Working Paper 228

Smart Governance?
Politics in the Policy Process in Andhra Pradesh, India

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AP	Andhra Pradesh
APSRTC	Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation
CM	Chief Minister
COPP	Conceptualisation of Policy Processes
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DM&HO	District Medical and Health Officer
DWCRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
EC	Election Commission
GoI	Government of India
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
IAY	Indira Awas Yojana (Rural Housing Scheme)
I(C)T	Information (and Communication) Technology
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
ISPP	Interpretations of Specific Policy Processes
PHC	Primary Healthcare Centre
PIM	Participatory Irrigation Management
TDP	Telugu Desam Party (a regional party, in power in AP at the time of writing)
WUA	Water Users Association

Glossary

Gram Panchayat	Village-level governing body
Gram Sabha	Village assembly
Janmabhoomi	Literally, 'land of one's birth'; a TDP regime flagship rural development programme
Mandal	Territorial and administrative unit (with a population of about 50,000 to 70,000) between the village and district levels
Panchayati Raj	System of rural local government with three ascending tiers, viz. *Gram Panchayat, Mandal Panchayats, and Zilla (district) Panchayats*

Summary

Over several years, the south Indian State of Andhra Pradesh has received a lot of attention, both nationally and internationally. This State was among the pioneers of economic reform programmes in the 1990s. A new type of dynamic leadership has come up, and in various policy areas, innovative legislation has been formulated and new policies have been developed and pursued with great zeal. However, the interpretations of what is going on vary considerably. The government itself claims that it is strongly performance-oriented, and that it aims to enhance professionalism in governance. The opponents of the regime claim that there are a lot of gimmicks and that not much is happening in actual practice.

This paper tries to interpret the developments in Andhra Pradesh (AP). The first section briefly characterises the reform process in AP. Although several other States in India have embarked on a similar reform process, the political leadership in Andhra Pradesh has been much more explicit and outspoken than elsewhere. The Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, projects himself as a champion of the reforms, and presents the reform policies as part of a larger development and governance project. Administrative reforms and enhancing accountability and transparency are explicit components of the reform process in Andhra Pradesh and the idea is that 'politics should be kept out of policy'. To what extent is that happening? And what is meant by 'politics of/in the policy process'?

The second section reviews the more general literature on policy processes, and particularly as far as this deals with the politics of/in policy processes. It briefly discusses three important insights from the policy process literature, namely a) the critique of the linear model of policy-making, b) the fact that policy processes are bargaining processes in which different constellations of actors negotiate and compete with each other, and c) the importance of policy discourses in these interactions.

The third section analyses a number of important characteristics of policy processes in Andhra Pradesh. It discusses four articles of faith in relation to administrative reforms and good governance. It then proceeds with a discussion of some shifts in the policy discourse. With the help of four examples of particular policy processes, the section highlights three main characteristics of the policy process, namely a) the 'hype and hide' strategy of the AP government, b) centralisation of the policy-making process, and c) the way in which policy implementation is used for local level party building.

The paper ends with a discussion of the various ways in which 'politics' is important in the policy process in Andhra Pradesh. It further summarises the main contradictions of the policy process, which are all concerned with the fact that, on the one hand, the regime claims to keep politics away from implementation, but on the other, the whole process is fundamentally political. How these contradictions will develop over time remains to be seen. Not only does the outcome depend on the state itself, but also on non-state actors and their capacity to make use of the openings that exist at present and take the government to task.

1   Introduction

Andhra Pradesh, a south Indian State in India with approximately 76 million inhabitants, has succeeded in capturing the imagination of quite a few policy-makers within and outside India. When India started to liberalise its economy in 1991, Andhra Pradesh (AP) followed suit, in a slow and modest way. However, since 1995, Andhra Pradesh's State government has become one of the main advocates of the Indian reform process, in which the States have become increasingly important anyway. It was the first State to negotiate an independent loan from the World Bank, the AP Economic Restructuring Programme. This loan was meant to finance expenditure in neglected social sector areas, but also to support the government in its economic reform policies, including cuts in subsidies, reduction of employment in the civil service, improvement of expenditure management, strengthening revenue mobilisation and public enterprise reform.[1] AP is not the only State implementing such reform policies – in fact, there are other States which started earlier with a reform process or which have made more headway – but the explicit intention of the AP State government to pursue a reform process and its overt attempt to make the economic reform policies part of a larger development and governance project, is what makes the reform more prominent and visible. While in several other States, reforms are implemented by stealth (Jenkins, 1999), the AP State government makes a point of advertising itself as a reformer. It is probably partly for that reason that Andhra Pradesh has become almost a darling State of several international donors – they like the overt commitment to reform that is expressed almost daily by the political leadership. Andhra Pradesh has, thus, become an important State in the overall reform process. Given the explicitness, a successfully pursued reform process carries an additional weight, and it is probably for that reason that the World Bank and other donors want reforms to succeed in AP, or so it seems at least.[2] After all, if the reforms cannot succeed in AP, where in India can they?

That AP would become one of the most explicitly reforming States was not exactly foreseeable. The State is relatively underdeveloped, depending predominantly on agriculture. Its literacy rate was 61% in 2001 (as compared to 65% for the whole of India) and its human development ranking in 1991 was 23rd of 32 States/UTs in India.[3] Since the early 1980s, the State was known for its large-scale populism. The then Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao, a popular film star-turned-political leader who had founded a regional party (the Telugu Desam Party, TDP) that had come to power in 1983 after an unprecedented defeat of the Congress party, introduced several populist schemes. The most important one was the so-called 'Rs. 2 per kg' rice scheme, which involved the distribution of 25kg of rice at a subsidised rate to about 70–80% of households. These populist schemes have remained important in AP's political history. The TDP was defeated in 1989, but it came back to power in 1993, partly again because of its promise to reintroduce the Rs. 2 per kg scheme (which was not exactly abolished by the Congress government but the price had been increased to Rs. 3.50) and other welfare policies. It was in this context of underdevelopment and backwardness, coupled with a rather extreme form of welfarist populism, that the explicit attempt to reform and a very committed leadership emerged.

Among the AP government's many claims, there are a few important ones that refer to governance. AP's leadership claims it wants to improve the performance of the administration, to enhance accountability and transparency, and to keep politics away from policy implementation. It has coined the term SMART governance to refer to these objectives. SMART stands for simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent. This paper will not investigate the extent to which the

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1 'India-Andhra Pradesh Economic Restructuring Project', Project ID INPE49385, project document downloadable from www.worldbank.org.

2 Despite, or perhaps as a result of, the lack of progress in many reform areas and lagging economic growth, the World Bank decided to give Andhra Pradesh a second loan (of US $250 million) in early 2002, basically meant to support the reform process. US $250 million is almost Rs 12 billion, which is about 5% of the State's annual total revenue expenditure.

3 All figures from GoI (2002).

government has, indeed, become more simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent, but, in a way, it does examine the smartness of the government: what kind of changes are implemented in the policy process, and how do these affect the role and importance of politics in the policy process?

But what is meant by 'politics in the policy process'? The paper will start with a short review of some of the literature on policy processes, which will focus particularly on the political nature of policy processes, and how this political nature can be conceptualised. The paper then proceeds with a discussion on policy processes in AP. What is happening in AP policy processes, and what is the role of politics in AP policy processes? The paper concludes with a short discussion on a number of contradictions that are emerging in the AP policy processes.

2   The Policy Process: A Short Review

Public policy studies can focus on a variety of things (administration, policy outcomes, allocation of resources, etc.) and can have a variety of objectives (contribution to better policy, better prediction of outcomes, better understanding of various kinds of variables, assessment of policy feasibility, etc.). The type of policy studies we are concerned with here focuses on policy *processes*. It is a blend of political science, sociology and anthropology, and its subject matter is the way in which policy is given shape in concrete historical processes. It does not assume that policies are 'natural phenomena' or 'automatic solutions' resulting from particular social problems and it does not privilege the state as an actor fundamentally different from other social actors. The 'why', 'how' and 'by whom' questions are treated as empirical questions, and it is concrete empirical research that can generate the answers. The growth of this branch of policy studies is relatively recent. There are several older studies which fall into this description (and therefore in between the disciplines of political science and public administration), and some of these are very interesting indeed,[4] but the wider interest in this subject matter and these kinds of questions is a relatively recent phenomenon of approximately the last 15 years.

It would be interesting to analyse the reasons behind the rise of this new sub-discipline. It is probably related with the changing role of the state, the declining faith in planning and in the malleability of society. It is probably no coincidence that the interest in policy processes came at the same time that neo-liberal economic ideology gained ground, that the ineffectiveness of the state was emphasised and downsizing advocated. In the wake of this neo-liberal upsurge came an increasing emphasis on good governance. After all, and quite ironically, the successful implementation of reform policies depends on a capable state – even though the ideology stresses a reduced role for the state. A further exploration of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper. It can, however, be noted that the study of policy processes in developing countries is partly stimulated by international donors and research institutions closely linked to development aid agencies and donors. In Britain, for instance, the Institute of Development Studies is one institute producing interesting work on policy processes – much of it funded by the Department for International Development.[5] The Overseas Development Institute is also doing work on policy processes.[6] As far as India is concerned, three new research and training centers have recently been set up to stimulate work on policy processes, all with the help of international money.[7] In Hyderabad, a more intervention-oriented centre is being set up, the Centre for Good Governance, with a £6 million grant from DFID. There is no doubt that international donors have stimulated work on governance and policy processes.

Generally, and notwithstanding the activities of institutes such as the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex and the funds released by donors to stimulate more work in developing countries like India, the literature on policy processes is dominated by examples and scholars from the United States, and to a certain extent Britain, rather than by examples and scholars from developing countries. An ordinary literature search for 'policy process' will yield many more studies on the US, or inspired by US policy examples, than on any other country.[8]

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4 To mention just a few of the classical contributions: Lindblom (1959) and Wildavsky (1979).

5 The IDS Working Paper series has many papers on governance issues and policy processes. An insightful review paper – produced without DFID funding – is Keeley and Scoones (1999).

6 See Sutton's overview paper (1999), the RAPID project on bridging research and policy, or the study on the budget-making process (Norton and Elson, 2002).

7 These centres are the Centre for Law and Governance (part of Jawaharlal Nehru University), the Centre for Public Policy and Governance (related to the Delhi-based Institute of Applied Manpower Research) and the Centre for Public Policy (part of the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore). The first two received funding from the Ford Foundation; the latter from UNDP.

8 When the search words are 'reform process' slightly different results are generated, but there is no doubt that the bulk of studies on policy/reform processes is on the developed part of the world.

The literature on policy processes is of two kinds. First, there are many papers and books that are meant to contribute to our general interpretation and understanding of what a policy process is: how should we conceptualise it? What is wrong with the linear model of policy-making? Where does policy change come from? etc. Second, there is a wealth of case studies about *particular* policy processes. The first type, which can be referred to as the 'conceptualisation of policy processes' (COPP) literature, makes occasional use of case studies and examples, of course, but the ambition goes beyond the cases. If there are examples, they are often from the US, and it would not be implausible if the general conceptualisations of policy processes that are put forward are more valid in the US than elsewhere. The second body of literature, which can be called 'interpretations of specific policy processes' (ISPP), is almost endless. In India, however, although there are a number of case studies,[9] this is certainly not a rich body of literature.

2.1   Is there a third world policy process?

To the author's knowledge, there is only one article that specifically addresses the question whether something like a 'Third World policy process' exists: a paper by Horowitz, from 1989. He argues that the process – 'the constraints, the ripe moments that produce innovation, the tendency for policy to have unanticipated consequences and so on' (p. 197) – has many similarities in developed and developing countries. In his view, it is, therefore, possible 'to understand many policy phenomena in terms of concepts already embedded in the emerging discourse on public policy in general' (p. 198). There are, however, some important differences. Horowitz cautions against broad generalisations, and makes the point that perhaps it is not so much the level of development that makes the difference, but the extent to which there are democratic structures in place. Nevertheless, he mentions eight differences. Some of these seem important, indeed. The first involves regime legitimacy. Since many Third World regimes are fragile, state legitimacy itself is often in question. The result is that, on top of their other objectives, many policies are also meant to enhance state or regime legitimacy. This gives an additional risk and stake in the process of policy-making/implementation. Second, the main policy concerns are often different. Third, many developing countries have a large state structure, which means that the state is 'inordinately important' (p. 201) as compared to the society. This does not necessarily mean that the state is strong or effective. The fourth point is that the capacity to effectuate policy is often weak. Fifth, in many developing countries there are often large groups of people excluded from participation in the policy process, and, sixth, the mode and channels of participation are often less well established or clearly circumscribed. Violence, for instance, may play a larger role. The seventh point is that, generally, in developed countries more weight is given to expert knowledge. Many people tend to believe that information is important and that research and understanding have to precede decision making. This, according to Horowitz, is less so in developing countries. Finally, the importance of foreign models and the dependence on foreign experts is larger in many third world countries. One more point that is not listed by Horowitz but mentioned in passing by Thomas and Grindle (1990) is that, while in many developed countries the main area of policy contestation is in the process of policy formulation, in developing countries it is the process of policy implementation that witnesses most struggles and contestations.

Notwithstanding these differences, Horowitz concludes that there are 'important regularities of the policy process that appear to transcend the categories of Western and Third World state' (p. 203). That there are regularities, and that it is possible to transcend particular cases and countries, is an assumption widely shared by scholars focusing on policy processes. The review paper by Keeley and Scoones (1999), for instance, is based on the idea that insights from the general COPP literature can contribute to the study of particular policy processes (related to soil management in Africa). In

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9 Some exceptions are Currie (2000), Echeverri-Gent (1993), Harriss (1988), Jenkins (1999), Kohli (1987), Manor (1993), Mooij (1999).

fact, the existence of the COPP body of literature itself illustrates the belief that it is possible to transcend case boundaries (though not necessarily country boundaries) and develop more general insights in policy processes. What, then, are the most important ideas and themes coming out of the COPP literature?

2.2   Critique of the linear model of policy-making

First, is the critique of the linear model of the policy process. The linear model assumes that the policy process consists of various subsequent stages: agenda-setting, policy formulation, implementation, evaluation, etc. This model has been dominant throughout the 1970s and the 1980s (deLeon, 1999:23). The model often goes together with an idea that the policy decision is the key moment in the policy process. Once the decision is made, there is simply execution or implementation. This implementation can be successful or not, but in case of (partial) failure, the blame is put on 'bottlenecks', interference or 'lack of political will', in any case external factors that have nothing to do with the 'policy proper', i.e. the decision. This model has been criticised by a number of policy scholars.[10] Apthorpe (1986) and Clay and Schaffer (1984) have argued that this separation between 'policy proper' and implementation (with all its bottlenecks and disturbances) enables policy-makers to escape responsibility. Schaffer (1984) stresses that 'policy is what it does', thereby putting the emphasis on the way in which decisions are used in actual practice, rather than on the decision itself. Thomas and Grindle (1990) also stress the importance of the implementation process as the main phase in the policy process. The real job often only starts *after* the decision is made. Instead of a linear model, Thomas and Grindle propose an interactive model. Policy change, in their view, will always lead to a reaction. There will always be resistance by those who are against it, and pressure for change. This pressure can be exercised at any stage of the policy process, and can lead to an alteration or even a reversal of the policy. Sutton's (1999) overview of the literature is completely centered on the idea that the linear model of the policy process is inadequate, and she concludes her review with a long list of social factors and circumstances that – rather than decisions *per se* – can lead to policy change.

Although from a social scientific point of view, this critique is fairly self-evident and hardly interesting,[11] the importance of the linear policy model in actual policy processes is not to be underestimated. Thomas and Grindle (1990:1165) refer to the fact that many donor agencies support policy analysis in developing countries, assuming that a better analysis automatically leads to good policy: 'Once a decision to change policy is made by the recipient government, donors tend to consider that their job is largely accomplished. They may check on compliance at intervals, but in general, decision is expected to lead to implementation'. Mollinga et al. (2001) analyse the introduction of Participatory Irrigation Management in Andhra Pradesh. Although there is ample evidence of the fact that this process was/is transactional in many ways, this aspect was, according to the authors, not sufficiently built into the design of the policy. The legal framework that was set up was a top-down one and it was assumed that legal force could affect the emergence of the relevant and necessary institutions (Mollinga et al, 2001:374). In other words, (international or domestic) bureaucracies themselves often seem to work with a linear model, and/or may not always be sufficiently equipped to take the interactive model to its full consequences in their policy design.

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10 Apart from the authors mentioned in the text, see, for instance deLeon (1999) and Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993).

11 One can even argue that, from a social scientific perspective, the critique is not radical enough. The fact that most scholars keep using terms such as 'policy implementation', 'state intervention' or 'policy process', means that they continue to regard the state as a privileged actor, and assume, rather than investigate, that public policies are important in structuring reality. A more radical perspective is to view policies as resources in interaction – money, rules, institutional power, authority are all resources that can come with particular policies – and to leave it to an empirical investigation to find out in what kind of processes these resources are used, by whom and for what kind of purposes. For an elaboration of this perspective on law, see von Benda-Beckmann and van der Velde (1992).

The conclusion that there is something wrong with the linear model of policy-making does not, of course, necessarily mean that there are no stages in the policy process. First of all, it is possible to formulate stages in such a way that they do justice to the fact that the policy process is interactive, rather than linear. This is done, for instance, by Sudan (2000), who uses a stage model developed by Kotter (1996) for business management to describe the introduction of e-governance in Andhra Pradesh. These stages are:

a) establishing a sense of urgency;

b) creating the guiding coalition;

c) developing a vision and strategy;

d) communicating the change vision;

e) empowering broad-based action;

f) generating short term wins;

g) consolidating gains and producing more change;

h) anchoring new approaches in the culture.

These stages are clearly based on the fact that policy-making is interactive, rather than technical or automatic.

The second option is to stick to the traditional formulation of stages, but to reconceptualise the stages, their boundaries, and the relationships with subsequent stages. Stages are then conceptualised as arenas, each with their different set of institutions, actors and stakes. Some actors may be important in some arenas, while they are poorly represented in other arenas. The outcome of some arenas may be important in othes, but what exactly this means (i.e. the way in which these 'outcomes' are used in subsequent arenas and the feedback mechanisms that also exist between subsequent arenas) can only be understood through concrete empirical studies.

Indeed, in the general COPP literature, we can see studies that focus primarily on the process of policy formulation, while others focus more on the processes of implementation, to mention just a very crude distinction.[12] Many of these studies, in one way or another, are about politics. After all, if the linear model, stressing the instrumental and technical nature of the policy process, is left behind, it becomes clear that policy processes are inherently political. Policies are not the product of rational decision makers, but they are shaped in interactions in which a variety of actors are involved.

2.3 Politics of policy: interests, interfaces and policy networks

This brings us to a second major theme within the policy process literature: the idea that actors interact and bargain with each other, and thereby produce a particular (albeit temporary) policy outcome. Actors can be individual, pursuing their own material interests, or they can be collective (interest groups). The most simple and fairly influential model is what Moore (1999) calls 'interest group economism'. It assumes that a) actors pursue mainly short-term self interests, b) individuals aggregate in interest groups that are exclusive in membership, c) policy is made by the interaction of competing interest groups, d) high levels of information are available, and e) each policy

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12 On formulation, see, for instance, Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), Kingdon (1984), Rochefort and Cobb (1993). For studies on implementation, see, for instance, Lipsky (1980), Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) and Thomas and Grindle (1990). The distinction is crude because it is possible to further subdivide these stages. Agenda-setting and policy formulation, for instance, are often seen as two distinct phases. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) distinguish five different stages in the implementation process alone. A small subset within the policy process literature focuses solely upon the budget making-process. See, for instance, Wildavsky (1974), or, more recently, Norton and Elson (2002).

decision is a separate event, unrelated to other policy decisions (Moore, 1999:38).[13] This model is a grossly simplified version of a public choice paradigm, especially popular among economists who want to (or are forced to) say something about politics as well, and who, basically, apply an economic model to the realm of politics. The state (or rather state incumbents) can also be regarded from this public choice perspective: '[G]overnment officials respond to incentives and disincentives. They are unlikely to undertake policies that are generally unpopular or that will lose them powerful support. They make deals that keep them in power and maintain revenue, votes, or whatever underlies their power' (Levi, 1988:201).

Another subset within the bargaining approach consists of pluralist theories. Their starting point is that pressure groups exercise a major influence over the policy process, but, where public choice theory can deal with the state (incumbents), pluralists tend to neglect the role of the state in this bargaining process and underrate the influence of institutional structures (Smith, 1990). Pressure groups can pursue the self-interest of their members, but they can also pursue wider public interests. This point that there is more to bargaining than just individual self-interest is made, for instance, by Snare (1995) and Rochon and Mazmanian (1993). They focus on, respectively, the conditions under which the (not so self-interested) policy analyst can play a role in the policy process and on the way in which social/environmental movements can affect policy.

Long's interface approach is a more anthropological approach of actors and bargaining processes (Long and Long, 1992). Interface, according to Arce and Long (1992:214),

> 'conveys the idea of some kind of face-to-face encounter between individuals with differing interests, resources and power. Studies of interface encounters aim to bring out the types of discontinuities that exist and the dynamic and emerging character of the struggles and interactions that take place, showing how actors' goals, perceptions, values, interests and relationships are reinforced or reshaped by this process. For instance, in rural development interface situations, a central issue is the way in which policy is implemented and often at the same time transformed'.

So, the bargaining process is quite complicated. It is not only that there is more than self-interests, that the state itself may not be a neutral arbiter and that there are institutional arrangements structuring the bargaining process. Long and his colleagues stress a fourth point: since actors are knowledgeable and capable (Giddens, 1984), they are also able to reflect on the bargaining process itself and are in a position to redefine their values and interests in the course of interaction.[14]

Several policy researchers who focus on interests and interaction use the term 'policy network'.[15] Policy network types of entities can be of different kinds, and different terms have been used, e.g. policy networks, policy subsystems or advocacy coalitions. Although these various notions do not refer to exactly the same phenomena, they are similar in the sense that they refer to groups of people who share ideas and are influential in setting policy agendas. Howlett and Ramesh (1998:469) suggest that it is useful to regard policy subsystems as made up of two subsets. The first is 'a larger set of actors [that] is composed of those who have some knowledge of the policy issue in question and who collectively construct a policy discourse …' These policy communities go by different names in the literature, but one of these is 'advocacy coalitions', a concept developed and

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13 The consequence of this model, according to Moore, is (unjustified) pessimism regarding the possibility of pro-poor policy-making. This is so because the model predicts that pro-poor policies will give rise to high levels of opposition. Pro-poor policy is, hence, only likely where there is active support of and/or pressure from the potential beneficiaries. In many developing countries this pressure does not exist, which, the model suggests, makes pro-poor policies hardly worth trying.

14 Nevertheless, Long's interface approach is criticised by some of exactly the same fallacy it tries to overcome. '[V]ia the notion of representatives it tends to collapse interface-interactions, individual interactions, and inter-group interaction. The civil servant becomes the State, and the villager, the peasant. It thus tends to transform normative group categories into analytical categories, and runs the risk of reifying those categories' (Benda-Beckmann et al, 1989:217).

15 For two critical reviews of the pros and cons of policy network theories, see, for instance, Dowding (1995) and Klijn (1996).

popularised by Sabatier and his colleagues (Howlett and Ramesh, 1998:note 10). Within this larger community, there is a subset 'composed of those who participate in relationships with each other to further their own ends and interests' (ibid: 469). What the members of a policy community have in common, according to Howlett and Ramesh, is their knowledge base. The smaller subset, on the other hand, acts in the pursuit of the interests of its members.

The origin of the 'network' term, according to Dowding (1995:137) is metaphorical. Used in a metaphorical sense, networks do not explain policy change; they are just heuristic devices, and as such they may be useful. Attempts, however, to go beyond the metaphor and to use the concept as a theory in order to explain policy processes have failed, according to Dowding. Even when this is true, we can probably say that the contribution of network approaches is that they a) help to overcome a structure-actor divide by focusing on (small) structures composed of actors influencing policy, b) make clear that policy (change) often results from social entities that cross the state-society divide, c) emphasise that there are bargaining processes in the policy processes, and d) highlight the role of ideas in policy-making.

In a way, all these approaches illustrate the fact that policy processes are inherently political. This is because they stress interactions between people, mobilisation and pursuance of ideas and interests. There is nothing natural or automatic in a policy process; on the contrary, policy processes are social processes and the outcome cannot be established in advance, but depends on the interactions and the strength of the groups. Power, in this interpretation of 'politics', is instrumental.[16] People (or groups of people) use their power to get things done, and those who have more power are more likely to win. The amount of power an individual or a group has depends on the resource base, which can include assets of different natures: human (knowledge, awareness, skills, training, entrepreneurship, charisma, etc.), social (connections, caste, etc.), financial (money), or natural (land, water etc.). Individuals, interest groups, policy communities or networks can be better or worse endowed with these resources, and this influences their power to affect policy processes.

Apart from this instrumental conception of power, another conception has also surfaced. As was suggested above, there can also be power in the (institutional) arrangements structuring the bargaining process. These arrangements may favour and empower some actors and disempower others. And it may, therefore, be that policy bargaining processes are not only about the immediate policy outcomes, but also about the terms and conditions under which this bargaining takes place. This brings us to a third major theme in the literature, as one of these structuring arrangements is the policy discourse.

2.4   Politics of policy: discourses

Discourses can be defined as 'ensemble[s] of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena. Discourses frame certain problems; that is to say, they distinguish some aspects of a situation rather than others' (Hajer, 1993:45, quoted in Gasper and Apthorpe, 1996:2). Discourses, thus, are thought and speech constructions that define the world in particular ways. They are not the product of individuals, but they are social (and political) phenomena. Discourses impose meanings. This imposition is, however, often not complete, as discourses are usually contested. Nevertheless, the implication is that there are important questions related to power: who has the power to define what? (Shore and Wright, 1997:18). What is the social basis of ideas and the social and historical context in which particular discourses can emerge and become dominant? (Watts, 1993:265, quoted in Gasper and Apthorpe, 1996:5).

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16 Within some policy community studies, there is, however, surprisingly little attention on power. The two volumes edited by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) and Sabatier (1999) have extensive indexes, but 'power' does not figure in them.

There are two main ideas in the literature on policies and discourse (Keeley and Scoones, 1999:25). The first relates to the whole notion of policy. The discourse of policy is based on ideas of rationality, techniques, efficiency, ends and means. Policy creates sectors, which are subsequently seen as natural boundaries within a social reality (Apthorpe, 1986; Schaffer, 1984). Policy in this vision is a technique to control – a perspective that goes back to Foucault. Wood (1985:351), for instance, quotes Foucault, who has said that we are controlled 'not by right, but by technique; not by law but by normatisation; not by punishment but by control'. Following this approach, Shore and Wright (1997) regard policy as a 'political technology' through which people are governed. Policies govern, not only because they 'impose conditions, as if from "outside" or "above", [but also because they] influence people's indigenous norms of conduct so that they themselves contribute, not necessarily consciously, to a government's model of social order' (Shore and Wright, 1997:6). Policies, hence, act *on* people, but also *through* people.

A second idea relates to specific policies. Within specific policy areas, some discourses have become dominant, and there is a significant amount of policy process literature focusing either on the discourse coalitions or on particular discourse techniques. Discourse coalitions (Hajer, 1993; Fischer, 1993) are, in a way, similar to advocacy coalitions, but the emphasis is more on the production of discourse and less on sharing ideas and technical expertise. There is more emphasis on the power implied in this shared worldview. Techniques of policy discourses include labels (Wood, 1985), metaphors and other stylistic devices, policy narratives (Roe, 1994) and styles of argumentation (Fischer and Forester, 1993; Hoppe and Peterse, 1998).

All these scholars and approaches illustrate the inherently political nature of the policy process. Almost all of them are also explicitly about power, which is now not conceived in an instrumentalist and resource-dependent way. Rather, power is conceived as invisible. It is in the discourse itself. It works through interpretations, through concepts, through meanings. It controls thought processes and closes down the possibility of thinking of alternatives (although this closure is never complete, and meanings often remain contested).

2.5   By way of conclusion

It is clear that the policy process literature provides several important ideas and insights regarding the political nature of the policy process. There are at least two ways in which policy processes are political. They are bargaining processes in which people struggle and negotiate policy outcomes, and they are structured by particular discourses that impose meanings, empower (some/in some respects) and disempower (others/in other respects). This means it is possible to distinguish in any case two layers in the bargaining process. People negotiate about immediate policy outcomes, but they also establish and contest meanings that, to a certain extent, set the terms and conditions for their bargaining. We will now turn to Andhra Pradesh and investigate the nature of policy processes in that State.

3 Policy Processes in Andhra Pradesh

In September 1995, Chandrababu Naidu took over as Chief Minister in Andhra Pradesh. He replaced his father-in-law, the very popular and charismatic leader N.T. Rama Rao. Both belonged to the same regional party, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which was founded by N.T. Rama Rao in the early 1980s. With the assumption of leadership by Chandrababu Naidu, a new phase in the State reform process started. It is not that he became the first Chief Minister to introduce reforms.[17] What did change with Chandrababu Naidu, however, was the explicitness of the reforms and the extent to which the Chief Minister himself publicly identifies with and advocates the reform process. In 1996, a White Paper was released on State finances, emphasising the need for fiscal prudence. In 1999, the AP government brought out the AP *Vision 2020* (GoAP, 1999), a very ambitious plan laying down what the State should head for in twenty years time.[18] Several bold steps and unpopular measures were taken, such as raising electricity charges for a wide variety of consumers, enhancing the price of subsidised rice (in steps) from Rs. 2/kg to Rs. 5.25/kg, and a partial lifting of prohibition. Several other policies and programmes, some linked directly to economic reforms and some not, were introduced or intensified, and often highly publicised, such as the *Janmabhoomi* (a rural development programme), the Participatory Irrigation Management reform and the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA).

It is not that the Chandrababu regime stopped being populist. As Suri (forthcoming) analysed, the regime continued to be very populist, especially during election time. To quote Suri (forthcoming),

> Like a political wizard, Chandrababu pulled out one welfare schemes after another from his hat, averaging one every week. (…) He concentrated most on securing the support of women, as he feared that resentment among them due to the lifting of prohibition on liquor might mar his electoral prospects. Several incentives were given to DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) groups, and other schemes meant for women were introduced. A scheme that became highly controversial was the *deepam* (light), meant to supply [1 million] cooking gas connections at subsidised rates, (…) launched just one day before the election schedule was announced by the Election Commission (EC). If Chandrababu appeared pragmatic in his advocacy of fiscal prudence and downsizing of government after he came to power in 1995, he appeared equally pragmatic in his fiscal profligacy on the eve of elections.

But there seems to be an important difference between NTR's and Chandrababu Naidu's populism. The latter's emphasis seems less on universal schemes and more on schemes targeted towards particular groups: *Deepam* (light) for rural women, *Adarana* (support) for people of traditional occupations, *Roshini* (light) for religious minorities, *Mundadugu* (going forward) for scheduled castes, etc. (Krishna Reddy, 2002:879).

3.1 Reforms and governance

A striking characteristic of the AP reform process is the emphasis on governance. Vision 2020 is about growth and development, but it is also about governance. It stresses that the government should be made simple, transparent, accountable and responsive, and that people should have a strong voice in the governance of the State (GoAP, 1999:3–4). This is not just an empty statement.

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17 The Congress (I) government, which ruled in AP when the Government of India decided to make a real start with economic reforms in 1991, introduced several reform measures– meant, for instance, to attract more foreign investment and to restructure the power sector. These policies were contested by N.T. Rama Rao; in the 1993–4 election campaign he projected the Congress government and the liberalisation process as pro-rich and himself as pro-poor, but when he came to power he continued in the same vein (although he reduced the subsidised rice price again and introduced prohibition) (Suri, forthcoming).

18 The document, according to some, is not only ambitious, but also unrealistic and blind to ground realities (Narasimha Reddy, 1999). The vision was prepared with the help of consultants from McKinsey.

A taskforce on 'Good Governance' was set up and a White Paper on 'Governance and Public Management' was brought out which discusses many goals and initiatives, such as the establishment of a Centre for Good Governance, speeding up the decision-making process (file movement, etc.), e-governance, citizens' charters, right to information, etc. In many of these areas, steps have been undertaken.[19]

These governance initiatives are highly publicised and play a prominent role in the image the GoAP tries to create of itself. The first part of Chandrababu Naidu's book, *Plain Speaking*, written with the journalist Sevanti Ninan, is about governance and politics. He states that:

> 'both old-style politics and old-style governance have to change …. Today, with the state exchequer bled dry, the mandate is more for effective governance … The era of handouts as a part of electoral politics is over (p. 10). At the heart of the administrative reform we are attempting is the change in the role for the government from being an actor, to enabler and facilitator' (Naidu with Ninan, 2000:12).

According to Chandrababu Naidu, there are major problems with the administration:

> 'The machinery which attempts to run the state needs an urgent overhaul itself. It is huge and self-perpetuating. It is slow and accountable to nobody. Above all, it is obstructive. It essentially exists for itself, not for the public' (ibid:45).

Corruption is an enormous problem and should not be tolerated. There are major problems also in the political sphere, in the sense that there is 'too much politicking and too little governance' (ibid., p. 17). Politics, according to the author, should become more professional; politics of populism should be replaced by politics of development; and politics should become respectable and dissociated from corruption and incompetence (ibid:17–18). Similar ideas on governance reform – or, we could say, policy processes – are regularly expressed by him in public meetings and reported in the media.

3.2 Four articles of faith

There are four recurring themes, or rather articles of faith, in the commitment to administrative reforms and good governance. The first one is the (desired) separation of powers between the administration and elected politicians. The discretion in policy implementation should be reduced. There should be implementation as per the norm. The administration should be allowed to do its work without political interference, and elected politicians, particularly Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), should focus more on overall development. Their role should become more that of a legislator, rather than that of a middleman in policy implementation.[20]

A second theme is 'governing for result', an emphasis on delivery and performance. Every month, there is a performance assessment of the bureaucracy.[21] The performance assessments take a lot of time, not only of those who have to submit the data, but also of those who process it. The performance assessments take place at individual and institution level. Individuals are assessed with the help of various indicators (e.g. targets, feelings of the people, media reports), and it is claimed

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19 Examples are the Computer Aided Administration of Registration Department (CARD, which enables the electronic registration of documents) and the e-seva centres (basically multi-purpose service centres for the public).

20 In order to encourage a change in the mindset of the MLAs, Chandrababu Naidu encouraged them to go (and almost all went) on a study visit to east Asia in the summer of 2002.

21 This has been so since mid 2002. Before that these assessments were done quarterly. It may be that, at the time of finalising this paper, the emphasis on assessments is less than what it used to be in the second half of 2002. This, however, does not mean that performance has become less important. It is just that the next hype, performance assessment budgeting, has taken over some of the attention.

that transfers do now take place mainly on the basis of performance, and no longer on the basis of bribes and influence. Institutions (like government hospitals) are also assessed, ranked and progress is monitored. Politicians are also assessed. In the case of Ministers, this involves collecting data on, for instance, the number of hours worked per day, the number of meetings attended, the number of visits made outside Hyderabad, etc., but media reports are also taken into account. The popularity and progress of the government is further assessed occasionally by independent agents and through ongoing public perceptions studies.[22]

A third recurring theme is the introduction of e-governance in order to achieve accountability and transparency and reduce corruption in governance. The Chief Minister himself strongly believes that technology can help in improving governance. As he writes,

> 'One solution [to problems such as departmental inefficiency, the enormous waste that is typical of the government machinery and endemic corruption] is information technology (IT). In the last four years we have focused on this because I strongly believe in the transparency it brings. Without technology you cannot have progress. We cannot achieve things any more in the traditional way. Apart from transparency IT brings about accountability and removal of discretion. Misuse and wastage will become less, corruption will go' (Naidu with Ninan, 2000:14).

One of the recent initiatives is the introduction of electronic file movement. The idea is that files – in scanned form – should move electronically. If they do not move for a number of days, they go automatically to someone else. Information on the movement should be available on the Internet, and in the case of confidential files, passwords would be given to the clients concerned. This system, it is claimed, would have the potential to improve transparency as well as accountability.[23] More generally, e-governance is believed to have an enormous potential to contribute to leapfrogging in development, and to change management within the bureaucracy (for instance, to make the bureaucracy less layered), apart from enhancing citizens' access to information, and thereby contributing to transparency and accountability.

A fourth theme is the necessity to increase participation of stakeholders in development efforts. Given the ineffectiveness of the state machinery and the perceived lack of professionalism and corruption of the political leaders, it is not surprising that the idea has come up that stakeholders should become more involved in policy processes. 'Make a stakeholder of every citizen' is an AP government slogan. Self-help groups (such as women thrift societies) and committees (water users associations, watershed committees, education committees, etc.) are presented as necessary countervailing powers to ineffective bureaucracies. The TDP flagship programme *Janmabhoomi* (see Box 1) is based on this notion of participation in development. The idea is that groups of stakeholders put pressure on the government to perform, take over some of the responsibilities previously held by the government and/or contribute financially to the programme. (See also Box 2 about Participatory Irrigation Management.)

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22 There is no doubt that some people, and probably the Chief Minister himself, really believe that these performance assessments are an important step forward. On the other hand, it is clear that it is very time-consuming and not always clear to those who are involved for what purpose all the data are collected. According to one observer (interview with someone indirectly involved, September 2002, Hyderabad), almost everything that is measurable is taken into account, but the reliability of the data is doubtful. If a district office learns on Friday afternoon that it is expected to submit the data on Monday morning, and it knows that timely delivery will be one of the assessment criteria, one cannot expect reliable data. This is not to argue that performance assessments would not be important, but one wonders whether a) doing it on a monthly basis and b) focusing exclusively on quantitative data and targets, is the right way forward.

23 While there is no doubt about file delays and the necessity to do something about this, one gets the impression that the advocates make excessive claims. If one imagines the size (in bytes) of many of the files, and how difficult it sometimes still is to download an ordinary PDF file from the internet, one cannot help wondering whether electronic file movement is the best way of solving the issue of file delays.

Box 1   The *Janmabhoomi* programme

Janmabhoomi (literally, land of one's birth) is one of the TDP regime's flagship programmes. It is based on a South Korean concept and was launched in January 1997. It is a rural development programme that a) aims to bring government to the people, b) is based on voluntary labour contributions, and c) involves microplanning at grassroots level. It is implemented in rounds; initially there were four rounds every year; later this was brought down to two. Each round has a particular theme, such as health, women, water conservation, etc. During each round, officials go to the villages and conduct *Janmabhoomi* meetings, in which local people can come forward with their complaints and/or demands and in which necessary community works are identified. Some problems are sorted out on the spot. Public works are carried out later.

Of crucial importance in the organisation of *Janmabhoomi* are (stakeholder) groups and committees (related to, for instance, watershed development, forest, education, etc.). *Janmabhoomi* is linked to a great many other government schemes, since the official distribution of funds or sanctioning of groups (e.g. DWCRA groups) happens at the time of the *Janmabhoomi* meetings. For instance, pensions are distributed, revolving DWCRA funds are sanctioned, gas connections and house sites are distributed at the time of *Janmabhoomi*. Community works, coming under schemes like the Employment Assurance Scheme, rural road maintenance, rural water supply, education and others also come to the village as part of *Janmabhoomi* (World Bank, 2000:29). In effect, this means that *Janmabhoomi* has incorporated more or less all important government development programmes.

Janmabhoomi has become the TDP's model of decentralised development. The TDP has been very slow and reluctant in implementing the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, which lays down procedures for the decentralisation of governance to village-level bodies, called *Panchayats*. According to a World Bank report, the *panchayat* institutions are ignored, marginalised and starved of funds (World Bank, 2000). On the other hand, *Janmabhoomi* received a lot of funds for works, but also for infrastructure (jeeps for the nodal officers, etc.). While the 73rd Amendment is about political decentralisation, *Janmabhoomi* is a bureaucratic form of decentralisation. At district level, the District Collector operates the funds. The programme is implemented by the local bureaucracy and the committees are appointed by the departments, rather than elected bodies.

There is no doubt that the *Janmabhoomi* programme has been instrumental for the TDP in strengthening its base at the local level. The various committees are packed with TDP supporters and local TDP politicians are also the most important contractors for the works – because of their political influence, but also because they are often the only ones able to make a down-payment required in the name of 'community contribution'. A certain degree of corruption is allowed. Manor (forthcoming) mentions that the Chief Minister himself, at a gathering of party activists, has said that he would allow one third of the funds to be 'eaten' up.

Sources: GoAP (2001); Krishna Reddy (2002); Manor (forthcoming); World Bank (2000).

3.3   Changes in policy discourse

What can we conclude about changes in the policy discourse? Three main shifts seem noteworthy. First, there is a shift away from a discourse centering on welfare to one centering on development and governance. The welfare discourse was introduced by N.T. Rama Rao in the 1980s. He projected himself as the elder brother who gives rice and sarees to women – a benefactor doing well to 'his people'. This discourse can be characterised as 'donative', since it stresses hand-outs, charity and welfare provided by a benevolent ruler.[24] This discourse ended in 1995 and a new 'developmentalist' discourse came up, with keywords such as growth, development, delivery, performance, effective/good governance, etc.[25]

Second, in a sense, the policy discourse is technocratic and falls back on the linear/rational model of the policy process. Norms are supposed to be one thing; implementation is something else. The norms are supposed to be appropriate; the problem is with implementation: there is political

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24 See Mooij (1995). See also Schaffer (1984) and Wood (1985:358–9) about donative versions of reality.
25 See Harshe and Srinivas (1999) about this shift.

interference, inefficiency, waste and corruption. The solution is administrative (better monitoring and assessments; performance-based incentives etc.) or technological (ICTs as answer to poor governance). It seems there is very little attention to democratic procedures as a means of solving problems of poor governance. The White Paper on *Governance and Public Management* (GoAP, n.d.) only stresses administrative and technological devices. There is nothing in this document on political checks and balances or democratic procedures in order to secure better governance.

Having said that, however, there is a third element of the policy discourse: the emphasis on 'active participation of the people in the development of the state' and on people becoming 'partners in progress' (GoAP, 1999:1–2). There is an emphasis on stakeholders who not only take some financial responsibility, but who are also considered important in pressurising the government to deliver. This, no doubt, is political reasoning. It is based on an interpretation of 'implementation as process'. After all, talking about stakeholders is the discursive component of an attempt to effectuate changes in the implementation arena. Emphasising self-help, participation, stakeholders, etc. fits in with a wider discourse that assumes that development efforts are contested, that there are conflicts of interest and that empowerment is important for a level playing field.[26]

To conclude, there have been discursive shifts in the post-1995 period in Andhra Pradesh. It is also clear that the AP government draws on various repertoires and stresses both empowerment/ pressure/stakeholders as well as administrative/technological devices to clean up the policy process. The new discourse does not go unchallenged, however. There is a lot of critique, not so much of the fact that development rather than welfare has become centre-stage, but certainly of the importance given to computers in development[27] and of the conceptualisation of stakeholders and the accompanying model of decentralisation (i.e. based on functional committees rather than on elected *Panchayat Raj* institutions). So far, however, there is no effective counter-discourse. There are critiques of Chandrababu Naidu's project, but an alternative vision or project, centring, for instance, on democratic decentralisation, is still absent.

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26 On the other hand, however, we should also note that the stakeholder groups that are encouraged to emerge are functional groups of people (water users, education committees, etc.). They are not political in the sense of elected in a wider democratic process of political decentralisation. An exception to this are the water users associations, which have elected board members. See Box 2.

27 As one member of the Opposition ridiculed Chandrababu Naidu: 'He says: Is agriculture no longer productive? Buy a computer! You don't earn enough as a handloom weaver? Have a computer in your house!' Interview with a leader of the Congress party, Hyderabad, 05.09.2002.

Box 2   Participatory Irrigation Management

From 1996–7 onwards, major reforms have taken place in the irrigation sector in Andhra Pradesh, intended to introduce Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM). The main component of the reforms was an institutional change: a move away from management by government towards management by farmers or water users. Water Users Associations (WUAs) have been formed at minor (tertiary) canal level; Distributary Committees have been formed at distributary (secondary) level; and Project Committees still have to be formed at system (primary) level.

The idea of PIM was new in Andhra Pradesh in 1996; this is why some observers have referred to the reforms as a 'big bang', rather than as incrementalist (Oblitas and Peter, 1999; referred to by Narasimha Reddy, 2002). Of crucial importance was a committed political leadership. Chandrababu Naidu probably saw these reforms as one of the ways in which he could further his development agenda and strengthen his image as a dynamic and innovative leader. Moreover, the 10,000 water users associations that were formed in 1997 promised to provide a considerable opportunity for building up local (party) cadres and securing/expanding TDP influence at local level. The reform also matched with the predispositions of the World Bank and the Bank was willing to support it. Several committed IAS officials were involved in designing the reform and drafting the legislation. There was considerable political consensus about the need and shape of the reform and the Act was passed unanimously. Water users were hardly consulted at the time of passing the Act, but there were massive awareness and training efforts afterwards. All in all, there has not been much opposition from water users, not even against the increased water charges.

To what extent has irrigation management become more participatory? This question has at least two components, namely a) the composition and functioning of the WUAs, and b) the shift in responsibilities away from the irrigation department to the WUAs. Regarding the former, it seems that the leadership positions within the WUAs have generally been captured by members of the upper castes, relatively wealthy landowners, generally better-educated people, usually with affiliations to a political party, often the TDP (Harshe, forthcoming; Table 3; Jairath, 2001:111). The elections (in 1997) were conducted in great haste, and many people were not yet sufficiently aware of the importance of the committees. Mollinga et al. (2001:368) report low levels of interaction between leaders and members and Harshe (forthcoming:37) states that the participation of women and 'weaker sections' in decision-making is negligible. Regarding the latter, a case study in two canals of the Tungabhadra Right Bank Low Level Canal showed that, since the rural elite was able to dominate the WUAs, not much has changed in the set of relationships surrounding water distribution: 'The Irrigation Department engineers are under considerable pressure from the top to work in a different manner, but hardly so from the bottom' (Mollinga et al, 2001:371). In other regions, however, this may be different. The extent to which the reform will affect relations between the irrigation department and the water users in the long-run is still to be awaited – and may vary from region to region. The next elections (which were due in December 2002 but postponed) will, in any case, be much more contested (along party political lines) than the previous ones.

Sources: Harshe (forthcoming); Jairath (2001), Mollinga et al. (2001, and personal communication); Narasimha Reddy (2002).

3.4 Characteristics of the policy process

Let us now move beyond the the discourse and look at some other major characteristics of the policy process. Three main characteristics of the policy process will be highlighted here. The first is the enormous concern with image building; the second relates to centralisation of policy-making, and the third to the strategy to use policy implementation for party building purposes.

Strategic image building happens with regard to the person of Chandrababu Naidu, as well as the achievements of his regime. When Chandrababu Naidu took over from N.T. Rama Rao in 1995, he was in a difficult position. Despite many positive qualities – he is excellent in party organisation[28] and

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28 According to Ninan (2000:xvi), 'As they tell you about [the TDP] in Andhra Pradesh, NTR founded it and Chandrababu Naidu built it'. This quote comes from the introduction of Chandrababu Naidu's own book, and he certainly must have approved this introduction. Nevertheless, it is hard to find a person who would not agree with this presentation of Chandrababu Naidu as a very competent party organiser.

is said to know more or less all party workers by name – he did not have the charisma of N.T. Rama Rao. It is therefore likely that he had to find another image, source of popularity and support base to distinguish himself from his well-known and very popular predecessor, and present him as a ruler in his own right. He found this image in computers, technology and modern management. There is a considerable amount of publicity around his person, stressing especially his commitment to reform, hard work, genuine ambitions for the state, modern outlook, etc.

There are also publicity hypes around particular so-called achievements. The development of Hyderabad as an IT city is a case in point. In government advertisements, the Cyber Tower in Hi-tec City, an IT area located south-west of Hyderabad, is a more important icon of the city than the historic Charminar. On closer inspection, however, the claims about AP's progress may be slightly exaggerated. There is no doubt that the software industry has grown rapidly. In 1996–7, software exports from AP were only Rs. 1.34 billion. This rose to Rs. 36.53 billion in 2002–3. Andhra Pradesh is, however, still only the fifth in software exports, after Karnataka (Rs. 123.50 billion worth of software export in 2002–3), Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra (Joseph, 2003: 3926).

While some 'achievements' are highly publicised, other aspects of the regime are rather underemphasised. This is particularly true for some of the State's economic and fiscal problems. According to the government's own figures, the average per capita annual growth rate of the AP economy between 1993–4 and 2000–1 was only 3.9% (at constant prices), while it was 4.8% for India as a whole (GoAP, 2001: Table 2.3). This low growth contrasts starkly with the ambitions of the regime.[29] The annual growth in employment between 1993 and 1999–2000 was only 0.8% in AP, as compared to 1.3% for the whole of India (GoI, 2002: Table 2.14). There has been a consistent revenue deficit between 1995–6 and 1999–2000, the level of which has fluctuated considerably.[30] The fiscal deficit has doubled between 1995–6 and 1999–2000, from Rs. 24,450 million to Rs. 49,430 million, and debt servicing has increased in the same period from Rs. 22,090 million to Rs. 51,460 million. Interest payment is about 30% of the State's own revenue (GoAP, 2001: Tables 3.7 and 3.9). These figures, according to some observers, are reason for serious concern. According to Manor (forthcoming), fiscal imprudence, particularly in the *Janmabhoomi* programme but also because of the 1999 elections, was such that in 2000, the AP government 'was borrowing money to pay salaries. Many government departments did not have funds to pay for fuel for their vehicles'. Manor (forthcoming) compares AP with Karnataka and argues that Karnataka has (had) much more prudent fiscal management, and that the government of Karnataka is also much more realistic about the problems. Perhaps one can say that the AP regime practices reform by hype and fiscal imprudence by stealth. The more general point is that a conscious 'hype and hide' strategy is part of the way in which the AP government governs.

> A second characteristic is the extent to which policy-making powers are centralised in the person of Chandrababu Naidu himself. In a sense, such centralisation is not new. The TDP has always been dominated by one leader. The drive and perhaps even workaholism of Chandrababu Naidu gives, however, a new twist to this centralisation.

Although Chandrababu Naidu likes to brainstorm, meets a lot of people (including businessmen, representatives of international agencies, journalists and media tycoons) and is open to new ideas, he does not seem to rely on anybody and is himself in control. He has a small number of like-minded people within the bureaucracy, often hand-picked and put in particular places, but even there, it is doubtful to what extent they really influence him. Ministers, barring a few, seem fairly marginalised.

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29 According to *Vision 2020*, the per capita income growth should have been 4.4% in 1995–2000, 7.6% in the next five years, 10.1% in 2005–2010, 11.7% in 2010–2015 and 13.4% in 2015–020 (GoAP, 1999:5).
30 In 1997–98 it was about Rs. 7,000 million, while it was almost Rs. 3,200 million one year earlier.

The question is whether this centralisation is deliberate or by default. The latter was suggested by several officials, who argued that Chandrababu Naidu outdoes almost all his ministers. As one observer described this, 'No Minister has the same stamina and energy as the Chief Minister. He gets up at 3.30 am, reads all the newspapers and does other work. By 6.30 am he starts calling other people, but by that time, the days' agenda is set already'.[31] The suggestion, confirmed by others, is that it is very hard, if not impossible, to keep up with Chandrababu Naidu's pace.

This may explain some of the centralisation, but certainly not all. The impression one also gets is that Chandrababu Naidu finds it hard to delegate powers and responsibilities to others. And, perhaps, this is not surprising. Estimates of the percentage of people in the bureaucracy who really identify with his project (i.e. *Vision 2020*, administrative reforms, e-governance etc.) varied between 20–30% of the IAS officers, (and a lower estimate for the non-IAS).[32] The other 70–80% of the IAS are not so much against the project, but rather indifferent. There may therefore be an issue of mistrust on Chandrababu Naidu's part that explains his drive to control. In turn, however, this drive may reinforce feelings of resentment among the civil servants.[33]

Box 3 further illustrates this centralisation in policy implementation. At district level, an increasing number of powers are concentrated in the hands of District Collectors (the highest IAS officers in the district) rather than the district-level heads of the departments. The District Collectors have a direct line to the Chief Minister. This empowers them on the one hand; on the other it facilitates central control over policy implementation in the districts.

A third characteristic of the policy process concerns the way policy implementation works at the local level. The participation of stakeholders is often not as good as the government claims it would like it to be. The example of Participatory Irrigation Management (Box 2) shows that although more than 10,000 water user associations are formed, most seem to be dominated by the economic and political elite, and many do not function as associations, let alone as democratic associations. The example of the Food for Work scheme (Box 4) illustrates that the supposed beneficiaries, i.e. poor people/workers, were not involved in the identification of the works and played no role in the implementation. True, there were other stakeholders – contractors, *Mandal*-level officers, local politicians – who were very much part of the implementation process, but we can assume it is not to these groups of people the government refers when it talks about 'stakeholder participation'.

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31 Interview with an IAS officer at Secretariat level, Hyderabad, 2 September 2002.
32 Based on interviews with senior IAS officers, September 2002.
33 Several reasons for resentment against Chandrababu Naidu's management style were mentioned in interviews, including that he does not give enough freedom, is too focused on statistics, does not trust officials sufficiently, is too harsh in his public criticisms, and does not give sufficient protection.

Box 3   Health policy implementation

Apart from government hospitals, the main government health interventions are disease-related programmes (pertaining to, for instance, malaria, leprosy, tuberculosis and AIDS), the family welfare programmes (immunisation and family planning) and the Primary Health Care centres (PHCs). In the districts, it is the District Medical and Health Officer (DM&HO) who is the highest medical administrator responsible for the implementation of the programmes and the functioning of the PHCs. Given the size of the districts in AP (many are more than 3 million people) plus the fact that different districts have different disease profiles, one would expect some flexibility and space to make district-level decisions in the area of health. In actual practice, however, the system is very centralised.

Two main features are worth mentioning:

a) Many of the important decisions are taken in Hyderabad, or in Delhi. The DM&HO has very little or no powers to influence the design of programmes. All issues that relate to the way in which services are delivered are decided either by the Government of Andhra Pradesh or by the Government of India.

b) Within the district, many powers rest with the District Collector (DC). There are very few issues on which the DM&HO can decide without the permission and agreement of the DC.

The situation has not always been like this. In fact, in the last few years, a number of policies or policy changes have been implemented in Andhra Pradesh, all taking away powers from the DM&HO. For instance, previously 50% of the money for drugs was in the hands of the DM&HO, who could purchase drugs locally. This drug purchase is now centralised and the DM&HOs have only a little money for emergency drug purchases. The same has happened with money for so-called consumables, including bleaching powder, disinfectant, cotton, cloth etc. The District Collector, and not the DM&HO, has been made the chairperson of all societies dealing with the funds of the disease-related programmes. The general ban on transfers of government staff in Andhra Pradesh has reduced the power of the DM&HOs with regard to personnel issues. Recruitment (on contract basis) has been decentralised to the district, but it is the DC who heads the recruitment committees.

This double move, i.e. withdrawing powers (and money) from the DM&HO and empowering the District Collector, can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt by the State government to get more control over the health sector. The DM&HOs are medical doctors and report to another medical doctor, the Director of Health. The District Collectors belong to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The selection of the DM&HOs, officially based on seniority, is made by the Minister of Health. The secretaries belong to the IAS and they are senior to the District Collectors. Therefore while the secretaries have little powers to control the DM&HOs, they are in a much better position vis-à-vis the District Collectors – who may be 'like kings in the districts', but junior to the secretaries. Moreover, the secretaries tend to mistrust the doctors, especially with money, and have therefore tried to reduce the money allocation to DM&HOs in various ways. Finally, also for the Chief Minister, who personally reviews and monitors the progress of many policies and other matters in the districts through video conferences, it is much easier to deal with District Collectors than with so many heads of the various departments in the district. This direct link to the secretaries and the CM has empowered District Collectors in the district, but at the same time it has also facilitated control of the State government over the district administration.

Source: Mooij et al (2003)

In the case of Food for Work it is very clear who the stakeholders are who should have been consulted and included in the policy process. In other cases, it is a bit more ambiguous. In the case of the power reform, for instance, almost the whole population is a stakeholder (i.e. everybody who is an electricity consumer and everybody who would like to be one).[34] Generally, it is especially the clients, the recipients and the public who are seen as stakeholders. The case of the AP State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC), however, shows that the workers (represented in trade unions) regard themselves also as important stakeholders in the policy process.[35] In 2001, the workers went on a strike

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34 In this reform, the consultation process failed, i.e. from the perspective of the government which hoped to be able to create a consensus around the reform. Considerable opposition continued to exist, but the government nevertheless decided to go ahead with the reforms (Harshe, forthcoming).

35 The information on the APSRTC comes from Ramachandraiah and Patnaik (forthcoming).

which lasted more than three weeks, demanding not only an increase in wages, but also a number of other measures which would be beneficial to the APSRTC as a whole, such as a reduction of the motor vehicle tax to 10% (from 15%) on a par with the rate for private buses; the curbing of illegal private vehicles (buses, taxis, vans) that operate without licence; and, reimbursements by the government of the losses incurred due to concessional rates given to particular categories of people. The government, however, did its best to discredit the workers, the trade unions and the strike. Apparently, trade unions and workers – even when they make points that are important for the survival of the government corporation that employs them – are not considered as legitimately acting/participating stakeholders.

One group that does not seem to be marginalised in the process of policy implementation are local TDP party men. Several observers have argued that *Janmabhoomi* was also partly meant for this purpose, i.e. to reach out to lower-level political cadres (see Box 1). The advantage of policy implementation through *Janmabhoomi* rather than through the elected *Panchayat* bodies is that there is more scope for influencing the decision of who will become influential in the process (as committee member, president or self-help group leader). Works are often done by TDP-affiliated contractors. *Janmabhoomi* and the Food for Work programme are no exceptions in this respect. Nayak et al. (2002) highlight that a great variety of centrally-sponsored rural development schemes are used to maintain coalitions of political support and favour TDP-affiliated contractors. Watershed committees, for instance, are criticised for being packed with party workers, and the resources are controlled by TDP party men. There are 'tremendous personal benefits to those who are part of the implementing machinery … [and in] return these people have acted as mobilisers during election time and generated party interests at other times' (Nayak et al., 2002:40).[36] The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) is another case in point. There are often middlemen involved who broker between the beneficiaries and the administration. More often than not, they are part of the party machinery (*ibid:* 43–4). Nayak et al. further state that beneficiaries of pensions are almost always selected on the recommendations of local leaders or middlemen. The same is true for the housing scheme, Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), where caste affiliations seem to play a considerable role in the identification of beneficiaries.[37] One point stressed at several points in the study of Nayak et al. is the fact that, while contractors and middlemen could previously be independent of political parties, nowadays the 'contractor class' has entered politics and the access of non-party middlemen to the bureaucracy is increasingly closed off.[38] What this illustrates is that policy implementation and party building happen in one and the same process. Two of the main characteristics of policy implementation – the stakeholder approach and the importance of contractors – both contribute to this dual purpose of strengthening the TDP at the same time as implementing the policy.

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36 At this point, the report quotes from an interview with Professor G. Haragopal. Generally, the selection of people interviewed in AP for this report is somewhat biased: many more are opposed to, rather than affiliated with, the government. The report is, however, also based on secondary material and first hand observations.

37 On this point, the report refers to a study by Chakravarty and Rajeswar (1998).

38 See, for instance, p. 37; p. 40 footnote 64; p. 42; p. 43.

Box 4   Food for Work

Between mid-2001 and mid-2002, Chandrababu Naidu negotiated 3.1 million tonnes of rice from the Government of India, for Food for Work programmes in Andhra Pradesh. This rice was provided free of cost to the State. 3.1 million tonnes foodgrain means about 40 kg per person, or about 200 kg per household if distributed evenly over the State. If it were to go exclusively to the poorest 25% of the population, it would mean about 800 kilos per poor household, which is about their full foodgrain requirement for a year. 3.1 million tonnes is, hence, an enormous amount of foodgrain, and that in a State that tends to have a food surplus. The market value of 3.1 million tonnes is about Rs. 30 billion. That Chandrababu Naidu could negotiate this amount is related to a) an embarrassingly large buffer stock of more than 60 million tonnes of foodgrain – far more than what is required for national food security, b) the fact that the TDP is an important partner in the coalition government that leads the country, which gives Chandrababu Naidu considerable political leverage, and c) the drought conditions experienced in parts of AP, which could justify the quantities given.

The correct procedure for the identification of the works to be undertaken starts at village level with a *Gram Sabha* (village assembly) in which proposals are made, which then move higher up. Ultimately, the District Collector has the responsibility for making district-wise proposals and estimates of the quantity of rice that is required. The works are supposed to be organised without contractors. Minimum wages have to be paid to the workers (and can be partly in cash, partly in kind) and the use of labour-replacing technology is not allowed.

The programme was launched in September 2001, and almost immediately the newspapers started reporting serious irregularity. It now seems that an enormous amount of rice has been diverted, either to the open market or back to the Food Corporation of India (and, hence, back to the buffer stock). According to Deshingkar and Johnson (2003), there are five main types of irregularities, all harmful to the poor. These are:

1) Works are identified in a top-down manner and not by the beneficiaries/poor.

2) Although the guidelines specify that there should be no outside contractors, contractors have been heavily involved. They have succeeded in making huge illegal profits by claiming amounts of rice disproportionate to the work done, and diverting it subsequently.

3) Insofar as work was done, it was done by the poor, and not by the very poor.

4) A lot of rice went to undeserving areas, i.e. areas with relatively fewer drought-affected households and fewer people willing to participate in the programme.

5) Labour-displacing machinery was used on a large scale.

Deshingkar and Johnson conclude that poor people/workers in the programme have had no influence on the design or on the implementation of the scheme. The media and the opposition have played a role in publicising the irregularities, which eventually led to some changes in the design and implementation process but only after large scale misappropriation had already occurred. The *Deccan Chronicle* of 6 October 2002 reported that, in a still ongoing investigation, 4,609 cases of irregularities had been detected so far. At the same time, however, Chandrababu Naidu was lobbying for another 2.5 million tonnes of rice.

Sources: Deshingkar and Johnson (2003) and newspaper cuttings from *the Hindu* and the *Deccan Chronicle*.

4   Conclusion: Politics in the Policy Process in Andhra Pradesh

In the final part of this paper, the attempt is made to relate the characteristics of the AP policy process to some of the insights discussed in the earlier part of the paper derived from the COPP body of literature. Based particularly on Horowitz (1989), we have discussed some possible features of policy processes in developing countries. Some of these can, indeed, be found in AP, e.g. the attempt to enhance regime legitimacy through the policies that are introduced. When AP voters voted for the TDP in the 1994 elections, they voted for N.T. Rama Rao, and not for Chandrababu Naidu. When the latter took over in 1995, he had to make an effort to project himself as a legitimate leader. Among other things, he did this by introducing and reinforcing several policies. On the one hand, he projected himself as a reformer *par excellence*. On the other hand, by introducing *Janmabhoomi* and Participatory Irrigation Management, he reached out to the rural population and showed that he was not just an IT enthusiast and a World Bank client, but that he was also concerned with agriculture and grassroots development. He succeeded in broadening the legitimacy of his regime and in the process, he also improved and developed his personal image, and strengthened the TDP party cadre.

Another point mentioned by Horowitz (1989) is the inordinate importance of the state as compared to civil society. That, indeed, is also a feature of the AP policy process. There are a few independent civil society organisations engaging with the government and actively involved in influencing policy processes,[39] but by and large, policy processes are state-driven. The initiative to establish users' committees and self-help groups may help in strengthening civil society in the long run, but so far, they seem to function more as extensions of political parties.

Yet another point mentioned in the discussion of 'Third World policy processsses' was the observation that most overt struggles in developing countries tend to be in the implementation phase, rather than in the phase of agenda setting and policy formulation. This observation is definitely true in the case of AP policy processes. Policy formulation is very much centralised and there is not much debate about (or protest against) 'policy on paper'. There is opposition (Suri, forthcoming), but it is weak and on the whole not able to develop alternative scenarios. In other words, the vision and project of the TDP regime are not really challenged. Policy implementation, on the other hand, is contested, sabotaged, manipulated/corrupted in many different ways. It is in this phase that most struggles occur, but also in this phase there are attempts to centralise powers and control decisions.

There are even observers who claim that redirecting public attention away from the process of (economic) policy-making was one of the important intentions of *Janmabhoomi*. According to Krishna Reddy (2002), *Janmabhoomi* has helped Chandrababu Naidu to depoliticise development. Krishna Reddy's argument is that, by focusing mainly on local issues, many of which are related to governance in a rather technical sense, Chandhrababu Naidu would have succeeded in insulating the reform process from democratic procedures and people's participation (which was by and large reduced to non-economic issues). It therefore helped him to go ahead with the reform process.[40]

This lack of debate on policy formulation also means that it is doubtful whether one can usefully speak of policy subsystems or advocacy coalitions in the AP context. There is definitely a vision or a project that is pushed by the Chief Minister and shared by (some) people within the bureaucracy, some party members, some local businessmen, journalists and other opinion makers and endorsed by international agencies. But the policy-making process seems too centralised – and implementation too much

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39 Examples of these are the Centre for Environmental Concerns and the MV Foundation.
40 Elsewhere I have argued that I do not find this account entirely convincing (Mooij, 2002).

dominated by party political considerations – to make it possible to speak about something like advocacy coalitions.

At the local level, in the policy implementation phase, networks (of interest, rather than of shared ideas) play an enormous role in shaping policy outcomes. Policy implementation can be usefully formulated as a bargaining process. There are a large number of actors, some with more power, some with less, interacting in local arenas. The currently interesting phenomenon in AP is that there is a conscious attempt to create new actors (stakeholder groups) and to change the form of the arena. *Janmabhoomi* creates new resources (positions in committees, contracts, group membership, money) and new 'rules of the game', and therefore it affects power relations in the local arenas of policy implementation.

One thing that has become very clear is that the state is not a neutral arbiter. In fact, it is hard to see the state as not primarily a TDP regime. In that sense, it is an important actor which has at least two (contradictory) interests, namely a) to strengthen the position of the TDP at all levels, in order to endow/enrich individual party men, but also in order to secure the TDPs political future, and b) to project itself as a dynamic, modern, developmentalist and competent regime. The former is done in many practices of policy implementation. The latter is done through the developmentalist discourse that stresses good governance, results, performance, growth, development, ambitions and achievements and through related practices: performance assessments, introduction of computers, e-governance projects, ambitious targets, etc. There is not just policy-speak (the developmentalist discourse) versus (party-building) practice, but there are different kind of practices going on at the same time in the AP bureaucracy. In part, these different practices are meant for different audiences. The local-level efforts of party building, with the diversion of funds and TDP-affiliated middlemen, are meant to reach out to the rural population and to enhance the regime's popularity among the voters but also to keep the TDP flock together. On the other hand, the modern management practices and discourse are helpful in creating legitimacy in the international arena, in which AP has to show its credit-worthiness and has to compete with other States for foreign investments. But this is not the whole story. The drive towards output and performance is also meant to have a noticeable impact on day-to-day public service delivery. As one bureaucrat said, 'the government has to be performance-oriented. Politics cannot sustain itself. One has to deliver outcomes. If one wants to continue in office, one cannot fool people for a very long time. There is a compulsion of good governance if one wants to be re-elected'.

What the discussion of policy processes in AP has illustrated is the enormous importance of party politics. Policy-making is dominated by a strong TDP leader, and local politicians are very important actors in policy implementation. Policy-making processes are shaped by concerns of regime legitimacy, and policy implementation is shaped by concerns with party building. In the earlier part of the paper, two different ways in which policy processes are political were identified: they are bargaining processes, and the policy discourse is political. Here we see a third meaning of 'politics of policy' – the process is very much dominated by party politicians and party concerns.

Finally, is should be stressed that the process is not without contradictions. This is because on the one hand, the regime claims to keep politics away from policy implementation, while on the other, the whole process is fundamentally political. This leads, in any case, to three related contradictions. First, the developmentalist discourse produces expectations. If it is true, as Harshe and Srinivas (2000:1887) claim, that even when the schemes fail and are criticised, there is still 'the fact that the people are willing to debate the development agenda', it means that the discourse will strike back. Chandrababu Naidu's regime may be judged by the standards it has introduced itself. The new stakeholder discourse may also help in empowering people to stake their claims.

Second is the contradiction between modern management and party building. The regime works on both – but at some point, of course, they are no longer compatible. It is only because the 'modern

management' has not trickled down far enough in the bureaucracy that both characteristics of this regime can continue to exist simultaneously. But the contradictions are emerging already. Party building involves money and the diversion of funds. In many programmes, it seems this can be contained to an acceptable level: party workers and others take a share, but there is not too much protest against this practice. In the Food for Work programme, however, the rent-seeking behaviour went out of hand. The diversions were so many and it involved so much money that it attracted the attention, not only of the opposition, but also of the media. The persistent publicity over corruption in this programme has damaged the image of the TDP regime as committed to good governance, modern management, etc.

Third, the contradiction between centralisation and participation. Policy-making is centralised, but policy implementation is supposed to be participatory. People are supposed to become 'partners in development'. But partnership requires ownership, and this requires some kind of say in processes of agenda setting and local policy design. This is not happening.

How these contradictions will develop over time is still to be awaited. There are openings for making the policy process more participatory and transparent and the government more responsive and accountable. There is a political leadership that claims to be modern, performance-oriented, in favour of participation and committed to making a difference. But given the compulsions of the electoral system as well as the rent-seeking behaviour at all levels within the bureaucracy, there are obvious limits to the changes that can be achieved by actors from within the government itself. This means it now depends to a large extent on non-state actors and their capacity to make use of the openings and take the government to task. It is in this light that empirical studies of specific policy processes in AP are potentially useful and should be encouraged. They may show windows of opportunity for an engagement from outside with the policy process in the State.

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