

CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL INNOVATION–BASED MODERNIZATION OF EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY

M. Yoqubov

Independent Researcher, NamSU

Abstract. This article provides an analytical overview of key conceptual approaches to modernizing executive authority through social innovation. It argues that contemporary modernization cannot be reduced to technological upgrades or administrative streamlining; rather, it requires a normative and institutional shift toward public value creation, citizen-centered service design, and collaborative governance. The paper systematizes major schools of thought relevant to social innovation in executive governance—New Public Governance, public value management, collaborative governance, co-production, participatory governance, and adaptive/evidence-informed policy. It then proposes an integrative framework for implementation, highlighting enabling conditions, institutional instruments, and performance indicators. The article concludes that social innovation-based modernization is sustainable only when embedded in legal norms, administrative culture, and measurable accountability systems.

Keywords: executive authority, social innovation, modernization, public value, collaborative governance, co-production, participatory governance, open government, institutional reform.

Introduction. Modern executive authority operates in a governance environment characterized by rapidly changing socio-economic conditions, higher citizen expectations, accelerated information flows, and complex policy problems that cut across sectors and administrative boundaries. Under such conditions, traditional command-and-control administration—predicated on stable routines, vertical accountability, and procedural compliance—tends to generate predictable outputs but struggles to deliver adaptive outcomes. As a result, modernization agendas increasingly emphasize not only efficiency but also legitimacy, responsiveness, inclusiveness, and resilience.

Social innovation has emerged as a key modernization vector in public administration. In governance terms, social innovation refers to new institutional arrangements, coordination mechanisms, and public service designs that solve societal problems more effectively than existing approaches while generating durable public value. It is “social” because it transforms relationships—between executive authorities and citizens, between agencies, and between the state and non-state actors—and “innovative” because it introduces new configurations of roles, incentives, and accountability.

This article addresses the question: what are the dominant conceptual approaches to social innovation–based modernization of executive authority, and how can these concepts be translated into implementable institutional designs? The paper has three objectives: (1) to clarify the conceptual meaning and analytical boundaries of social innovation in executive governance; (2) to systematize the main theories and models used to justify and operationalize such modernization; and (3) to propose an integrative framework that links concepts to instruments, enabling conditions, and performance indicators.

2. Social Innovation in Executive Governance: Conceptual Clarification.

In public administration scholarship, modernization is frequently interpreted in narrow terms: digitization, workflow automation, organizational restructuring, or performance management. While these elements matter, they do not necessarily change the logic of governance. Social innovation-based modernization is broader: it involves redesigning how executive authority identifies public problems, co-produces solutions, allocates resources, and maintains trust.

A working definition can be formulated as follows: social innovation-based modernization of executive authority is a purposeful institutional transformation that introduces new participatory, collaborative, and citizen-centered mechanisms of policy-making and service delivery, supported by legal and managerial arrangements that ensure accountability and scalability.

This definition implies several analytical features:

1. Outcome orientation: modernization aims at improved social outcomes and public value, not merely organizational outputs.
2. Relational change: innovation modifies interactions (citizen–state, agency–agency, public–private–civil society).
3. Institutionalization: mechanisms are embedded in formal rules, procedures, and roles rather than ad hoc projects.
4. Scalability and sustainability: innovations are designed for replication, stable financing, and evaluation.
5. Legitimacy and rights compatibility: modernization must be consistent with rule of law, fairness, and equal access.

With this baseline, we can map the principal concepts that have shaped social innovation in executive governance.

3. Core Concepts and Theoretical Approaches

3.1 New Public Governance and Network-Based Administration. New Public Governance (NPG) shifts attention from hierarchies and markets to networks and partnerships. It argues that complex public problems require coordination across organizational and sectoral boundaries. Executive authority modernization, from this perspective, means building network capacity: interagency coordination mechanisms, partnership governance, and shared accountability. Key implications for executive authority:

- executive bodies act as orchestrators rather than sole producers of services;
- policy implementation becomes multi-actor, requiring shared standards and trust;
- success depends on institutional design (rules for cooperation, conflict resolution, resource pooling).

3.2 Public Value Management. Public value theory frames modernization as the capacity of executive authority to create value for society under democratic constraints. It emphasizes strategic leadership, legitimacy, and operational capability. Social innovation becomes the means by which executive institutions align public needs, political authorization, and administrative capacity.

Key implications:

- modernization must be justified by public value propositions (equity, safety, trust, quality, sustainability);
- executive reform should strengthen the “strategic triangle”: public value, legitimacy/support, operational capacity;
- evaluation moves beyond cost to include social outcomes and trust.

3.3 Collaborative Governance. Collaborative governance theorizes structured cooperation among government, civil society, and business in decision-making and implementation. It is not informal consultation but a designed process with clear entry rules, facilitation, shared deliberation, and joint commitments.

Key implications:

- executive authority must institutionalize collaboration through formal platforms (councils, commissions, joint task forces);
- collaboration requires procedural legitimacy (who participates, how decisions are made, how conflicts are managed);
- measurable outputs include agreement quality, implementation compliance, and stakeholder satisfaction.

3.4 Co-production and Co-creation of Public Services. Co-production highlights that citizens are not passive recipients but active contributors to service outcomes (e.g., compliance, information sharing, joint problem-solving). Co-creation extends this idea to service design and innovation processes.

Key implications: modernization involves redesigning services around user journeys and life events;

- executive institutions must build channels for continuous feedback and service improvement cycles;
- quality improves when citizens and frontline staff shape service standards and processes.

3.5 Participatory Governance and Deliberative Democracy. Participatory governance emphasizes direct citizen involvement in planning, budgeting, and oversight. It supports legitimacy, responsiveness, and inclusion. Deliberative approaches add the requirement of reason-giving, evidence use, and fairness in discussion. Key implications:

- executive authority modernization includes participatory budgeting, public hearings, citizen assemblies, and consultative councils;
- participation must be designed to avoid tokenism, ensuring representativeness and accountability;
- outputs include policy acceptance, reduced conflict, and higher trust.

3.6 Open Government, Transparency, and Accountability

Open government links modernization to transparency, access to information, and citizen oversight.

It operationalizes accountability through open data, procurement transparency, performance dashboards, and complaint mechanisms. Key implications:

- executive authority must shift from episodic reporting to continuous transparency;
- open data becomes an infrastructure for civic monitoring and service innovation;
- accountability is reinforced when transparency is combined with sanctions and corrective procedures.

3.7 Adaptive Governance and Evidence-Informed Policy

Adaptive governance frames modernization as institutional learning under uncertainty. It prioritizes experimentation, pilot projects, rapid evaluation, and scaling based on evidence. Evidence-informed policy links administrative decisions to credible data, evaluation, and feedback loops. Key implications:

- executive authority should adopt policy labs, regulatory sandboxes, and pilot-to-scale pipelines;
- performance management must focus on learning and improvement, not only compliance;
- institutional capacity includes data infrastructure and analytical competence.

Performance Indicators and Evaluation. An essential advantage of social innovation-based modernization of executive authority is its capacity for systematic measurement and evidence-based evaluation. Unlike declarative reforms, socially innovative modernization requires clearly defined performance indicators that allow institutions to assess effectiveness, legitimacy, inclusiveness, and sustainability. A comprehensive evaluation framework should integrate service performance, participatory legitimacy, transparency standards, institutional capacity, and sector-specific outcomes into a coherent monitoring system.

First, service quality and accessibility constitute the primary operational dimension of modernization. Executive authorities must evaluate the efficiency of administrative procedures, including processing time, procedural simplification, and responsiveness to citizen requests. Equally important is the measurement of user satisfaction, accessibility for vulnerable and marginalized groups, and the effectiveness of grievance redress mechanisms. These indicators demonstrate whether modernization translates into tangible improvements in everyday public service delivery.

Second, participation and democratic legitimacy form a core dimension of social innovation. Evaluation should consider the level and inclusiveness of citizen participation in decision-making processes, the representativeness of stakeholders involved, and the extent to which public input influences policy outcomes. Trust surveys and legitimacy assessments provide insight into whether modernization enhances public confidence in executive institutions.

Third, integrity and transparency indicators ensure that modernization strengthens accountability rather than merely increasing administrative discretion. Compliance with procurement transparency standards, audit findings, corrective action mechanisms, and the accessibility and use of open data platforms serve as measurable proxies for institutional openness and ethical governance. Transparency must be assessed not only by information publication but also by the responsiveness and enforceability of accountability procedures.

Fourth, organizational capacity and administrative culture are critical to sustainable modernization. Performance evaluation should include assessments of civil servants' competencies, training outcomes, innovation adoption rates, and institutional learning capacity. The presence of structured innovation processes—such as pilot initiatives, evaluation cycles, and scaling strategies—demonstrates whether modernization is embedded in institutional practice rather than limited to isolated projects.

Finally, outcome-based indicators must reflect sector-specific policy results. Social innovation-based modernization is meaningful only if it improves measurable social outcomes, such as employment rates, educational performance, healthcare accessibility, environmental sustainability, or social protection coverage. These outcome indicators align modernization efforts with broader developmental objectives.

In sum, performance measurement within a social innovation framework must be multidimensional, combining efficiency, legitimacy, transparency, capacity, and societal impact. A well-designed evaluation system transforms modernization from a formal reform agenda into a results-oriented governance model grounded in accountability, evidence, and continuous improvement.

Conclusion. Conceptual approaches to social innovation-based modernization of executive authority converge on one central insight: contemporary executive governance must be redesigned around public value, legitimacy, and adaptive capacity. New Public Governance, collaborative governance,

co-production, participatory governance, open government, and evidence-informed policy each highlight different levers of modernization. When combined into an integrative model, these approaches provide a coherent modernization architecture: citizen-centered services, institutionalized participation, transparent accountability, capable organizations, and learning-based policy cycles. Sustainable modernization depends on institutionalization—legal embedding, stable organizational capacity, and measurable performance management. Social innovation thus becomes not an optional add-on but a strategic governance principle that can improve service effectiveness, trust, and resilience of executive authority in complex social environments.

REFERENCES

1. Bekkers, V., Edelenbos, J., & Steijn, B. (Eds.). *Innovation in the Public Sector: Linking Capacity and Leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
2. Bommert, B. “Collaborative Innovation in the Public Sector.” *International Public Management Review*, 11(1), 2010, 15–33.
3. Brandsen, T., Steen, T., & Verschuere, B. (Eds.). *Co-Production and Co-Creation: Engaging Citizens in Public Services*. Routledge, 2018.
4. European Commission. *Guide to Social Innovation*. European Union, 2013.
5. Moore, M. H. *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*. Harvard University Press, 1995.
6. Osborne, S. P. (Ed.). *The New Public Governance?* Routledge, 2010.
7. OECD. *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions*. OECD Publishing, 2020.
8. Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. “Enhancing Collaborative Innovation in the Public Sector.” *Administration & Society*, 43(8), 2011, 842–868.
9. United Nations. *World Public Sector Report: Working Together – Integration, Institutions and the SDGs*. UN, 2018.
10. World Bank. *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law*. World Bank, 2017.
11. Mulgan, G., Tucker, S., Ali, R., & Sanders, B. *Social Innovation: What It Is, Why It Matters and How It Can Be Accelerated*. Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, 2007.
12. Ansell, C., & Gash, A. “Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 2008, 543–571.