transparency

Pollution management control systems require reliable information tailored to decision-making needs. Pollution sources, deposits, transport, transformation, and effects should be thoroughly quantified and assessed to evaluate societal costs and assign responsibilities. Low-quality or unavailable information leads to ineffective control measures, uncertainty about pollution effects, and questions about regulating agents. Controls addressing air, water, and land pollution can be well defined using mass balances, illustrating that management can only take place if pollution levels are perceived. Until the mid-1990s, the situation in the FSU and Eastern Europe undermined pollution management. Following new regulations, environmental information should become public (CLINTON et al., 2015).

6. Case Studies: Comparative Perspectives on State and Public Institutions

Case studies enable cross-country or regional comparisons of pollution management and eco-development. Such analyses illustrate how various governance configurations shape the effectiveness of state and public institutions in these areas. The accounts presented here examine two populous democracies from different continents—India and Brazil—and highlight contrasting combinations of policy success and failure.

7. Challenges and Limitations in State-Led Pollution Management

As a result of inadequate controls on emissions and inadequate information, pollution abatement efforts tend to be targeted to larger firms and are very weak compared to the intensity of the pollution problems. The dominant policy approach consists of installing end-of-pipe treatment equipment, resulting in some abatement for a very large number of firms and generating revenue for a considerable number of vendors. The efficiency of industrial pollution abatement has improved, pollution still remains a serious problem in the Indian cities and controlling it is a challenge. Those concerns have led the countries to seek instruments to control pollution charges, the radical change and pollution due to greenhouse gasses. There are extreme difficulties with the present system of pollution control and the hurdles faced and problems in the water pollution can be described. The above issues point towards the need to identify key

pollutant and assess the ambient quality of air. The importance of environmental impact assessment (EIA) and other risk assessment procedures together with impact analysis and monitoring of artificial boundary and control parameters as identified (Otutei, 2014).

8. Eco-development as a Governance Objective

The urbanization process creates urbanism problems. The concept of sustainable urbanism emerged in the 1990s in North America. It advocates a fundamental shift from conventional planning paradigms toward planning that embodies sustainable development (Otutei, 2014). Sustainable urbanism emphasizes land use, community design, and regional patterns. Planning and design initiatives focus on building within, not outside, existing boundaries and favouring the protection of infrastructure and ecosystem services. A second aspect of sustainable urbanism is the deployment of green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is a planning and design paradigm to mitigate landscape fragmentation. Green infrastructure includes a continuous green network encompassing parks, open spaces, greenways, street trees, rooftops, corridors, and urban cemeteries. The links between vegetation patches in this network and the size of patches and buffer zones strongly affect boundary permeability, landscape quality, resilience, and the ability to host biodiversity. Eco-development focuses on pollution prevention, resource recovery, cleaner production, and resource efficiency. The eco-development approach strives to close loops of resource utilization and production and promotes the circular economy in urban systems. Indicators related to loop closure, recovery, and resource efficiency help to measure performance in eco-development.

8.1. Sustainable Urbanism and Green Infrastructure

Urbanization and climate change substantially modify the hydrological cycle and nature of rainfall, drastically affecting the effectiveness of existing drainage systems, increasing sewer overflow events and widespread flooding. Green infrastructure, as a decentralized approach to storm water management, is tactical for meeting water-related sustainability objectives. Based on principles of sustainability science and holism, green infrastructure encompasses a paradigm shift with a focus on urban protection and resilience, urban restoration, eco-development, and understanding urban storm water challenges and interventions in a broader context, injecting an important public-good dimension into sustainability debate. Integrated flood-risk governance advocates managing the rainfall-runoff-water continuum more systematically, and addressing multi-dimensional, multi-scale sustainability aspects related to urban flood risk. A broad, normative perspective — urban sustainability — linking systemic transformation with adaptation, is essential for long-term guidance. The urban influence on precipitation is slowly becoming evident in many cities, and an urban-planning perspective is complementing the conventional approach centred on water-management technologies or site design. Planning measures emphasize monitoring storm water effects during extreme events, delineating networks that effectively reconnect the urban with the hydrological cycle, deploying effective multi-functional networks implying storm water saving-and-reuse combined with treatment prior to infiltration, and initiating studies on (semi-)urban areas that still possess potential future development (Qiao, 2019) ; (Prasad Dhakal, 2017).

8.2. Pollution Prevention, Circular Economy, and Resource Efficiency

Pollution prevention, circular economy, and resource efficiency aim to reduce environmental impacts through sustainable consumption, resource management, and waste minimization. Strategies encompass promoting eco-economy and bio-economy concepts, advancing remanufacturing, developing industrial symbiosis networks,

adopting green procurement practices, and implementing product-service systems (Milios, 2018). Implementing circular economy policies and fostering stakeholder engagement are essential to transitioning toward sustainable development and increasing resource productivity.

By the year 2050 the world's population is expected to reach over 9 billion. Rapid projected population growth, along with development in all countries, will significantly increase demand for raw materials and energy. At the same time, due to climate change and other environmental impacts, remaining ecological capacities are scarce. Improving resource management is therefore one of the most promising avenues to achieve sustainability. Moving toward a circular economy, decoupled from resource constraints, is promising in that respect. A circular economy is defined as an economy that promotes the closing of resource loops.

9. Policy Implications and Reform Pathways

The period following independence in 1947 saw significant industrial, agricultural, and technological growth in India, accompanied by unregulated pollution in air, soil, and water bodies (A. Ashford & Caldart, 2008). Of six major laws for pollution control and eco-development, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981 targeted threats to public health and welfare. These legislations led to the establishment of the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs), but poor compliance, regulatory failings, and incomplete technological solutions remained sources of concern. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, sought to resolve fragmented approaches by consolidating and expanding jurisdiction over air, water, land, hazardous substances, and noise, but it was not until after the 1990 economic liberalisation that the focus turned anew to pollution management and control. The Environmental Impact Assessment Notification of 1994 mandated prior assessment of industrial projects and specified guidelines for large units in sensitive locations. Continuing these efforts, the Solid Waste Management Rules of 2016 aimed to regulate waste generation, collection, storage, and disposal by urban local bodies and the handling of total plastic waste. Urban planners and local government authorities looking to mitigate industrial and municipal waste-to-environment migration turned towards green networks—ecological buffers and zones, green corridors, and sustainably designed parks—in cities across India.

Policies adopted since 2015 pursued water supply augmentation, municipal wastewater recycling, river conservation, personal hygiene promotion, and the development of demonstration toilet and waste treatment facilities. The Zero Liquid Discharge Industrial Policy of 2018 empirically illustrated treated wastewater re-use options for different industrial sectors. The Public Finance Management System introduced across central and state governments specified new approvals for plan grants, funds, and important expenditure that would not be eligible, emphasising strict operational deadlines. Mapping techniques coupled with large-scale canvassing have verified the coverage of public sanitation facilities in both urban and rural areas, while real-time monitoring of construction and demolition waste, hazardous waste, and municipal solid waste tracks compliance with the Waste Management Rules.

10. Conclusion

Pollution management and eco-development are crucial elements of state and public institutions' environmental governance. State-level pollution management aims to minimize environmental damage while fostering economic growth. In contrast, eco-development broadens regulatory objectives to encompass resource conservation and ecosystem protection. Pollution management retains significance in developing countries and in polluting sectors of advanced economies, where eco-development is

often impeded by governance barriers. State-led approaches to pollution management continue to feature prominently across a wide spectrum of contexts. Pollution-management struggles arise not only in the absence of public, civil, or donor assistance, but also when they lack adequate feasibility, or political backing. These limits have resulted in eco-development attaining a broader conceptualization of governance and substantive objectives. The pursuit of eco-development may constitute one of the key research and reform agendas facing state and public institutions across developing and advanced economies alike (Chen & Rasool Madni, 2023).

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