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Reconceptualizing Public Innovation Sustainability: A Non-Western Administrative Perspective

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Abstract

Public innovation sustainability remains a critical challenge in contemporary governance reform, as many initiatives fail to endure beyond their initial implementation phase. Mainstream public administration literature predominantly explains sustainability through managerial and formal institutional approaches rooted in Western paradigms, emphasizing regulation, leadership stability, organizational capacity, and accountability mechanisms. However, such perspectives are insufficient to explain variation in innovation endurance across governance systems characterized by institutional hybridity, contextual legitimacy dynamics, and complex state–society relations. This study aims to develop a conceptual framework for public innovation sustainability through the lens of Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA). Using a qualitative conceptual design grounded in systematic literature exploration and interpretative synthesis of scholarship published between 2000 and 2025, supplemented by foundational institutional theory, this study reconceptualizes sustainability as a socio-institutional and configurational process. The findings demonstrate that innovation endurance emerges from the dynamic alignment among contextual institutionalization, adaptive managerial capacity, sustainable resource support, and collaborative governance, mediated by social legitimacy and embeddedness. Sustainability, therefore, is not merely administrative stabilization but an ongoing process of institutional reproduction within a governance ecology. By integrating relational and contextual mediating mechanisms into institutional approaches, this study extends

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public innovation theory and offers a more context-sensitive analytical model for explaining sustainability variation across diverse governance systems.

Keywords: *public innovation; innovation sustainability; non-Western public administration; contextual governance; social legitimacy.*

Abstrak

Keberlanjutan inovasi publik tetap menjadi tantangan kritis dalam reformasi tata kelola kontemporer, karena banyak inisiatif gagal bertahan melampaui fase implementasi awalnya. Literatur mainstream administrasi publik secara dominan menjelaskan keberlanjutan melalui pendekatan manajerial dan institusional formal yang berakar pada paradigma Barat, dengan menekankan pada regulasi, stabilitas kepemimpinan, kapasitas organisasi, dan mekanisme akuntabilitas. Namun, perspektif tersebut tidak memadai untuk menjelaskan variasi daya tahan inovasi di berbagai sistem tata kelola yang dicirikan oleh hibriditas institusional, dinamika legitimasi kontekstual, dan hubungan negara-masyarakat yang kompleks. Berdasarkan eksplorasi literatur secara sistematis dan sintesis interpretatif terhadap karya ilmiah dari tahun 2000 hingga 2025, yang dilengkapi dengan teori institusional dasar, studi ini menggunakan desain konseptual kualitatif untuk merekonseptualisasi keberlanjutan sebagai proses sosio-institusional dan konfigurasional. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa daya tahan inovasi muncul dari penyelarasan dinamis antara institusionalisasi kontekstual, kapasitas manajerial yang adaptif, dukungan sumber daya yang berkelanjutan, dan tata kelola kolaboratif, yang dimediasi oleh legitimasi sosial dan keterikatan (embeddedness). Oleh karena itu, keberlanjutan bukan sekadar stabilisasi administratif, melainkan sebuah proses reproduksi institusional yang berkelanjutan dalam suatu ekologi tata kelola. Dengan mengintegrasikan mekanisme mediasi relasional dan kontekstual ke dalam pendekatan institusional, studi ini memperluas teori inovasi publik dan menawarkan model analisis yang lebih sensitif terhadap konteks untuk menjelaskan variasi keberlanjutan di berbagai sistem tata kelola yang beragam.

Kata kunci: *inovasi publik; keberlanjutan inovasi; administrasi publik non-Barat; tata kelola kontekstual; legitimasi sosial.*

INTRODUCTION

Public innovation has become a central component of contemporary governance reform. Over the past two decades, governments have faced increasingly complex public challenges, including digital disruption, climate change, social inequality, and fiscal pressures that demand higher levels of efficiency and accountability. These structural pressures require governments not only to reform administrative procedures but also to rethink governance models and policy instruments more fundamentally. In this context, public innovation is broadly understood as the introduction and implementation of new ideas, processes, institutional arrangements, or service models that generate substantial improvements in public value creation and organizational performance (Mulgan & Albury, 2003; Bekkers & Tummers, 2018). Previous studies have

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emphasized that innovation in the public sector is shaped by managerial discretion, organizational complexity, and leadership, all of which influence both adoption and long-term endurance (Borins, 2001; Damanpour & Schneider, 2009; Walker, 2014).

Beyond the advancement of technology, public innovation signifies a transformation in governance principles. It alters the ways in which governments relate to the public, the distribution of power, and the methods used to tackle shared challenges. Policy diffusion research demonstrates that innovation adoption and sustainability are influenced by intergovernmental dynamics and institutional competition (Berry & Berry, 1990). Simultaneously, the rise of network governance and collaborative governance paradigms has repositioned governments within multi-actor ecosystems involving civil society, private sector actors, community groups, and transnational networks (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Sørensen & Torfing, 2017). Empirical research further highlights the importance of adaptive capacity, innovative behavior, and institutional learning in maintaining reform trajectories across administrative settings (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017; Demircioglu & Audretsch, 2017; Lewis et al., 2018; Molenveld et al., 2021). Public innovation, therefore, is embedded within broader processes of co-creation, experimentation, and adaptive governance.

In spite of the increasing number of innovation projects globally, ensuring the long-term viability of these innovations remains an ongoing difficulty. Numerous public innovations show encouraging initial outcomes yet struggle to persist beyond their early phases of implementation. Sustaining innovation within bureaucratic systems has proven significantly more difficult than generating it, particularly when political transitions, fiscal uncertainty, or organizational resistance disrupt reform continuity (Osborne & Brown, 2011; Torugsa & Arundel, 2016). These patterns suggest that sustainability is not simply a matter of technical aspects, but rather a widespread institutional concern that appears repeatedly across different governance situations. Challenges can arise at multiple points in the innovation journey, such as starting, executing, and embedding innovations, reflecting more profound issues regarding power dynamics, resource distribution, and legitimacy.

These barriers illustrate that sustainability challenges are not episodic but structurally embedded across the innovation cycle. Initiation may fail due to legitimacy deficits, implementation may stall due to capacity constraints, and institutionalization may weaken due to fragile embeddedness. Sustainability vulnerability, therefore, spans the entire governance process rather than a single stage.

Process stages	Number of barriers	
Idea generation and selection	23	(9.8%)
Development and design	70	(29.8%)
Implementation	128	(54.5%)
Sustainment	14	(6.0%)
TOTAL	235	(100%)

Table 1. Barriers to the Public Innovation Cycle
Source: Cinar et al. (2019)

These structural vulnerabilities indicate that innovation sustainability is embedded within broader institutional ecosystems rather than confined to discrete program phases. Each stage of the innovation cycle is conditioned by pre-existing governance arrangements, power configurations, and normative expectations that shape how innovation is interpreted and enacted. Failures in initiation often reflect contested legitimacy and limited stakeholder

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alignment; breakdowns in implementation frequently reveal misalignments between policy design and administrative capacity; while fragility in institutionalization signals weak integration between formal rules and socio-political support structures. Consequently, sustainability challenges cannot be reduced to managerial shortcomings but must be understood as systemic expressions of institutional tension. This perspective underscores that endurance depends not only on technical execution but on the continuous negotiation between structural authority and relational acceptance within governance systems. Cross-regional empirical findings reinforce this vulnerability. In Europe, van Acker and Bouckaert (2018) found that only around 10% of public innovations survived beyond five years after launch. Early implementation success does not automatically translate into long-term sustainability, particularly when innovations rely heavily on individual leadership or temporary political support. In Asia, Suchitwarasan et al. (2024) reported that 62% of innovations in Thailand and 57% in South Korea stagnated or were discontinued within three years of implementation. Short-term political backing, limited sustainable funding, and uneven bureaucratic capacity were identified as dominant contributing factors. Taken together, these findings suggest that innovation sustainability constitutes a structural challenge that transcends geographical and developmental differences.

In addition to structural and managerial factors, the longevity of innovation is influenced by socio-cultural traits and the dynamics between the government and society. Riggs (1964), through the theory of the prismatic society, proposed that bureaucracies in developing contexts operate within hybrid spaces between formal norms and informal practices. Evans (1995), through the concept of embedded autonomy, emphasized that policy effectiveness depends on the balance between bureaucratic autonomy and embeddedness within local socio-economic networks. These perspectives imply that public innovations lacking social legitimacy and relational integration may lose durability even when formally institutionalized.

Empirical illustration from Indonesia reflects patterns consistent with cross-regional findings. Data from the National Public Service Innovation Network (JIPPNas) for the period 2014–2023 recorded 2,928 registered public service innovations, of which 1,916 (approximately 81.7%) remained active, while 429 (18.3%) stagnated or were discontinued (Kemen PANRB, 2024). Meanwhile, the Public Service Innovation Competition Program (KIPP) generated 13,941 regional innovations during the same period. However, the average score for innovation creation reached 61.16 (good), while institutionalization scored 51.80 (moderate), and development scored 33.73 (low). This imbalance indicates that the capacity to generate innovation is relatively strong, whereas the capacity to institutionalize and develop innovation sustainably remains limited.

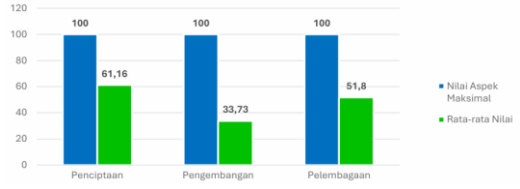

Figure 1. Average PIPP 2024 achievement based on aspects
Source: Kementerian PANRB (2024)

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Empirical studies further underscore this pattern. Pradana et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of regulatory support and consistent leadership as prerequisites for sustainability. Widodo et al. (2022) identified the absence of long-term financing and adequate monitoring systems as key reasons for early discontinuation. Savira et al. (2025) described a regional innovation paradox in which increased innovation quantity does not correspond to improved service quality due to weak institutionalization and replication. Nevertheless, most of these studies remain focused primarily on formal and managerial variables.

At a deeper theoretical level, the idea of sustainability in innovation can also be viewed through the framework of institutional transformations and path dependency. Pierson (2004) argued that public institutions tend to reproduce established patterns through self-reinforcing mechanisms. Mahoney and Thelen (2010) further suggested that institutional change often occurs gradually through processes such as layering, drift, or conversion rather than abrupt transformation. From this perspective, innovation must contend with existing institutional frameworks and norms. Thus, sustainability is not a straightforward process but arises from the continuous interaction between agents of reform and institutional setups.

Mainstream public administration paradigms have largely framed innovation sustainability as a matter of formal institutional design and managerial rationality (Bertelli et al., 2020). Such approaches implicitly assume administrative universality and underemphasize socio-cultural diversity across governance systems. In contrast, the Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA) perspective offers a more context-sensitive analytical foundation. Drechsler (2015) and Farazmand (2022) stressed the importance of historical and cultural embeddedness in understanding administrative practice. Kim (2023) and Nzimakwe (2014) demonstrated how local moral and relational values shape bureaucratic foundations across different regions. Within this perspective, social legitimacy and contextual fit become central explanatory variables in determining policy and innovation endurance.

Although public innovation scholarship and Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA) have developed in parallel, their conceptual integration remains limited. The concept of innovation sustainability is mainly viewed through the lens of bureaucratic institutionalization instead of as a mutually developing and contextually influenced interaction between formal frameworks and wider social structures. Consequently, structural reinforcement is often seen as sufficient in itself, whereas the relational and legitimacy-driven factors that support the ongoing existence of institutions are not sufficiently theorized. This lack of theoretical depth necessitates a rethinking that connects structural, adaptive, and contextual factors in a cohesive analytical framework that can explain differences in how innovation persists across various contexts.

Accordingly, this study advances a theoretical reconceptualization of public innovation sustainability by integrating mainstream innovation sustainability theory with the Non-Western Public Administration perspective. Sustainability is defined as a socio-institutional arrangement that arises from the interplay of formal institutional establishment, adaptive capabilities, resource

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availability, collaborative governance, and context-specific legitimacy within state-society interactions. By adopting this approach, the study creates an analytical framework that is sensitive to context, enhancing theoretical comprehension of innovation sustainability across different governance frameworks.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual research design grounded in systematic literature exploration and interpretative synthesis. Rather than relying on primary empirical data, the study reconstructs and integrates existing theoretical and empirical insights in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of public innovation sustainability across diverse governance contexts.

The literature corpus covers scholarly publications between 2000 and 2025, with selective inclusion of foundational works that provide essential theoretical grounding, particularly in institutional change theory and Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA). Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and relevant policy analyses addressing public innovation, innovation sustainability, institutional dynamics, governance theory, and contextual administrative perspectives. Literature selection was guided by three primary criteria: (1) conceptual relevance to public innovation sustainability, (2) explicit engagement with institutional or governance dynamics, and (3) analytical contribution to contextual or non-Western administrative perspectives.

The analytical strategy follows an interpretative synthesis approach. This method moves beyond descriptive review by identifying recurring conceptual patterns, theoretical tensions, and explanatory gaps across different strands of scholarship. The analysis was conducted in three sequential stages. First, the study mapped dominant explanatory variables within mainstream public innovation sustainability literature, particularly those emphasizing formal institutionalization, leadership continuity, resource stability, and managerial capacity. Second, it examined contributions from institutional change and path dependence scholarship to understand how innovation interacts with established institutional configurations and self-reinforcing mechanisms. Third, it incorporated insights from the Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA) perspective to foreground the role of contextual legitimacy, socio-cultural embeddedness, and state–society relations in shaping innovation endurance.

Epistemologically, this research is positioned within an interpretivist-constructivist orientation that views social reality as socially constructed through interactions among actors, institutional structures, and socio-cultural contexts. From this perspective, innovation sustainability is not treated as an objective phenomenon determined by isolated variables, but as a socio-institutional configuration emerging from processes of negotiation, legitimation, and contextual interpretation within specific governance systems. This stance enables a reflexive engagement with administrative plurality and avoids assumptions of institutional universality embedded in dominant governance paradigms.

Through iterative comparison and cross-referencing, the study identified points of convergence and divergence between mainstream innovation sustainability theory and Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA) scholarship. Conceptual categories

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were refined through analytical abstraction, leading to the development of a configurational framework that integrates structural, adaptive, resource-based, collaborative, and relational dimensions of sustainability. The analytical process emphasizes theoretical triangulation rather than quantitative aggregation, ensuring that the resulting framework reflects the interaction among multiple explanatory traditions rather than privileging a single paradigm.

This methodological orientation aligns with the study's reconstructive and theory-building objective. By synergizing diverse yet interconnected bodies of literature, the research moves beyond fragmented explanatory models and advances a socio-institutional understanding of public innovation sustainability. The outcome is not merely a cumulative inventory of determinants, but a theoretically integrated model that conceptualizes sustainability as institutional reproduction within contextually embedded governance systems. This interpretative and theory-building strategy shifts the analytical focus from variable-based explanation toward configurational understanding.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This Building upon this interpretative synthesis, the analysis identifies a persistent conflation of institutional stabilization with sustainability within mainstream public innovation scholarship. Dominant accounts equate sustainability with the formal consolidation of innovation into regulatory frameworks, organizational routines, and standardized procedures (van Acker & Bouckaert, 2018; Osborne & Brown, 2011). Within this paradigm, durability is assumed to follow from codification. However, cross-contextual evidence demonstrates that innovations frequently deteriorate despite formal embedding, particularly under political transition, fiscal volatility, or declining public legitimacy (Suchitwarasan et al., 2024). This inconsistency exposes a theoretical blind spot: institutional consolidation is treated as causally sufficient, while the socio-political conditions of institutional reproduction remain undertheorized.

The synthesis therefore distinguishes analytically between institutional stabilization and institutional reproduction. Stabilization refers to the structural embedding of innovation within bureaucratic apparatuses. Reproduction, by contrast, denotes the capacity of innovation to regenerate normative legitimacy, relational support, and adaptive relevance across temporal and contextual shifts. Sustainability is not the passive persistence of institutional form but the active reproduction of institutional meaning.

This distinction becomes sharper when examined through the lens of Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA). Administrative institutions are not universal technical constructs; they are historically situated normative systems embedded within cultural and relational orders (Drechsler, 2015). In institutional environments characterized by hybridity, formal rules coexist with informal practices, producing a dual normative structure in which codified procedures are continually interpreted through relational contexts (Riggs, 1964). The assumption that formalization guarantees endurance presupposes a stable congruence between rule and practice. Yet such congruence cannot be assumed. Institutional durability depends on the balance between bureaucratic autonomy and societal embeddedness (Evans, 1995). When

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autonomy detaches from embeddedness, institutions risk procedural insulation and social irrelevance.

Sustainability must therefore be reconceptualized as institutional reproduction sustained through socio-political alignment rather than administrative entrenchment. Innovation endures when its normative justification is collectively recognized and continuously reproduced, linking institutional authority with socially constructed meaning.

This reconceptualization implies that sustainability operates as a co-evolutionary process between institutional structures and socio-political environments. Innovation does not merely adapt to context; rather, institutional arrangements and social legitimacy evolve reciprocally over time. Formal regulations shape collective expectations, while societal responses reinterpret, reinforce, or recalibrate institutional meaning. Sustainability thus emerges from iterative reciprocal adjustment between bureaucratic architecture and relational legitimacy, rather than from unilateral administrative consolidation.

This co-evolutionary dynamic provides the analytical foundation for identifying the key domains through which institutional reproduction occurs. Sustainability is structured through interacting mechanisms that stabilize expectations while simultaneously enabling adaptation within evolving governance environments. Building upon this theoretical reframing, sustainability is conceptualized as a configurational coherence among four interdependent domains: contextual institutionalization, adaptive managerial capacity, sustainable resource support, and collaborative governance. These domains operate within what can be analytically described as a governance ecology, a system of interdependent institutional, relational, and resource-based dynamics in which endurance emerges from equilibrium rather than linear causality education.

Aspect	Sub-Aspect	Analytical Perspective (NWPA)	Analytical Aspect	Sources
Contextual Institutionalization	Formal regulations and policies	Rules are not only codified but socially understood and collectively internalized.	Innovation continues despite leadership change; stakeholders understand objectives and procedures; program discussed in community or multi-actor forums; shared awareness of innovation goals.	van Acker & Bouckaert (2018); Patterson & Huitema (2019); Drechsler (2015)
	Supporting organizational structure	Organizational arrangements incorporate active societal roles, not solely administrative actors	Existence of active community or stakeholder groups; involvement of local leaders or intermediaries; joint decision-making processes.	van Acker & Bouckaert (2018); Riggs (1964); Evans (1995)
Adaptive Managerial Capacity	Leadership	Leadership functions as a relational mediator between policy mandate and societal expectations.	Regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms; incorporation of stakeholder input; continuity beyond direct supervision.	Hartley (2005); Bass & Avolio (1994); Evans (1995)
	Organizational learning	Institutional learning enables incremental recalibration and contextual adjustment.	Periodic reflection processes; adaptive modification of practices; institutional memory preserved across leadership transitions.	Argyris & Schön (1978); Cinar et al. (2019)
Sustainable Resources	Funding and resource support	Resource configuration combines formal fiscal allocation and social capital.	Budget allocation embedded in planning documents; voluntary participation or in-kind contributions; program continuity despite fiscal fluctuation.	Zepeda et al. (2022); Evans (1995)
Collaborative Governance	Cross-actor	Collaboration is grounded in trust,	Multi-actor cooperation; shared responsibility;	Ansell & Gash (2008);

Table 2. Synthesis of Innovation Sustainability in the Perspective of
Non-Western Public Administration (NWPA)
Source: by author, 2026

The configurational analysis demonstrates that sustainability is not the additive accumulation of these domains but an emergent systemic property produced by

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their alignment. Contextual institutionalization provides normative depth. When rules are internalized as collectively meaningful rather than externally imposed, innovation acquires socio-political legitimacy that transcends administrative cycles. Without such legitimacy, formal consolidation degenerates into symbolic institutionalization structurally present but normatively hollow.

Adaptive managerial capacity introduces reflexivity as a necessary condition of reproduction. Sustainability requires institutions capable of self-interpretation. Leadership that functions as a relational mediator recalibrates institutional purpose in response to shifting societal expectations (Hartley, 2005). Organizational learning preserves institutional memory while enabling modification (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Absent reflexivity, institutions become path-dependent and vulnerable to contextual misalignment. Thus, adaptation is not optional enhancement but structural necessity for endurance.

Sustainable resource support further complicates deterministic fiscal explanations. Budgetary allocation secures short-term continuity, yet long-term endurance depends on relationally embedded resource flows. When innovation draws upon both formal fiscal planning and social capital, it diversifies its base of support. This diversification reduces systemic fragility and distributes the burden of continuity across governance actors. Resources, in this sense, are not merely material inputs but relational commitments embedded within networks of reciprocity.

Collaborative governance functions as the connective infrastructure of the governance ecology. Trust-based cooperation institutionalizes shared ownership (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Collaboration redistributes authority and diffuses responsibility, strengthening resilience by embedding innovation within multi-actor networks. Trust here operates not as an abstract value but as a stabilizing mechanism that sustains relational alignment across institutional boundaries.

Critically, these domains interact recursively rather than sequentially. Legitimacy reinforces collaboration, collaboration enhances learning, and learning strengthens adaptive leadership, while diversified resources stabilize networks. Disruption in any domain reverberates across the system, illustrating interdependence. Sustainability therefore resembles ecological equilibrium. It reflects a dynamic balance maintained through continuous co-evolutionary recalibration among institutional structure, adaptive capacity, and relational legitimacy.

The framework articulated above should be understood as a systemic configuration in which innovation durability depends on patterned interaction among interdependent domains rather than isolated determinants. Each domain conditions and is conditioned by the others, generating a relational dynamic that stabilizes or destabilizes institutional alignment over time. Contextual institutionalization shapes the normative environment within which adaptive leadership operates, while adaptive capacity translates structural mandates into practices that resonate socially. Resource configurations reinforce collaborative commitment, and collaboration in turn deepens normative internalization and shared responsibility.

Breakdown does not typically arise from the weakness of a single dimension, but from imbalance within the configuration. Formal consolidation without relational embeddedness risks bureaucratic insulation;

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resource sufficiency without reflexive learning generates rigidity; collaboration without structural anchoring leads to volatility. Sustainability therefore hinges on equilibrium within a governance system whose elements continuously recalibrate in response to shifting contextual pressures.

From the Non-Western Public Administration perspective, this equilibrium is context-sensitive rather than universally standardized. Institutional durability emerges when formal arrangements are embedded within locally meaningful normative orders and sustained through relational legitimacy. Sustainability thus reflects the ongoing stabilization of institutional alignment within governance ecology rather than the mere persistence of administrative form.

In this framework, governance ecology functions as the systemic environment within which institutional reproduction becomes possible, linking formal architecture with relational legitimacy. This reconceptualization shifts the analytical focus from institutional stabilization toward a relational-ecological understanding of sustainability. Endurance is not a terminal stage of institutionalization but a dynamic process through which innovation continuously regenerates socio-political legitimacy. Innovation persists not merely because it is formally embedded, but because it remains normatively justified, relationally sustained, and adaptively recalibrated within its governance environment. Sustainability, therefore, reflects the capacity of governance systems to continuously reproduce institutional alignment across shifting socio-political contexts rather than merely consolidate bureaucratic design.

This reconceptualization also invites deeper attention to the temporal dimension of sustainability. Institutional reproduction unfolds gradually rather than instantaneously. Institutions rarely transform through abrupt rupture; instead, they evolve through processes of layering, drift, conversion, and incremental adjustment (Pierson, 2004; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). Public innovation must therefore negotiate with inherited institutional trajectories shaped by prior policy choices and self-reinforcing mechanisms. Sustainability depends on whether innovation becomes incorporated into these evolving paths without losing its normative relevance.

Within a governance ecology, institutional reproduction entails a productive tension between continuity and transformation. Stability secures predictable expectations and procedural order, while adaptive recalibration enables innovation to remain responsive to contextual shifts. Continuity and change thus coexist within the same structural framework of governance (Thelen, 2004). Innovation that is excessively rigid risks obsolescence; innovation that is excessively fluid risks institutional fragility. Endurance emerges when governance systems maintain alignment between structural anchoring and adaptive flexibility.

Governance ecology, in this sense, is not merely an external environment but a relational field composed of institutional actors, normative expectations, resource configurations, and power asymmetries. Sustainability is shaped by the density of relational ties, the credibility of leadership, and the resonance of innovation with shared social meanings. Institutional reproduction therefore involves continuous negotiation among actors positioned within bureaucratic hierarchies, political arenas, and community networks. The capacity of innovation to endure depends on how these actors

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reinterpret, legitimize, and recalibrate institutional arrangements over time.

Co-evolutionary alignment implies that sustainability is sustained through ongoing institutional work. Innovation persists when it becomes embedded not only in formal regulations but also in cognitive schemas and normative commitments that structure collective action. Institutional reproduction is achieved when formal architecture and relational legitimacy evolve in reciprocal reinforcement, enabling innovation to remain socially indispensable despite contextual transformation (Pierson, 2004; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

The theoretical contribution lies in moving beyond deterministic institutionalism toward a configurational account that integrates institutional architecture, socio-political legitimacy, and adaptive reflexivity. By positioning contextual legitimacy as the mediating mechanism between bureaucratic autonomy and social embeddedness, the framework explains variation in sustainability trajectories across governance contexts. Innovations with similar formal structures diverge because their governance ecologies differ in relational density, legitimacy reproduction, and adaptive capacity.

Sustainability is neither a technical outcome nor a managerial status. It is a socio-political accomplishment sustained through institutional reproduction within a dynamic governance ecology. Public innovation endures when it is continuously re-legitimated, relationally embedded, and structurally aligned with its context. Without such alignment, formal institutionalization remains insufficient for long-term resilience.

CONCLUSION

This study advances a reconceptualization of public innovation sustainability by critically reassessing the assumption that formal institutionalization is sufficient to secure long-term endurance. The findings demonstrate that regulatory consolidation, organizational embedding, leadership continuity, and fiscal support, while necessary, are not causally determinative of sustainability. Structural stabilization alone does not explain why innovations with similar formal architectures produce divergent trajectories across governance contexts.

By integrating mainstream public innovation theory with the perspective of Non-Western Public Administration, this study reframes sustainability as a socio-institutional process shaped by the interaction between formal institutional consolidation and contextual legitimacy. Sustainability is not merely the persistence of administrative structures but the outcome of relational alignment between bureaucratic design and socially constructed meaning. Public innovation endures when it is not only institutionalized but also socially internalized, adaptively recalibrated, and collectively supported.

The proposed four-dimensional framework contextual institutionalization, adaptive managerial capacity, sustainable resource support, and collaborative governance demonstrates that sustainability is configurational rather than deterministic. Innovation endurance emerges from the dynamic coherence among these interdependent dimensions rather than from the strength of any single factor. Contextual institutionalization provides normative grounding; adaptive managerial capacity enables continuous recalibration; diversified resource support strengthens systemic resilience; and collaborative governance embeds innovation within relational networks of trust and shared responsibility. Variation in sustainability outcomes can thus

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be understood as differences in socio-institutional configuration rather than merely differences in formal design.

Theoretically, this study does not reject institutional approaches within Western public administration but extends them by incorporating contextual and relational mediating mechanisms emphasized in NWPA. By foregrounding legitimacy and embeddedness as central explanatory constructs, the study shifts the analytical focus from administrative stabilization toward institutional reproduction. Sustainability becomes a dynamic equilibrium within governance ecology, maintained through continuous co-evolutionary alignment among institutional structure, adaptive reflexivity, resource configuration, and relational legitimacy.

As a conceptual contribution, the framework invites further empirical testing. Comparative cross-national studies, longitudinal institutional analyses, and configurational research designs may assess how different combinations of the proposed dimensions generate distinct sustainability trajectories. Such inquiry would strengthen the explanatory capacity of this socio-institutional model across plural governance systems.

Ultimately, public innovation sustainability is not the endpoint of bureaucratic consolidation but an ongoing process of socio-political alignment within governance contexts. Innovation persists because it remains normatively justified, relationally embedded, and adaptively aligned with its institutional environment.

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