

Creativity as Governance: Hybridity, Dispositif, and the Institutional Organization of Imagination in Indian Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This article advances a reconceptualization of creativity as an institutionally embedded mode of governance, thereby challenging dominant Eurocentric paradigms that construe creativity as an instrumental precursor to innovation. Drawing on qualitative interpretive insights from Indian organizational contexts, it develops a multilingual theoretical framework integrating *dispositif*, *gouvernementalité*, *Lebenswelt*, *habitus*, and *savoir-faire*. The analysis demonstrates that creativity is neither an autonomous expressive force nor a purely managerial technique, but a regulated, relationally sustained, and culturally mediated phenomenon enacted through hybrid configurations of formal managerial *Ordnung* and locally embedded institutional logics. By theorizing hybridity as a processual negotiation rather than a structural condition, the article positions Indian organizations as theory-generative sites for rethinking creativity in plural modernities. It contributes to organizational theory by advancing a governance-oriented, decolonized understanding of creativity, foregrounding the institutional organization of imagination.

KEYWORDS: Creative Governance; Organizational Hybridity; Dispositif; Gouvernémentalité; Lebenswelt; Habitus; Tacit Knowledge; India; Organization Studies

1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity occupies a privileged yet paradoxically under-theorized position within contemporary organizational scholarship. While it is ubiquitously invoked as the generative core of innovation, adaptability, and strategic renewal, its conceptualization remains tethered to instrumentalist and universalist paradigms that privilege measurable outputs and codified processes.¹ Such paradigms, while analytically convenient, obscure the institutional, cultural, and relational infrastructures through which creativity is enacted, regulated, and sustained.

This limitation becomes particularly pronounced when examining organizational contexts characterized by institutional density, hierarchical relationality, and cultural heterogeneity, such as those found in India. Within these contexts, creativity does not manifest as an unbounded expressive rupture; rather, it emerges through negotiated, culturally embedded, and institutionally mediated practices situated within specific organizational *Lebenswelten*.

This article advances a decisive theoretical shift: creativity must be understood as governance. Specifically, it conceptualizes creativity as a dispositive—a heterogeneous assemblage of discourses, practices, and institutional arrangements through which imagination is simultaneously enabled, constrained, and legitimized.²

This reconceptualization unfolds through three interlinked contributions. First, it reframes creativity as a governance dispositif, shifting analytical attention from innovation outputs to the institutional regulation of imaginative practice. Second, it advances a processual theory of organizational hybridity, demonstrating how creativity emerges through the ongoing negotiation between global managerial *Ordnung* and culturally embedded *Lebenswelten*. Third, it positions Indian organizations as epistemically generative sites, contributing to the decolonization of organizational theory.

These contributions collectively establish the foundation for the subsequent sections, which progressively elaborate creativity as a negotiated institutional achievement embedded within plural organizational modernities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual trajectory of creativity within organizational scholarship reveals a gradual but incomplete shift from individual cognition to institutional embeddedness. Early psychological frameworks conceptualized creativity as a function of intrinsic motivation, domain expertise, and cognitive flexibility.³ While foundational, these approaches positioned organizations as passive environments rather than active structures shaping creative conduct.

Subsequent organizational research extended this perspective by foregrounding leadership, culture, and structural design as critical mediators of creativity.⁴ Creativity came to be understood as a managed phenomenon, subject to facilitation, evaluation, and institutionalization. However, these frameworks largely retained an instrumentalist orientation, treating creativity as a means to innovation rather than an object of governance in its own right.

Institutional theory further deepened this analytical shift by situating creativity within regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive frameworks, thereby foregrounding its dependence on legitimacy and power.⁵ Parallel developments in cultural organizational studies demonstrated that creativity operates as a symbolic and interpretive practice, embedded within shared meanings, moral economies, and historically sedimented practices.⁶

Despite these advances, the literature remains constrained by three interrelated limitations. First, it exhibits a persistent Eurocentric bias, privileging autonomy, low hierarchy, and market rationality as universal conditions for creativity. Second, it reduces creativity to instrumental outcomes, thereby neglecting its institutional and symbolic dimensions. Third, it marginalizes non-Western contexts as empirical deviations rather than theory-generative sites.

Emerging scholarship on India and other non-Western contexts begins to address this lacuna by highlighting the role of collectivism, relational authority, and adaptive improvisation in shaping organizational practices.⁷ However, these insights remain theoretically under-integrated. Responding to this gap, the present study synthesizes institutional theory with Foucauldian and phenomenological perspectives, thereby advancing a governance-oriented framework capable of capturing the multilayered, culturally embedded nature of creativity.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of *dispositif*, as articulated by Michel Foucault, denotes a strategic assemblage of discourses, institutions, and practices that produce and regulate social phenomena.⁸ Applied to organizational creativity, it enables a shift from viewing creativity as an individual attribute or managerial resource to understanding it as a structured and governed field of practice.

Creativity, as *dispositif*, is constituted through three interrelated dimensions. First, discursive regimes—including innovation narratives, strategic rhetoric, and organizational storytelling—construct creativity as a desirable and legitimate organizational attribute. Second, institutional practices—such as evaluation systems, performance metrics, and hierarchical structures—render creativity measurable, governable, and aligned with organizational objectives. Third, cultural logics, embedded within *habitus* and moral economies, shape how creativity is enacted, interpreted, and valued within specific organizational contexts.

Through the lens of *gouvernementalité*, creativity is governed not through overt coercion but through internalized norms, symbolic recognition, and self-regulating practices.⁹ Individuals align their imaginative capacities with institutional expectations, producing a form of regulated autonomy that simultaneously enables and constrains creative expression.

This theoretical framing establishes the conceptual foundation for the subsequent analysis, which examines how creativity is enacted as a governed phenomenon within hybrid organizational contexts.

4. Organizational Hybridity as Processual Governance

Building upon the conceptualization of creativity as *dispositif*, this section advances a processual understanding of organizational hybridity as a central mechanism through which creative governance is enacted. Conventional approaches to hybridity often treat it as a structural condition—an assemblage of coexisting institutional forms. However, such interpretations obscure the dynamic, lived processes through which organizations continuously negotiate competing logics.

In the Indian organizational context, hybridity unfolds at the intersection of:

- Global managerial *Ordnung* (efficiency, standardization, performance metrics)
- Locally embedded cultural logics (collectivism, hierarchy, moral economy, historical continuity)

Rather than existing as static oppositions, these logics are continuously reconciled within organizational *Lebenswelten*—the lived worlds of meaning, interaction, and practice.¹⁰

Hybridity thus emerges as a processual modality of governance, enacted through everyday practices such as decision-making, evaluation, and informal coordination. Creativity arises within this negotiated space as situated improvisation, enabled by *savoir-faire* and guided by cultural *habitus*.

This processual perspective not only reframes hybridity as a generative organizational capability but also provides the analytical bridge linking the theoretical framework to the empirical analysis that follows.

5. Empirical Elaboration

The empirical cases examined in this study illustrate how creativity is enacted as a governed, culturally embedded phenomenon across diverse organizational contexts.

5.1 Aravind Eye Care System: Moral-Technical Governance

At Aravind, creativity is embedded within a moral-technical dispositif oriented toward efficiency, equity, and service. Process innovations—such as task modularization and workflow redesign—are legitimized not through novelty but through their alignment with ethical imperatives. Creativity thus manifests as disciplined bricolage, illustrating how governance structures can enable sustained innovation without disruptive rupture.

5.2 Tata Group: Temporal Hybridity and Value Rationality

The Tata Group exemplifies creativity as a function of institutional continuity and ethical stewardship. Innovation is embedded within narratives of national development and intergenerational responsibility, producing a form of temporal hybridity that reconciles continuity with transformation. Creativity here is stabilized through value rationality, demonstrating how governance can sustain innovation without eroding institutional coherence.

5.3 Infosys: Bureaucratic Ordnung and Informal Lebenswelt

Infosys illustrates the coexistence of formal innovation systems and informal communities of practice. While creativity is institutionally organized through codified processes and metrics, it is substantively enacted through peer-based problem-solving and tacit coordination within the organizational Lebenswelt. This case highlights the limits of formal governance and the centrality of informal relational infrastructures.

5.4 Ogilvy India: Symbolic Gouvernamentalité

In the domain of advertising, Ogilvy India demonstrates how creativity operates as symbolic capital within a regime of *gouvernamentalité*. Creative practices are simultaneously enabled and regulated through reputational economies, client expectations, and aesthetic judgment. Expressive autonomy is encouraged, yet continuously calibrated, illustrating creativity as a professionalized dispositif.

6. Managerial Practices and the Governance of Creativity

Across these cases, creativity is enacted through a constellation of managerial practices that collectively constitute the governance dispositif.

Leadership operates as interpretive mediation, translating institutional constraints into creative possibilities. Decision-making processes function as negotiated hierarchies, where informal deliberation precedes formal authorization. Performance evaluation systems enact dual regulation, balancing quantitative metrics with symbolic recognition. Finally, symbolic practices—rituals, narratives, and awards—serve as affective infrastructures, legitimizing creativity while regulating its scope.

These practices collectively demonstrate that creativity is not merely enabled but actively governed through institutional mechanisms.

7. Culture, Habitus, and Tacit Knowledge

The enactment of creative governance is further grounded in organizational culture and tacit knowledge systems. Culture operates as *habitus*, structuring creative conduct through shared dispositions and moral orientations.¹¹ Tacit knowledge (*savoir-faire*) enables creativity through experiential learning, informal coordination, and contextual adaptation.

These relational infrastructures constitute a form of implicit governance, wherein creativity is guided through trust, obligation, and shared meaning rather than explicit control.

Synthesizing the theoretical and empirical insights, creativity emerges as a negotiated institutional achievement, enacted through hybrid configurations of formal and informal governance. It exists as governed improvisation, balancing autonomy with constraint, innovation with continuity, and efficiency with ethics.

This reconceptualization challenges dominant paradigms that equate creativity with disruption, demonstrating instead that creativity can be disciplined, continuous, and institutionally embedded.

9. CONCLUSION

This article advances a governance-oriented, decolonized framework of creativity, positioning Indian organizations as theory-generative sites. By integrating *dispositif*, *gouvernementalité*, *Lebenswelt*, *habitus*, and *savoir-faire*, it offers a nuanced understanding of how organizations govern imagination within complex, culturally embedded contexts. Creativity, ultimately, is not merely produced—it is organized, mediated, and sustained through institutional and cultural processes, thereby redefining its role within contemporary organizational theory.

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