



Virtual Event on

DATA-DRIVEN GOVERNANCE: CATALYSING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Speaker: Dr. Poornima Dore, Head, Data-Driven Governance, Tata Trusts

Introduction to the speaker: Dr. Rudra Sensharma, Professor (Economics), IIMK

Conversations: Dr. Ram Kumar Kakani, Professor (Centre for Governance), IIMK

Curation: Harikrishnan R Varma, Consultant (Centre for Governance), IIMK

Excerpts from the conversation

Harikrishnan : Goodmorning and welcome to the first event of the *Governance: Theory and Practice Monthly Event series* organized by the Centre for Governance, IIMK. Our speaker today is an expert from the domain of Data-Driven Governance, Dr. Poornima Dore. I welcome Prof. Rudra Sensharma to introduce the key speaker.

Prof. Rudra : Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the session.

At IIM Kozhikode, we have the Centre for Governance to do research that can translate into action to improve the governance systems in the economy. The centre adopts an interdisciplinary approach with inputs from leadership, management, public policy, strategy, finance and so on.

The idea is to create and generate evidence-based research and disseminate it to impact the society. It tries to have conversations [like this one] and collaborations with policy makers, corporates, researchers and Non-Governmental Organizations.

As part of the conversation agenda, we have this session with a wonderful speaker from the field practice, Dr. Poornima Dore. She is an economist and a Tata Administrative Services professional. She heads the Data-Driven Governance portfolio at the Tata Trusts with experience in digital transformation and development finance. I am reminded of her saying in one her interviews that she believes in using data not just as a tool for decision-making, but as a means of social transformation. She holds a PhD in economics from IIT Bombay and is a gold medalist from XLRI Jamshedpur.

I welcome Dr. Poornima to the event. Thank you.

Harikrishnan : Starting with a broad question; how do you define 'Governance' from your experience from the field? How do you think 'Governance' is different from 'Government'?

Dr. Poornima : I would say that the term Governance influences and impacts multiple sectors of learning and practice. I would also distil it down to the means and quality of decision making. For instance, Good Governance is a product of quality decision-making. This decision-making could happen in any sector, let it be corporate, academia or government; or even at the individual level when people take a call on themselves. All these represent a 'kind' of governance. Essentially governance is a large all-encompassing term. On the other hand, Government is one of the institutional forms which governance could take. It could be at the local, national or global level. Aspects of governance include participation, planning, innovation and so on. This has also led to wider academic deliberations. For instance, we have scholars like Jan Kooiman and R A

W Rhodes who looked at Governance from a theoretical perspective. Kooiman breaks up governance into three key components: Elements, Modes, and Orders¹. To elaborate the Elements of Governance; in a civilized society, if democracy is an image, then the electoral system, where every last person is voting, is an instrument and this would initiate governing actions. Order of Governance connotes to the level at which the previously discussed decision-making takes place. Here, the day to day processes (called 1st Order), operations at the institutional level (called 2nd order) and the underlying norms and values (called 3rd order or meta-governance) come into the picture. For example, if the Ministry of Rural Development brings in some innovation in the design and process of existing schemes this could be a change in the third order of governance. SEBI coming up with directives or NITI Aayog coming with a set of policy recommendations could also be examples. Finally, the Modes of Governance deals with structural aspects. Is it a hierarchical form? Or are there instances of collaboration? Is a particular group self-governed?

Prof. Ram : You said that governance essentially is about decision-making at various level. We would be interested in hearing your reflections from the field on what data has to do with governance? Why do you think information is an important element in decision-making?

Dr. Poornima : At all levels of leadership, decision making has to do a lot with information. Every decision-maker has to look at the data carefully and ensure that it is synchronous with what happens in the ground. We often use the term 'informed decision-making' and try to avoid personal biases. Hence, data-driven governance leads to informed decision-making.

Prof. Ram : Reminds me of a recent article in Financial Times about a small country making all the data available to the public and the impact it would make on the society.

Harikrishnan : Going back to the point, we discussed Kooiman's model. It's more of a theoretical model. Are there similar notions in the field practice? Could you please elaborate on Tata Trusts' work in the domain of Data-Driven Governance?

Dr. Poornima : One of the areas where Tata Trusts work largely covers the ways through which the investments in social and economic development programmes can be made effective. A large part of the gap in this area is driven by the absence of information or appropriate governance strategies. The *Theory of Change* concerning Data-Driven Governance is based on three identified gaps (See Figure 1).

¹ See Kooiman's Framework at <https://iimk.ac.in/research/cgov/assets/img/flow.png>

Figure 1. Data-Driven Governance- Theory of Change



Source: Tata Trusts

Gaps largely are related to, firstly, ‘not understanding the entire problem’. Players in the context like social enterprises, in-charge of government programmes like municipal commissioner or district collector are not getting opportunities to have a full picture of what is happening.

Secondly, many government schemes are applied to the entire country. The implementer should get chances to go deep into the nuances of factors like diversity among states, location-specific needs and so on. This requires information.

Thirdly we should talk about the operational roadblocks. Our work has been at different levels of operational governance. Lack of information was increasing the workload of the personnel.

From the trusts’ point of view, what we felt as valuable was to invest in building the systemic capacity to prioritize the available budget, distribution of funds taking into account the geographically-specific information. We have been on a system-strengthening mode and hence the name ‘catalysing systemic change’. If we want to improve governance, the decision-makers require better data, reliable tools and advanced technology.

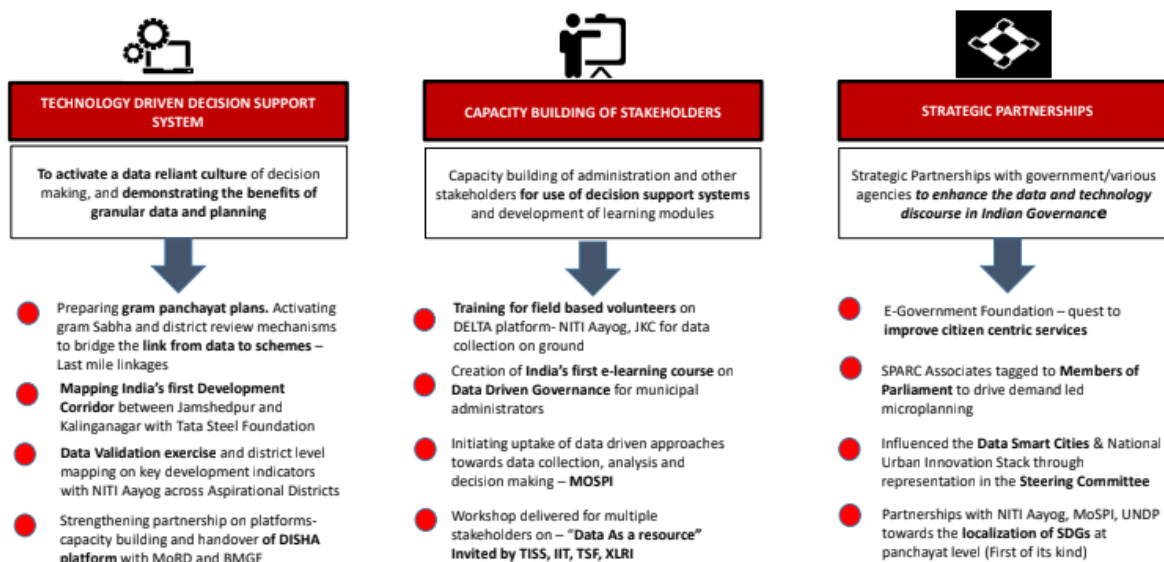
At least in the last ten years, the private sector has been making use of these tools. If the government agencies can make use of these tools, it can make a huge social impact.

Prof. Ram : The private sector players have been able to mine data and make use of this till the last mile delivery such that the needs of the stakeholders are taken care of. If the unit is a district, it is nearly impossible for the district collector to go to each citizen or group and identify what is needed. The question of ‘span of control vs Depth of control’ becomes significant when a single officer holds multiple administrative responsibilities in a district. This is where I understand that the Tata Trusts has got a key role to play. How did you accomplish this goal?

Dr. Poornima : Absolutely. I think the three key pillars of Tata Trusts’ work on Data-Driven Governance would answer this question (See Figure 2). First is the need for a Technology-Driven

Decision Support System. For example, building dashboards, helping the government in making the processes smooth, use the information collected for decision-making and so on.

Figure 2. Pillars of Work- Data-Driven Governance



Source: Tata Trusts

Essentially, this is about developing a data-reliance culture for decision making. The second pillar is the Capacity Building of Stakeholders. Interestingly these stakeholders belong to multiple categories. One of the key areas of significance was to impart the necessary skills to the stakeholders down at the village level. We train young people from villages on data collection, for example in using tablets, and facilitate them to understand their priorities. The greatest opportunity here is that they know the governance dynamics of their region. We call them DELTA Champions instead of data collectors.

Besides, we have strategic partnerships with other stakeholders like start-ups, NGOs and state agencies. Tata Trusts act as a forum of multiple stakeholders.

Prof. Ram : We would be interested in knowing more about such partnerships. Can you give us some examples?

Dr. Poornima : A recent example would be the partnership with the Government of Maharashtra under the Village Social Transformation Project. The idea was to place fellows across the villages. These fellows The key output was the 'Village Development Plans' (VDP) and to identify and facilitate the private sector and government funds to realize the plan (See Figure 3). These fellows are also trained for various tasks including data collection.

Figure 3. Preparation of Village Development Plan (VDP)



Village development plans are prepared for all villages and GPs
 Plan consolidation at Village-Block-District and State level

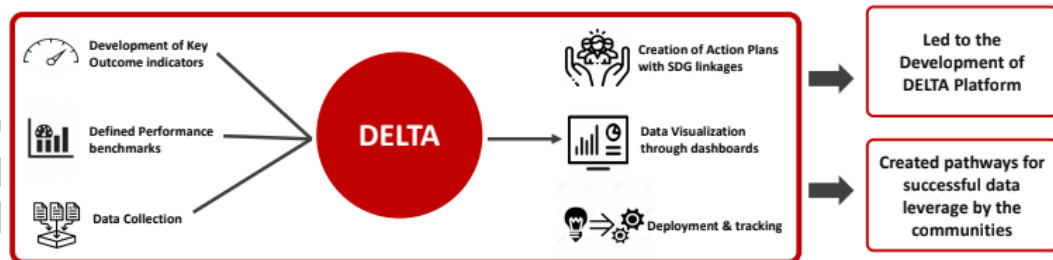
Source: Tata Trusts

Another example which I can talk about is our collaboration with the NITI Aayog in realizing the Aspirational Districts Programme. It is a pan-India benchmarking process. Selected backward districts are evaluated on their performance across various sectors like health, education etc. The Trusts helped them with the on-ground validation of this.

Harikrishnan : What was your approach in these collaborative activities? How did you seed Data-Driven Governance to the ground? Could you please elaborate.

Dr. Poornima : We started by asking the question “Can we first create regional profiles?” to ourselves. For instance, there are elected representatives who are interested in making use of their development funds impactful. But the challenge they are facing is that they do not have a reliable set of data to prioritize the allocation of funds. Our solution to this problem is what we call the DELTA framework (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. DELTA Framework



The uniqueness of the DELTA framework is that it is capable of capturing progress at a **household & institution** level, which in turn gives a holistic picture of an administrative block.

DELTA Plus was started with an intention to implement data driven plans at a village level bringing in **last mile linkages** between the community & local government

DELTA Link- <https://app.deltadriveindia.in/>



Source: Tata Trusts

To expand, it is **Data, Evaluation, Learning, Technology and Analysis**. Also, the term ‘delta’ symbolizes incremental change, as we learned in calculus. Realizing the DELTA framework involved people at the ground level as the agents of change. The development of the database was done through a mix of household-level and institution-level information collection and multiple Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA). As I discussed, the preparation of VDPs through community mobilization will answer the question “What do they really want?”. For each identified need, say drinking water, electricity etc, the dashboard will have information on what is the current status, auto-generated requirements for each village and an estimated budget required to satisfy the need (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. DELTA Platform



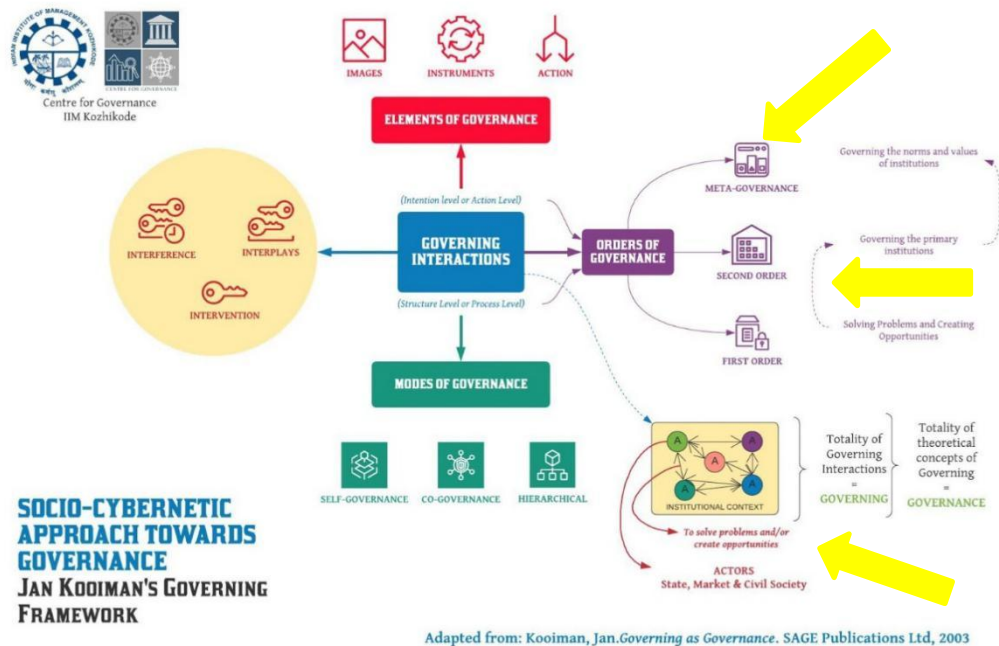
Source: Tata Trusts

Harikrishnan : To digress a little and connect this to first part of the conversation, how do you relate your work on Data-Driven Governance to the Kooiman’s model? Are there instances where you could place your experiences in the field over the components of the model?

Dr. Poornima : There are a few areas where I would place our work in the Kooiman’s Governance model (See Figure 6). For instance, images are important elements of governance. Our hypothesis that decentralized planning is important for bringing out people’s voice and using this for decision-making is a major image of Data-Driven Governance.

Similarly, VDP is an instrument. Top 20 items in the VDPs are kept written on a chart placed on the walls of Panchayat offices, somewhat like a citizen charter. This would also nudge the sources of VDP action.

Figure 6. Kooiman's Model of Governance



Source: Centre for Governance, IIMK

Also, our work falls under the second-order and meta-governance where the question of how do you incorporate data-driven methods in the governance of government schemes is answered. Finally, the Tata Trusts work on DDG is in the institutional context where state, market and civil society actors play their roles.

Excerpts from the Q & A

Q. When we talk about data, three major concerns arise: (i) Transparency, (ii) Biases, (iii) Ethical Use of Data. How does your organization address these concerns in the context of data-driven governance?

On the transparency side, we see ourselves as the custodian of the data, and not users, by making it available only to the government. Technical safeguards with both parties are also ensured on sharing the data. To talk about the biases, in my experience, bias happens largely at the point of entry. The mechanisms to avoid bias during data collection are imbibed into the training of DELTA champions. Also, while reviewing the data, we sometimes feel that there are opportunities available to take note of the biases if any. The third part of the question is on the ethical use of data. We do not make personal data available to anybody. Also, the data collected for this purpose are not made available to private players in the market including Tata Group companies. Essentially, this is specific to development purposes.

Q. What are the prospects of Data-Driven Governance? What are the opportunities and challenges?

The biggest opportunity will be to get the national census to go digital. The time frame should be once in five years, given the picture on the ground is changing rapidly, even at the systemic level. The

challenge would be to meticulously ensure privacy, bias etc. We need capacity-building initiatives from the system itself. This would require a system design perspective. And as we discussed tools make things simpler. To add upon, the people from the digital space need to go empathetic. Sometimes, in the rush to get digital, agencies miss out the systemic capacity part. Open platforms by themselves don't solve things. And finally, as discussed, we must be able to align the process to the principles of fairness.

About the speaker

Dr. Poornima Dore heads the Data-Driven Governance portfolio at Tata Trusts. She is an economist and Tata Administrative Services professional with experience in digital transformation and development finance. She has also led the Urban Poverty and Livelihood Portfolio at Tata Trusts. She holds a Doctorate in Economics from IIT Bombay specialized in regional growth, development of cities and the access to skills, employment and finance. She is a Gold Medalist from XLRI Jamshedpur.

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