



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Department of Management

Public Management in the Extreme:
LSE Case Study Research on the 2019
Prayagraj Kumbh Mela Festival

Final Report

February 2021

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IN BRIEF

This report corresponds to the fourth and last milestone required by the contract signed between the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj Mela Authority (PMA). Following the templates advanced on the previous reports, we present the final four outputs of the 2019 Prayagraj Kumbh Mela (PKM) Festival case-study: two cases for teaching purposes and two research documents (and audiovisual supporting material).

1. **Teaching case 1.** A decision-forcing case, where participants are placed in a situation where their input is needed for decision-making, and then confronted to the events that actually followed.

2. **Teaching case 2.** A reverse-engineering case, where participants are confronted to the way a situation was made sense of, and a design-project to deal with it was produced.

3. **Research paper 1.** The document presents a re-documentation of the case from a public management perspective, focused on the re-discovery of the 2019 Kumbh Mela campaign as a design-project.

4. **Research paper 2.** The document presents an analysis of the case from a public management perspective, focused on the study of the 2019 Kumbh Mela campaign's management mechanisms.

5. **Diffusion and dissemination.** The research papers have been accepted for presentation in two online international conferences that will take place in 2021: the *Indian Public Policy Network Annual Conference* (Bharti Institute of Public Policy, Indian School of Business, March 26th-27th) and the *5th International Public Policy Association Conference* (Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals, July 6th-8th). The bundle for teaching materials will be ceded to the Indian Institute of Public Administration, as agreed upon with the Institute's authorities in February 2020.

None of the products presented in this document would have been possible without the invaluable support and participation of **Dr Yifei Yan** (London School of Economics and Political Science) and **MSc Shashank Tripathi** (Prayagraj Mela Authority).



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Teaching case 1

Planning the Solid-Waste Sanitation Program for India's 2019 Prayagraj Kumbh Mela

In April 2017, at the time when the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh had made it known to state officials that the 2019 pilgrimage festival in Allahabad-Prayagraj) was meant to be an upgrade of past Kumbh Melas, a special task force was formed, within Prayagraj Mela Authority, to develop new waste management strategies. The person appointed to lead the task force was Saloni Goel, a consultant to Uttar Pradesh's Health Department, as part of a World Bank-funded project to strengthen the capacity of the state's health system. Goel was an experienced professional with an impressive educational background, which included a masters' degrees from the India Institute of Technology and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The Health Department of Uttar Pradesh would have multiple roles to play in the 2019 Kumbh Mela. One role was to provide medical care on the site of the Mela through temporary medical facilities. Another was to ensure that good sanitation was provided for. As an organization staffed mainly with medical practitioners providing care to settled populations across the state, performing the sanitation role for pilgrimage festivals was distant from the core of its mission. However, the Department needed to be involved in sanitation planning for the 2019 Kumbh Mela, from an early stage. It was felt that environmental management expertise was important, as the sanitation function concerned creating capacity for managing human and solid waste generated by the Kumbh and its activities. But there were no specific expectations as to what needed to be done by June 2017, when the team started to work.

The Initial Scene

The Kumbh Mela's preparations were the responsibility of the Division Commissioner, Ashish Goel, as he was the "nodal officer" of the Mela. Sanitation was clearly a priority for his team. Part of the setting was the national government's Clean India Mission (*Swachh Bharat*), which originated in 2014, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While the original focus had been on eliminating open defecation, eradicating manual scavenging, bringing about a behavioural changes regarding sanitation practices, and augmentation of capacity in rural areas, by 2017 the Swachh Bharat Mission's scope had widened to include sanitation in urban areas, with one priority being the expansion of "modern and scientific" municipal solid waste management. Uttar Pradesh had its state-counterpart mission since its inception, and it was evident that the government of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expected the Kumbh Mela to embrace and fulfil this policy commitment.

The idea of modern and scientific municipal solid waste management contrasted with what was known to be common practice during pilgrimage festivals or other large gatherings. As the waste management team leader summarized:

[So far] the concept had been that we put some dustbins in place, though many people will litter. Workers will sweep the litter and make small piles. Then workers will pick up the garbage from the ground and put it in a handcart. The handcarts will be walked to a designated location, where the waste will be dumped. A large pile of garbage accumulates. A JCP excavation vehicle will come. The garbage is loaded onto a tractor truck and removed. This was the *best* practice. The not so good practice was to put the garbage into a heap and burn it.

In taking an interest in how solid waste would be collected and removed from the Mela site during the Kumbh Mela festival, the Divisional Commissioner requested that a demonstration of existing methods and equipment was put on by Allahabad-Prayagraj's Municipal Corporation, to help perform the sanitation function for the Kumbh Mela festival as an extension of its responsibilities to the Mela site, which is actually located outside city limits. In September 2017 the demonstration of equipment and methods was made by the city's public works department near the "Sangam", where the Ganges and Yamuna rivers meet, with the review being conducted by Ashish Goel as Divisional Commissioner, with all the other officers in attendance.

The part of the solid-waste collection and disposal process being demonstrated was the transfer of waste from vehicles used specifically in collecting garbage within the Mela site to vehicles used specifically in removing garbage from the Mela site. Such vehicle-to-vehicle transfer was not the normal practice in the city; accordingly, the equipment wasn't designed to be compatible in this respect and the workers had not practiced the transfer task. The result was that some portion of the garbage from the smaller vehicle used for collection ended up on the ground, rather than in the second larger "compactor" garbage truck that would remove solid waste from the area for disposal. To complete the task, workers on the scene collected the spillage manually and placed it into the compactor garbage truck. As the team members recalled, "The Divisional Commissioner was very unhappy. He made it absolutely clear that he didn't think the equipment and methods were an acceptable solution. [We knew we had to] try something out."

In the ensuing months, the team worked to devise a better system for solid waste collection, removal, and disposal, in collaboration with the supervisors and engineers in the public works department. They were to pilot the system's operation in January 2018, during the small-scale, Magh Mela pilgrimage festival, held in the same area where the much larger Kumbh Mela was to take place a year later. The opportunity to use the Magh Mela as a 'pilot site' for various operations to be performed during the Kumbh Mela had become clear, and the pilot was tested out in Sector 1, the geographical area nearest to the Sangam.

Coming up with a System Architecture to be Piloted

The first meeting between the consultants hired for sanitation and the staff of the municipal corporation's and engineers took place in their equipment maintenance

workshop. In line with the Divisional Commissioner's dissatisfaction with the demonstration at the Sangam, the initial problem-solving effort focused on the cross-vehicle transfer of garbage. One vehicle was a truck small enough to travel along narrow streets in the Mela area, while the other was a compactor vehicle that required wide streets to operate. The small truck was equipped with a container which could dispense its contents by mechanical lifting and tilting backwards –referred to as a hopper or tipper vehicle. The large truck incorporated a compactor system, allowing for the carriage of many tons of waste in any given sortie., The municipal staff tried to perfect the technique of aligning the vehicles to avoid spillage during the transfer, but it was not easy going. It seemed unlikely to work to the point of avoiding the need for manual clean-up of garbage that spilled from the "tipper vehicle" on to the ground, so that it would eventually be carried away.

In the team leader's words:

The way we were looking at garbage was that once it touches the ground, it never gets fully picked up. In India, if it spills, it spills, and normally nobody bothers about it. So, we came to the view that, if we are working in a comprehensive way, garbage should never touch the ground. Indeed, not only should garbage never come into contact with the ground, it shouldn't come into contact with the human hand, either.

This two-fold principle was kept in mind in the informal and formal discussions that took place over the ensuing few months, in the offices and meeting rooms of the compound that served as the Divisional Commissioner's base of operations and residence. The focus of many of such meetings was the planning of projects to perform any number of functions, such as security, land allocation, transportation, sanitation, and public communication. It was understood that most projects would involve not only some operational planning, but also procurement of infrastructure, equipment, and supplies as well as the hiring of temporary labor.

The ethos and purpose of the meetings was to come up with the best solutions – not necessarily incremental ones – along with strong business cases for the spending required in bringing them to fruition, for eventual consideration by elected and top career officials, mainly at state level, but also some attached to the national government and its national missions, such as the National Mission for Clean Ganga (Ganges). The process for judging solutions and business cases, and coordinating with counterparts at state and national level, was led by the Divisional Commissioner. He planned to host the Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary and other officials at the Magh Mela in January 2018 so that they could take their own measure of the pilot operations and to appreciate the issues and challenges involved in achieving a glorious and clean Kumbh Mela to take place in January-March 2019.

The Magh Mela 2018 Pilot

The provisory system piloted in Sector 1 combined in such a way the basic “concept” of “waste not touching the ground” could be achieved. The team intended to show the upscaling of waste management to the concept was workable within existing possibilities, and its better outcomes would become a shared criterion and benchmark for all stakeholders.

The traditional practice was to sweep garbage into heaps, and shovel them on to the big pits dug besides the sanitary lanes and/or in front of the pandals by using tractors. Later those pits were closed using soil. In a nutshell, the solid waste was simply buried within the mela area. The provisory system entailed the laying down of a grid of 100 lt drums (200 lt drums cut in two). These drums were procured by the Health department from the vendors engaged via tender process. Sanitation workers would collect the waste from the drums and load them into evacuation trucks, which would then transfer the waste to the treatment plants situated outside Prayagraj.

The New System

The final preparations for Kumbh Mela entailed a final version of the Magh Mela provisory system. This included the laying down of a denser grid of dustbins (one every 25 meters) so that they would be easily visible and available to all visitors. Dustbins were equipped with plastic bags that sanitation workers could collect and close before loading them on to the tipper trucks. Tipper trucks would transfer the waste to compacter trucks, which would then take their load to the treatment plants.

To maximize cleanliness a monitoring drill was put in place, and a bigger number of workers was assigned to the task. Biometric attendance was started to ensure sweepers came regularly for work and were present for their entire shifts. In previous Melas, workers absent from duty had become an accepted phenomenon because there was no systematic checking. Biometric controls showed limitations (sweepers were in frequent contact with water, so machines failed to read their thumb impressions), but stricter attendance control turned out to be fruitful. Their remunerations were paid directly to their accounts, avoiding delays and conflicts.

To prevent contact of garbage with the ground and people, liner bags were used. To ensure that garbage didn't spill out of the bags, ropes were initially given to the supervisors, which they were supposed to distribute to the sweepers so that they could tie the bags while removing them from the dustbins. However, that approach proved ineffective as people forgot to either distribute ropes most of the times or sweepers forgot to carry them. Hence another solution (to tie the bags with ropes to the bins) was developed.

To maximize on-site waste collection efficiency, dustbins were redesigned in conic forms, so that one truck could load more of them. After this innovation, tractors could carry 100 to 150 bins instead of just 20. Basic manual segregation and recycling was introduced for the four main kinds of waste: bottles, flowers, clothes and coconuts.

A total of 20,000 dustbins were used, about 800 for every 20 sectors. Around 2,000 dustbins were dedicated to religious organizations and their community kitchens, which were the main sources of solid waste. The practice of burying litter in the ground was

stopped.

To maximize evacuation efficiency, a detailed plan for trucks to enter and exit the Sangam area was designed. Chequered plates were used to construct temporary roads in the circulating areas and other places so that tippers vehicle could be taken to the nearest possible points. Hand carts were thus restricted only to low lying areas, especial in and around Sangam.

The newly designed system was demonstrated to the CM during a special visit of Paraygraj's Kumbh Mela preparations on December 16, 2018. He was especially happy to see that the transfer station was absolutely odourless and filthless. According to witnesses, he jokingly remarked that people could even sit and have food there. The pilot became so successful that people in other sectors later complained that why such arrangements were not done in their sectors.

Teaching case 2

Managing a Governmental Campaign for a Mega-Event: Strategic Planning for the 2019 Kumbh Mela Hindu Festival in Uttar Pradesh (A)

In March 2017, the *Bharatiya Janata* (“Indian People’s”) Party (BJP) won the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh (UP) Assembly elections and formed a new government for India’s most populous state and the world’s most populated subnational entity (approximately 250 million by 2018). The new Chief Minister (CM), Yogi (“active practitioner of Yoga”) Adityanath, was a Hindu monk, *Mahant* (“head priest”) of the Monastic order running a temple in Gorakhpur (UP), and founder-leader of a religious-political youth organization. He assumed the office of CM on March 19, 2017.

The BJP’s government of UP (2017-), as the BJP’s national government of India (2014-) displayed an ambitious, institutionally reformist agenda around the upgrading of governance. A symbolically important part of this agenda evolved around the idea of organizing the coming Hindu Festival of Kumbh Mela of Prayagraj, to be held in January-February 2019, in the best possible way.

The Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 concept

The Kumbh Mela (“great pot”) Festival or Fair is the most important regular Hindu religious event in India. For as long as sources can trace (some thirteen centuries), pilgrims gather once a year in selected riverside sacred places where the Hindu Gods are believed to have unwantedly spilled *mana* from heaven, during a legendary fight. Millions of people travel to these 50-60 days gatherings, being the state governments responsible for the organization of the events.

Kumbh Melas of Allahabad (since 2018 renamed Prayagraj) have always been the most attended Melas in India, and quite probably the most attended religious meetings on Earth. The last big festival, in 2013 was attended by an estimated 100-120 million people, and was the object of careful logistical preparations ensuring a clean, safe and satisfying stay for visitors. These preparations included local infrastructure upgrade and special planning and coordination of security and sanitation in and around the Triveni Sangam grounds, the 20 square kilometres area where the most important parts of the event take place. Although the 2013 event was praised by most visitors, many administrative and logistical challenges remained, regarding adequate infrastructure for the large quantity of visitors, crowd management and the prevention of accidents, and cleanliness of the festival grounds and the river waters.

The political vision of UP’s Government for Prayagraj Kumbh Mela (PKM) 2019 was to run a “Great Kumbh”. The festival had to be open and welcoming of all Indians,

regardless of cast, gender and age. It had to be especially attractive to the young. And it had to show better governance could be achieved in India's biggest state. The vision coalesced into a sticky slogan for the 2019 festival: a *Swachh* (clean) Kumbh, a *Divya* (divine) Kumbh and a *Bhavya* (great) Kumbh.

UP's Government initiative aligned well with the Indian national scene. The 2014 election had brought BJP's Narendra Modi to power as Prime Minister. The campaign pivoted on the need for rapid development through institutional change, as his "victory tweet" expressed: "*Bharat ki vijay, acche din aane wale hai*" ("India has won, good times are about to arrive").

A centrepiece of Modi's government was the creation, in December 2014, of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog "Policy commission"), which replaced the long-standing classical top-down, normative-indicative Planning Commission (1950) and its Five-Year Plans. NITI Aayog provided intellectual support to nation-wide social transformation *abhiyaan* ("campaigns" or "missions"). Transformation through governance and behavioural change, as well as through planning and management strategies capable of effectively coordinating Ministries' action through pivotal campaigns. This was particularly the case for *Swachh Bharat* ("Clean India", 2014-2025) and *Nanami Ganga* ("Clean Ganges", 2014-2022).

The *Swachh Bharat* Mission was presented by Narendra Modi with words chosen to reflect Mahatma Gandhi's (*satyagrah*, loosely translated "the force of truth"): *Satyagrah se Swachhagrah* (loosely translated "cleanliness is moving towards the truth"). Clean India was to eliminate "open defecation" (the human practice of defecating in the open - fields, bushes, forests or other open spaces - rather than into a toilet), and to improve solid waste management, eradicating "manual scavenging" (hand manipulation of waste) in urban and rural areas. This was to be achieved through a kind of behavioural change facilitated by monetary incentives, volunteer work (*Swachhagrahis*, "Ambassadors of cleanliness"), and sanitation infrastructure development. The campaign received technical and financial support from the World Bank, and required to scale-up coordination between Ministries, States, Divisions and Districts. The main goal was to achieve an "open-defecation free" India by October 2, 2019, the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth.

The *Nanami Gange* Mission was intended to "abate pollution" and promote "conservation and rejuvenation" of the Ganges River Basin, covering an area distributed in 8 Indian States and inhabited by between a fifth and a quarter of India's 1,300 million citizens (2018 figures). Clean Ganges's main project lines were aimed at identifying "pollution hotspots" (crucial source areas); intercept, divert and/or treat waste water (including industry shutdowns, if necessary); and clean the river surface and coastlines.

The Organization of the Campaign for PKM 2019

After Independence in 1947, India's National- and State-level governments were

broadly modelled on the British Westminster-Whitehall governmental system. Governments are formed based on parliamentary composition: at the state-level, the head of government is the Chief Minister. Cabinet government includes ministers appointed by the Chief Minister. In the Whitehall pattern, the government is supported by a civil service, headed at the state level by the Chief Secretary, appointed by the Chief Minister. The civil service is composed of many branches, some of which are functionally specialized (for example, in policing). The Indian Administrative Service is a branch that provides an outsized of top officials. Their career track includes many years as the representative of the state government within territorial jurisdictions within states.

Indian States are divided in Districts. A number of districts comprise a Division (for administrative purpose), and is managed by UP government appointed "Commissioners". The role of Commissioners (normally senior IAS officers) is to supervise state activities in the territory, from land use, to planning, coordination and control of services and special projects. Districts have politically elected Mayors who preside (with limited powers) Councils or local governments (the most populated districts like Allahabad having Municipal Corporations). The Districts' administrations are managed by (mostly junior) IAS District Managers, also called "Collectors". IAS, IFS or IPS officers manage their sector related agencies (among them development and police).

PKM 2019 was to be organized by the Allahabad-Prayagraj Division Commissioner. The person invited to occupy this pivotal position was a senior IAS officer, Ashish Kumar Goel. He knew the Melas relatively well, as he had occupied the position of Allahabad District Magistrate/Collector in 2007-08 and had the opportunity to organize the Magh Mela, a much smaller version of Kumbh Mela. He was also part of team for the Kumbh Mela 1998 in Haridwar (now in Uttarakand) as Joint Magistrate, and had seen the Kumbh Mela 2013 in Allahabad closely.

Goel was serving in Lucknow (UP State capital city) and was directly transmitted the goals and conditions of the invitation. He was to produce an unmistakably great festival in all possible senses. He knew how some of the best Indian administrators had been historically at pains to control all the variables for a "no issues" Mela, and had a fair idea of what needed to be done. Success depended on developing costly infrastructure for the host city; controlling upstream river pollution in one of the most densely populated areas of UP and India; and building, managing and dismounting the temporary city in the time-span of little over three months – where the Triveni Sangam and adjacent areas are liberated from flooding.

Goel was assured he would have as much high support as possible. The national-state political alignment would make full financial support easier (though not necessarily simpler) to secure. A generous UP special budget was to be ear-marked for the campaign, and the National Government's involvement was to be stronger, both through direct financial contributions, and through facilitating key national agencies' and missions' cooperation to deliver infrastructure projects, human resources and technical support. Goel

was invited to ask what he needed for PKM 2019 as soon as possible, as the time “stringent constraint”, all agreed, was the most important independent variable.

Managing a Governmental Campaign for a Mega-Event: Strategic Planning for the 2019 Kumbh Mela Hindu Festival in Uttar Pradesh (B)

In the first days of April 2017, Goel presented to the UP government a short list of key aspects that he considered crucial to achieve the PM-CM intent on PKM 2019. To optimize cleanliness in the event, he requested full government support for water pollution control, and called the attention to the need of special efforts and funding for waste management. To achieve efficiency and speed for the preparation process, he requested “untied funds” for technological innovation and experts hiring, as well as a “dedicated cell” placed directly under the CM office to support the budget process, and fast appointment of key collaborators. To guarantee governance and enhanced transparency, he requested to create a professional third-party monitoring system and authorization to thoroughly document all operations. Finally, on considerations on how to appropriate and use recent technological change, he requested to create a smart monitoring system of works and labour, based on geo-tagging and biometrics.

Goel was appointed Division Commissioner (DC) of Allahabad (soon Prayagraj) on April 14, 2017, little less than a month after Adityanath had become the CM of UP. He took office in April 21, in a ceremony in which the CM publicly announced his vision of a “Divya Kumbh, Bhavya Kumbh”. Quickly, a “situation room”, austere but equipped with all things necessary, was built. In an interview granted later for the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) report team, Goel specified: “With the sole aim to enhance pilgrim experience, the Kumbh 2019 vision rested on five key pillars: Inclusion of all sections of the society, improved quality of services and new cultural/spiritual experience, aesthetically coherent and pleasing Mela, use of digital technology as an enabler to further planning goals and overall efficiency improvement, and finally, creation of a worthwhile legacy for future Kumbhs”.

The new DC’s first move was to form his Team and meet representatives and experts of all areas related to the project in Delhi, Lucknow and Prayagraj, and thoroughly review impressions, diagnostics, grievances, expectations, needs and suggestions. By June 2017 this process had led to the elaboration of what the Team Kumbh 2019 called “the wish-list”. The wish-list was presented to the CM and the new High Committee, relabelled “Apex Committee”, was constituted in Lucknow in May. Most aspects were agreed upon, including key collaborators names. A resulting “check-list” reduced the project’s front end “fuzziness”, although many of the specificities, as well as some new important ideas, would evolve later. From the perspective of the DC’s expert team, this check-list condensed the means to achieve the purposes of two overarching programs: the transformation of Prayagraj’s infrastructure, and the delivery of “the greatest Kumbh ever”.

The first program included a strategy for UP government’s ambitious reshaping of the 5+ million people urban area of Prayagraj (as estimated for 2017) into a 20+ million people “smart” host city (as calculated for peak days for the city’s development master plan). This was to be done “conveying a positive message of government”. The city transformation “final” plan included an almost complete redevelopment for access (airport, railway station, roads, parking areas), circulation (road grid, traffic flow, pedestrian “friendliness”), security (rapid deployment of specialized disaster and emergency teams), and servicing (water, sanitation, police and health facilities, as well as commercial areas). A redevelopment of that size, in the available time-span, would require both major financial commitments, and substantial administrative adaptations, both of them only possible with strong political back-up.

The second program included providing “the greatest Kumbh ever”, which meant “delivering an experience” to visitors and showcasing governance. It was expected (and desired) that the event hosted a larger turnout than in 2013, considering the growth in Indian citizens’ mobility and interest, and communication campaigns dedicated to entice the non-religious public with targeted messages. The turnout was naturally impossible to calculate with precision, but it was thought to double 2013 numbers, with roughly 200 million visitors. A “picky” event had to be delivered with no “harm” or “mishap”, be “welcoming”, and generate the best possible impression in the public opinion. Together with safety and services upgrading, festival cleanliness was seen as the most challenging aspect, as it entailed a delicate combination of social nudging and sensitive management for behavioural change.

DC’s team retrospective schematization of the two overarching programs



Source: *Prayagraj Kumbh 2019. Introspecting the management and administration of the world's largest congregation of humans*. Delhi, Ernst & Young, 2020.

The newly appointed DC started by putting together and empowering a “core team” of close collaborators, some of them in key official positions, some contracted as experts

for the campaign. The Core Team was to become the task force interacting with national, state and local authorities. Although it had no formally defined boundaries, it comprised the two Districts' Magistrates (Prayagraj and the Mela temporary district) and their closest collaborators. The number of full-time contracted experts was small, and belonged to a well-known international business management consultancy firm that won the open bid: Ernst & Young. With the help of his Core Team, the DC began a series of "iterative" interactions with higher and local authorities, as well as with experts from private and public reputed institutions, to further define the multi-project campaign. Of these first iterations the "front end" of the project came to be.

By June the "final" project was presented to the Apex Committee: a complex articulation of subprojects regarding Prayagraj infrastructural transformation and the PKM 2019 preparation. According to the testimonies of various participants, the presentation convincingly dramatized both the DC's style of leadership and the confidence on how only the total completion of them could ultimately bring about a substantially better festival.

Managing a Governmental Campaign for a Mega-Event: Strategic Planning for the 2019 Kumbh Mela Hindu Festival in Uttar Pradesh: (Sequel)

Territory-wise, Prayagraj required a full-fledged commercial airport (it was using Air Force infrastructure earlier), new train stations and capacity enhancement of existing ones; enlarged and upgraded access routes; a highway system with fly-overs and underpasses; a thorough conceptual and physical redesign of the city circulation grid; an almost new electricity line and transforming platforms complex, and a wide-as-possible "beautification" of the city proper. As it was stated that visitors would need to walk for a maximum of 5 km to reach the Mela area, this meant larger parking areas in densely used terrain. The Sangam confluence needed a dramatic number of upstream drain and *nalas* (minor water courses) cancellations or treatment facilities, as well as sewerage plants interventions. The prepared *ghats* (bathing riversides) needed to be extended to almost twice their existing length, to better distribute user pressure. Clean Ganges support would be used to design a new network of sewer lines for the city. The temporary district, finally, needed to be significantly enlarged (an estimated 35% relative to 2013), taking the total area to a surface of 3,200 hectares or 32 square kilometers, which required complex negotiations with local communities. Finally, the new version of the "tent city" and its servicing required smart and sensitive plot allocation, in adequation to religious organization's expectations, and to avoid usual conflicts.

The program of preparations for the festival itself reflected the way in which the upgrade relative to 2013 was expected to be brought about. Centralized control for crowd management and service delivery would be centralized by a smart-city styled Command and Control Centre, armed with real-time specifically developed and adapted monitoring technology, manned by a 24/7 human team, and fed with a widespread CCTV grid and

digitalized information coming from facilities and field teams. Security and disaster prevention and management would be granted by planning through a scenario-failsafe “multi-tiered” program, developed with the help of UP Police, Indian Army and special branches of Indian Defence departments. A “No Batons, Whistle and Ropes” policy would effectuate the visitor-friendly new safety vision intended for the event. This entailed capacity-development for the roughly 50,000 police force to be deployed.

DC's team retrospective schematization of the campaign



Source: Prayagraj Kumbh 2019. Introspecting the management and administration of the world's largest congregation of humans. Delhi, Ernst & Young, 2020.

To enhance the Prayagraj and Mela area hosting capabilities, regulations for traffic, vending, camping and religious activity would ensure an adequate equilibrium between logistical arrangements, stakeholder expectations and visitors' needs. A “visitor and tourist” oriented campaign would develop symbols and thematic attraction for the festival, as well of strategic embellishments of the host city. Two key aspects of this were to be the “Paint my City” campaign, providing means to special teams to design and paint images and messages in visible walls; and a negotiation with the Indian Army to temporarily open public visitation of a revered Hindu relic tree, theretofore only open to limited religious access.

For timely procurement, acquisitions and delivery of services, e-tendering and payment technologies and protocols would be adapted to effectuate time-efficiency procurement and subcontracting. The experience showed that classical monopolistic procurement needed to be avoided. Labour negotiations and agreements would prevent the much-feared vendor bottlenecks and workers strikes that could endanger the delicate time-limited activities. The entire operations complex would be given visibility and transparency through an Online Project Monitoring System. The campaign would also take steps into “managing its legacy”. A commitment to open government and thorough documentation would ensure the experience could outlive the festival.

Waste management was clearly seen and presented as the crucial domain in which PKM 2019 had to make the difference. The concept and vision, arising from iterations with Clean India and the India's World bank office, were to develop a “no manual handling” and

“rapid evacuation” process, allowing “no ground contact”, and “no odour, no flies” outcomes. This strategy had to be developed, planned, programmed and managed by a separately formed, specially prepared team, working in strategic alliance with UP and local health and sanitation authorities. It was presumed the effort would require a field team “as large as possible” with “as least financial impact as possible” on the final budget.

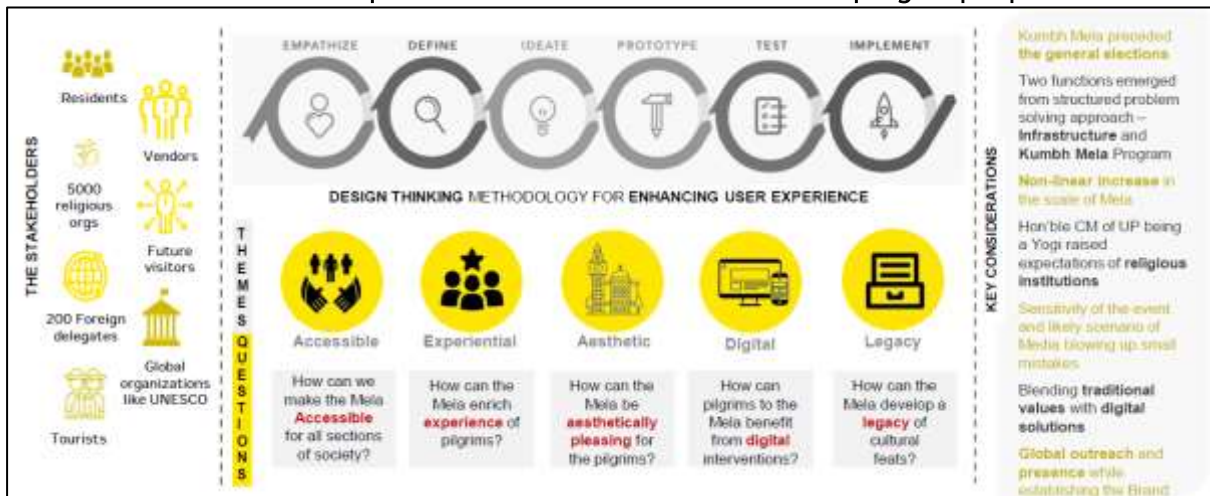
The second most important move of the campaign was to put to work the Division-based entity agreed with the UP government, the *Prayagraj Mela Pradhikaran* (“Authority”) (from hereon: PMA), as well as the agreed independent auditing structure capable of monitoring it. The new organization was to be the main base for negotiating, defining, designing, planning and monitoring the numerous projects the campaign needed to engage. From the very beginning PMA had to work, in the words of a CoreTeam member, with “minimum capital, and awareness of each department’s unique strengths and weaknesses”, strategically “phasing” preparations, while granting the DC a clear-to-all “unity of command”.

The Prayagraj Mela Authority Act, approved in December 2017, had relabelled the events “Kumbh” and recognized PMA as a “body corporate” within the renamed Prayagraj Division, with the DC as the Chairperson, and the Temporary District’s Inspector General of Police and Magistrate as Vice-Chairpersons. The Mela Adhikari/Magistrate would be the “Chief Executive Officer” of PMA, and would be appointed by the State Government for each Mela. The members of PMA would be the officers-in-charge of all related agencies, namely, the Prayagraj Development Authority, Municipal Corporation, City Transport Services, Medical Department, Water, Irrigation, Power Corporation, Cantonment Board, and Ganga Pollution Control Board. Other members would be the Allahabad and the Kumbh Mela Senior Superintendents of the Police, one representative of the Army, and three eminent persons nominated by the State Government.

On December 20, the Mela Adhikari, the temporary District Magistrate (DM), as well as most officers within PMA, were appointed. The new DM, Vijay Kiran Anand, became the most important collaborator of the DC, and a second-in-command pivotal node to deal with PMA, UP and national authorities. Vijay Anand was a junior IAS officer (born in 1979, IAS since 2009), but had served as District Magistrate in seven different UP districts from 2013 to 2017; and as part of the UP government dedicated office to the Clean India Mission in 2016-2017.

Throughout 2018, the DC and his core team proposed, PMA discussed, and the multi-sector multi-layered campaign organization developed the roughly 200 specific subprojects involving the permanent city area transformation, as well as the temporary city pre-arrangements. No significant outsourcing was contemplated. The general spirit was to “make the existing system work” following the way the DC operationalized his received mandate. The task, at first sight, involved a peculiar combination of sequential-parallel interventions within an existing space (the Prayagraj area), and plans for the yet-to-be-actually-available space (the Triveni Sangam area). Interventions and plans needed to follow “iterative interactions” with a large number of public organizations and stakeholders.

DC's team retrospective schematization of the campaign's purposes



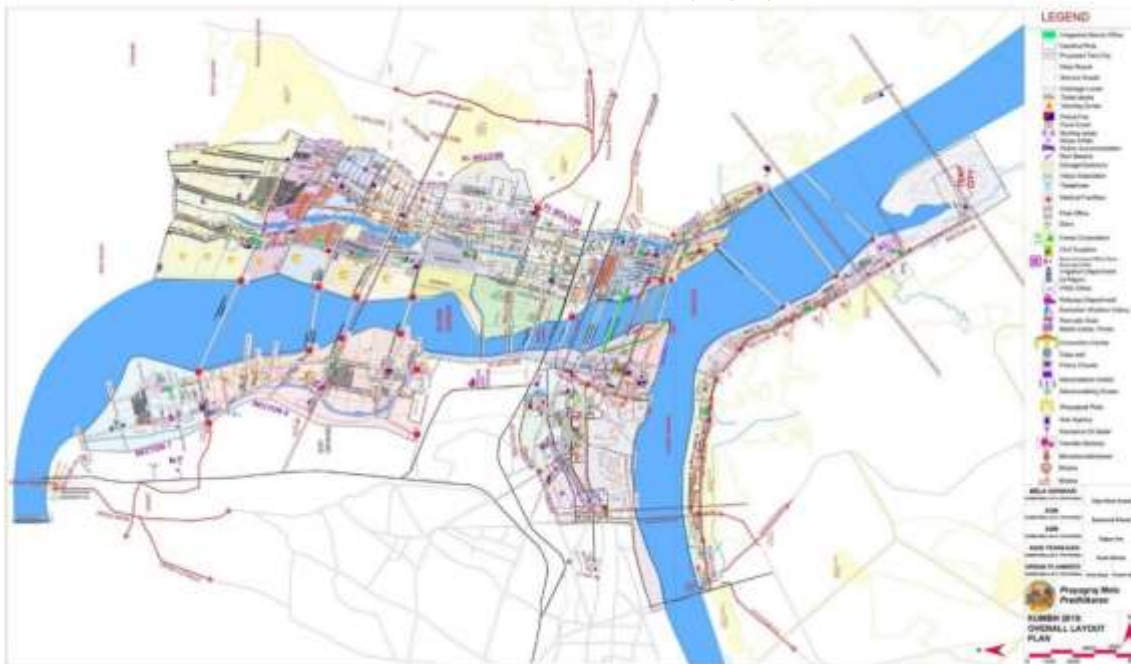
Source: Prayagraj Kumbh 2019. Introspecting the management and administration of the world's largest congregation of humans. Delhi, Ernst & Young, 2020.

These interactions needed not only to guarantee coordination of adequately sequential or parallel interventions between numerous agencies (28 at the state level, 4 at the national level) doing very different things (railways, defence, power, sanitation, conservation, health, and the municipal corporation services and public works). They also needed to “gently trod” on existing practices and traditions, avoiding institutional path dependency and professional inertias. Last but not least, they needed to “play” in different avenues of protocol at the same time to gather the right speed for each subproject. All of this had to be done under the supervision of 30 resident professionals forming the independent control team, and what was expected to be an attentive judiciary and press. A loose analogy could associate the tempo required to the complex indicators and controls that are managed by the commanding astronaut of a space vehicle in the critical time-span of a launch phase, but with no Cape Canaveral control as back up, and an imprecise idea of the outer atmosphere environment.

For example, to guarantee access, connectivity and circulation, while upgrading infrastructure, an important number of roads (and all the main ones) had to be widened and strengthened. The same space had to be used, at the same time, for the laying out of new sewerage lines, while footpaths had to be built on the sewerage covers. This had to be done avoiding the removal of trees when possible, thus respecting the new “green belt” plan for the city. In the same space, fibre optic lines needed to be laid, while existing electricity lines and platforms had to be elevated to poles to avert electrocution dangers. As the roadwork advanced into the city, roundabouts needed to be built on key traffic junctions generating periodic congestion. Specially designed sculptures, of varying size, shape and heights, had to be placed in the middle of the new roundabouts. At the same time, important front portions of the buildings in the selected roads, needed to be demolished, and sometimes their occupiers relocated. If one of the subprojects required to operationalize these public works was subject to delay, because of usual financial matters, protocol consideration, stakeholder negotiations, or shifts in requirements, all other subprojects needed to be

rescaled and re-planned, so as to allow the “whole” to move on.

The festival area in Prayagraj



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Kumbh2019/photos/a.268142786930319/565167843894477/?type=3>.

Frequency of personal meetings and dramatization seem to have produced what the Core Team called a “delicate equilibrium between hard and soft authority”, as well as a strong-as-possible sense of “togetherness” and “ownership” to facilitate the escalation of commitment. While scheduled weekly meetings were conducted with all state departments active at the Division and local levels in PMA, monthly meetings were conducted with central government departments by the core team, regular meetings were needed with stakeholders, and daily meetings needed to be undertaken by the team. In all, the “grandeur of the mela” (in the terms of the core team) needed to be constantly underlined to all departments and individuals involved, so as to gather an adequate tempo-quality relation.

The CM’s style of political leadership coincided well with the situation. The CM, in practice, concerned himself directly, frequently visiting the area to receive direct insight on preparations, and he facilitated the running of the upper-layer Apex committee and state departments. But he avoided micro-management, in spite of the high expectations and political sensitivity around the project, timely backing the DC’s strategies at the state level, and allowing unity of command to flow from below. As he told the research team, he “ensured there was no political interference so that everything went fine”.

Within these organizational context and dynamics, the project managed the Prayagraj zone transformation and the festival preparations showing some interesting patterns, for a public management perspective. Overall, a “learning curve” of “fast problem assessment – educated evolving solution” seems to have been essential to combine subprojects planning and phasing, multi-level and multi-sector negotiations, flexible processes, intensive technology innovation and commitment escalation through

dramatization. Among the patterns identifiable in this “fast problem assessment - evolving solution” sequences, some seem to have provided support for *all* the activities that needed to be undertaken. They were consciously embraced by the team, and validated by their results time and again during the campaign.

1) *Real planning*: Subprojects were prepared with a “no-bullshit” approach (realistic situational assessments and goals), and were effectively used as roadmaps (frameworks for local discretion and sources of indication). An example of this was the “Comprehensive Mobility Plan”, developed and ran with the help of the National Ministry of Transport, that delivered a detailed program for all major traffic movement, including traffic diversion scenarios. Key aspects of this Plan were urban planners’ suggestions on zoning, differentiating the treatment of peak and non-peak days, and the creation of self-sufficient, fenced parking lots, complete with basic infrastructure and amenities.

2) *Scenario-wise phasing*: Subprojects own “tempos” needed to be interlaced in such a way “stop-and-go” situations in one subproject would not threaten the master project’s overall speed. This was done with all major infrastructure subprojects, many of which completion processes were requirements for the starting of other subprojects (as referred above for road works, sanitation and power), and all of which had different institutional frameworks and protocols, and required separate negotiations and follow-up.

3) *Flexible-yet-protocolized processes*: For all subprojects, an “ad hoc process for project approval” (in terms of the stakeholders) was undertaken. “In principle approvals” from the upper layers were accepted as “green light” for initiation, trusting local discretion to provide proof of protocol respect downstream. E-tendering, open from August 2018, gave public transparency to the ad hoc process, to ensure it was not just “protocol pushing”. As an important administrative stakeholder pointed out, “we felt another procedure was needed, but (with) no alterations to control”. This approach was used in most procurement and acquisition processes. It was useful to deal with markets (vendors) that needed to be shaped to the circumstance, both in specifications, quality and scale. The two most important examples of this were the way the tentage and the toilets for the temporary city and Mela area were procured.

4) *Standardisation as tool for conflict management*: Offering standard services and procedures broke with particularistic and clientelist practices prevalent in previous festivals. This approach was useful to break with the monopolistic practices of vendors, as well as to manage the extremely sensitive particularistic expectations of religious organizations in the allotment of space. Particularly, the computerised layout and plot allotment system, as well as the standardization of facilities for all the plots (same size and quality tents, 24/7 water and electricity, easy access) helped to reduce conflict with religious organizations and clashes between them.

5) *Technology-sensitive ingenuity*: There was a constant, omnipresent search for how technology (particularly digitalized information and communication systems) could be

appropriated and adapted to help solve organizational problems. In the terms of the participants, it was not about buying “gadgets”, but getting expert help to choose and combine available devices in crucial new ways. The most impressive example of this was the deployment of specially redesigned (re-engineered from existing models) toilets, equipped with real-time digitalized indicators that facilitated the monitoring process and allowed the sanitation team to clean them with little dead time.

6) *Dramatization*: “Ownership” of the event needed to be created among stakeholders within and around the public organizations administrating the event, both to speed up subprojects and to run the festival. At least two dramatization strategies evolved during the preparation process: a “togetherness” treatment of the upper layer officials; and a horizontal, respectful treatment of human resources at all levels, particularly the field workforce. “Endorsing local discretion”, as a member of the core team put it, was found to be essential. The first required a sustained effort to underline the collective character of the enterprise (incumbents and opposition, politicians and administrators). The second reflected in an impressively distinct treatment of staff, and sanitation workers in particular, something that went against established discriminatory practices in Indian society.

The early 2018 lower turnout version of the festival (Magh Mela) presented the opportunity for a pilot experience, and showed the “evolving solution” approach in development and action. There were approximately 8 million visitors. The experience was a particularly useful occasion to test safety arrangements and waste management. Viewed from the perspective of the core team, the “pilot” became a tipping point, providing a measure of what was still needed to wrap up in the Prayagraj zone transformation, as well as new insight on a number of issues for the festival running that, if solved, could prove key for the desired Kumbh Mela upgrade relative to 2013. It also provided some reassurance that preparations were headed in the right direction.

The “pilot” was also fertile in providing new ideas for stakeholder management, from the treatment of VIPs to the negotiations with religious organizations. It also highlighted the need to innovate for the retention of persons working in the Mela, considering stringent timelines and long working hours. Safety, well-being and personal treatment of workers had to be specifically targeted. The Magh Mela also helped to better understand the possibilities and threats of communication through social media, given the rising importance of this “arena” of public opinion. As a collaborator put it, social media needed to be “pushed”, so as not to work in “reaction mode”. The communication team thus needed to become an “influencer”. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the pilot experience was a key opportunity to identify final issues around cleanliness. With the input provided by the pilot experience, the final waste management “master plan” evolved.

The second half of 2018 corresponded to the deployment of all final infrastructure arrangements and festival management plans, final budgeting, procurement solutions for the waste management plans, and stakeholder management for the religious organizations involved. Particularly important was the finding of crucial financial support from national

programs (amounting to 50% of the estimated final cost), which was dealt with by a string of visits of the DM to Delhi and Lucknow, and a round of negotiations with national and state authorities by the DC and the DM.

As 2019 approached, three elements added pressure to the preparations and their management: the better-than-expected success of the Magh Mela, the Varanasi “flyover incident”, and the calculations on the dates the rivers would liberate the Mela area. The turnout and public satisfaction on the Magh Mela raised the possibility of a Kumbh Mela with more visitors than the most optimistic expectations. The “Varanasi flyover incident” put pressure on safety arrangements. On May 15, 2018 a portion of an under-construction flyover in the PM’s constituency collapsed, crushing vehicles and killing 15-20 people. The flyover was being built by the Uttar Pradesh State Bridge Corporation Ltd., the same agency in charge of Prayagraj’s flyovers and underpasses. Last, but not least, as Autumn fell on the river plain, experts signalled that the workability of the Mela area was going to come at least two weeks later than expected. Preparations needed to be made for an even more reduced time-span.

The Prayagraj Kumbh Mela project’s outcomes

Between January 15 and March 4, 2019, an estimated 240 million people attended the Kumbh Mela. The six peak days gathered, approximately, above 20 million (on days 1, 5 and 6), above 30 million (on days 2 and 4), and above 50 million (on day 3, *Mauni Amavasya*, February 2, 2019). Although the turnout was way over the two-fold 2013 expected, the festival rolled with no significant issues, and received wide praise as an impressive experience by the vast majority of visitors. Everybody coincided it was the cleanest festival ever, and substantially cleaner than most visitors expected. Even more impressively, visitors’ collaboration was apparent in everything related to safety and cleanliness. As a high political stakeholder observed, “cleanliness took people by surprise, and that made them happy”. On February 22, during his visit to the festival, PM Modi took a dip; and, in a situation that, according to well-informed participants, was off-protocol and program, he washed the feet of sanitation workers, adding he “would carry the memory of washing the feet of safaai karamcharis life-long”.

The final bill was almost exactly five times bigger than the 2013 Kumbh Mela, at constant prices. Approximately two-thirds were absorbed by infrastructure development. Although there was heavy scrutiny, no significant observations were made to the budgeting and spending procedures utilized.

In the Indian General Elections of 2019, 615 million people voted. They were won by the incumbent BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), with 31% (BJP) and 37% (NDA) of the cast vote, representing a 6% increase relative to the 2014 elections, and thus achieving majority at the Lokh Sabha. Of all 543 seats, 303 went to the BJP, totalling 353 for the NDA. In UP, the BJP and the NDA got 49.98% and 51.13% of the total 86.5 million votes, a 7% relative increase, and 64 of the 80 seats in UP’s Assembly.

The complex “governance structure”, as the Core Team put it, had worked better than expected. Almost immediately, talks with the authorities preparing the coming Haridwar Kumbh Mela spoke of the Prayagraj model as a successful precedent to be used.

The Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) had been requested by PMA (see above) to assist to the event and elaborate a report on its management. The thorough final document (Ramesh, G; Tripathi, Ritu and Raj, Prateek: *Prayagraj Kumbh 2019. An integrative assessment*, IIMB Bangalore, 2020) pointed to a number of domains explaining what they called an “organizational breakthrough”. It highlighted (1) how the open and adaptive structure of PMA – public agencies – Apex committee, hinged in the DC, contrasted with India’s routinized bureaucratic functioning; (2) how motivational drivers of the administrators and workers were generated and sustained to produce a highly effective working environment; (3) how the placing of emphasis in “user experience” instead of “service delivery” gave way to a particularly impressive cooperative result; (4) how technology adoption multiplied possibilities of effectiveness and efficiency; and (5) and how innovative government-public interfaces worked for stakeholders and visitors, generating “self-emerging” systems.

The two field surveys conducted by the IIMB team after the start, and into the festival, showed notorious approval of visitors. In the first one, all facilities were rated quite positively, with the three most notable services being safety, hygiene, and *ghats* arrangements. In the second one, safety, hygiene, sanitation facilities, *ghats* arrangements, and electricity and lighting were noted as the most approved features of the event.

In relation to the Waste Management campaign, the IIMB team found that the general public appreciated the availability of the facilities and cleanliness of the place, and adapted well to the situation. Surveying several areas, from the railways station to the Sangam, all places were “on the whole” clear of garbage and defecation. The overall majority of toilets were quite well maintained, and only minor soiling and facilities issues were spotted. The only remarkable shortfall seems to have been too much garbage accumulated and awaiting treatment in landfill areas and treatment plants, in the last step of the waste management process, and the only phase actually outside the team responsibility.

In the words of NITI Aayog, “the success of the Mela can be largely attributed to the strong political will, effective coordination of the various Central and State agencies and the motivation of the stakeholders to serve. Crowd Management has been a major challenge for the organizers of events of such a massive dimension and magnitude, which, however, the Govt. of Uttar Pradesh addressed through infusion of new technologies (...) and innovative management tools for crowd regulation. Notably, business models drawing private participation were introduced and successfully implemented. These efforts resulted in vastly improved service delivery to the pilgrims, a hassle-free maneuverability in and around the Mela area, a safe access, a secure environment, leaving a learning experience

etc. The Mela was successful in boosting economic activity including trade and commerce, projecting our national image and tourism as well as local employment generation. The Mela was also successful in showcasing the grandeur that is India, to the world, besides demonstrating the organizational skills of the State Government. The practices/strategies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) adopted in the Mela deserve to be shared with other States/UTs for replicating while organizing such large-scale events”.

What was the opinion of the very team? In July-August 2020, the experts in the core team presented the results of an “internal” exercise to assess the performance of the campaign’s management. The exercise transpired overall satisfaction with the way the “six administrative/managerial tasks” were undertaken: project organizing, communication with stakeholders, budgeting & financial management, acquisition & procurement, controlling & auditing, and training & development. All “functions”, as they were called, were found to have met their objectives.

Among “what went right”, the assessment highlighted planning in advance; frequent bottom-top and bottom-bottom interaction; clever communication; smart territory allotment; creative technological development; stakeholder “open door” involvement, coordination and dispute settlements; “hassle-free” management of security; effective budget estimation and financial management; market research and timely procurement; regular double-checks and verification; systematic training through mock drills and “pilgrim sensitivity”; effective auditing; and thorough documentation.

Among “what could be done better next time”, the assessment pointed mostly to “more of the same”: more coordination with local authorities; more integration between the area layout plan and the plot allotment system; better focused and multilingual communication; larger scale transportation facilities; earlier budgeting; earlier land acquisition settlements; more toilets and quicker disposal; on-site waste segregation; faster procurement; enhanced third party control; and earlier starting training.

All the UP authorities interviewed by the LSE team expressed remarkable satisfaction with the PKM 2019 project, and high regard for the responsible officers, particularly the DC and the DM. DC Ashish Goel was “released” (IAS vocabulary) from the post of Prayagraj DC on March 13, 2020, to be appointed as Joint Secretary for Rural Development at the Government of India. Such a transition is generally regarded, in the Indian Public Administration, as a consequence of successful service. DM Vijay Kiran Anand was promoted to Special Secretary, at the Basic Education Department of UP, on July 5, 2019, a key department of the State Administration and, coincidentally, the position Ashish Goel had before becoming the Prayagraj’s DC.

Research Paper 1

Re-discovering the design-project for the Indian Kumbh Mela 2019 festival campaign

Introduction

Starting in 2017, India's Uttar Pradesh (UP) state government, working with national and civil society partners, prepared to host an age-old religious and cultural "mela" festival, centered on ritual bathing by the Hindu faithful, for a period of weeks in early 2019. The festival's locale, per tradition, was alongside the point of confluence between India's great Yamuna and Ganges rivers, on the outskirts of one of the state's most populous cities, Allahabad (renamed Prayagraj since October 2018). The 2019 mela was envisioned by the state government to be a "Kumbh Mela" of no less (and indeed greater) scale and significance than any previous mela in UP or elsewhere in India. As such, in April 2017, the state's Chief Minister commissioned state officials to prepare for the Kumbh Mela (KM, also referred to as the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela or PKM in subsequent texts), just weeks after his political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), won the state election.

Preparations for the PKM involved performing multiple governmental (technical) functions, including urban infrastructure provision, transportation planning, sanitation, health, and policing. It also involved performing the governmental (administrative) functions of organizing, staffing, project planning, budgeting, procurement, and coordination. In performing these many interdependent functions, state officials were guided by the Chief Minister's call for the PKM to attract better-off segments of both India's society and its diaspora, who had tended to avoid mixing with the masses who typically attended mela festivals in very large numbers.

Relatedly, preparations for hosting the festival were guided by the specific intent that the PKM be free from stampedes, drownings, other accidents, disease outbreaks, pollution, and people going missing. Reflecting the elected state (and national) leadership's orientation, preparations were further directed toward remediating the environmentally degraded Ganges river, de-normalizing open-air defecation, and enhancing the welfare of migrant workers.

The festival officially kicked-off in January 15, 2019. Over the course of nearly 50 days (between January 15 and March 4, 2019), an estimated 240 million people attended the Kumbh Mela. The six peak days gathered, approximately, above 20 million (on days 1, 5 and 6), above 30 million (on days 2 and 4), and above 50 million (on day 3, *Mauni Amavasya*, February 2, 2019). After it had wrapped up, the officials who had carried the responsibility for the PKM were greatly relieved that its inherently severe risks had been effectively mitigated: neither stampedes, nor drownings, nor disease outbreaks transpired. Considering the undertaking's scale, and its inherently risky nature, the PKM's hosts – political leaders

and public officials, alike – were understandably proud of what had been accomplished.

As an undertaking, the KM was unusual for public administration in India and, surely, further afield. Notwithstanding its atypicality, the PKM suits being researched, not just as a study of a unique undertaking, but as an instrumental case study of public administration in action. Studying the PKM is specifically a means to furnish knowledge about *conducting public campaigns*, that is, time-limited public undertakings that proceed from their preparation stage to their execution stage, and then brought to an end. Accordingly, the broad aim of this instrumental case study is to furnish professional practitioners with *usable knowledge about preparing public campaigns*.

Research intended to furnish such professional knowledge sensibly follows the intellectual doctrine that public campaigns should be analyzed as working phenomena, akin to technological undertakings. Research on working phenomena in public administration borrows from other professional fields in designating functions that are to be performed in every such undertaking. Accordingly, a guiding principle of this case study research project is to seek to understand how the technical and administrative functions performed during PKM's preparation stage worked toward fulfilling this specific public campaign's intent. The term used to designate case studies like the present one – seeking usable knowledge about public undertakings – is *design-focused case study* (Barzelay, 2019: pp. 134-135 and chapter 6).

Following a heuristic approach to research design for such case studies, this paper offers a redocumentation of the case and a re-discovery of its design-project. In the first part, the most important aspects of PKM 2019 as a Public Management design-oriented case study are presented. In the second part, PKM 2019 is re-discovered as the design-project for a public campaign needing to achieve tempo, coordination and effectiveness.

1. The Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019

1.1. *Mela festivals in India and in Allahabad/Prayagraj*

Kumbh melas are the most iconic, regularly held Hindu religious events in contemporary India. Tens of millions of people gather in designated riverside areas of the country to meditate and bathe in sacred water¹. Since India's independence in 1947, responsibility for hosting any such festival has fallen on the state governments where they take place, with financial and organizational support for infrastructure, logistical and security matters being provided by the Government of India.

¹ Every year, a mela event of standard scale (Magh) is held in four locales across India: Allahabad/Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain. Every three years, one major (Kumbh) mela is held in one of the four sacred places, on a rotational basis. For a period of 50-60 days, bands of warrior ascetic monks belonging to established religious organizations, known as *Akharas*, camp in the sacred areas and engage in ceremonial activities, attended by pilgrims and, increasingly, by tourists. For historical reasons and religious considerations Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad) is acknowledged to host the most popular melas of India.

The immediate predecessor to the 2019 Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj took place six years earlier, in 2013, and had given rise to important administrative and technical novelties. On the administrative side, a high-profile state-level Minister was given portfolio responsibility for the festival's preparation; a special state-level multi-ministry committee was appointed for coordination and oversight; and a temporary district was created within Allahabad Division, with its own two key administrative authorities, the Temporary District Magistrate and the Temporary District Inspector General of Police. On the technical side, Allahabad city's road infrastructure was improved. The area set aside for use in servicing the festival was expanded and turned over well in advance of the festival event. A more advanced sanitation collection and treatment system was introduced, featuring no-discharge and rapid evacuation toilets. The layout and allocation procedures of tent camps were modified from past festivals to mitigate the risk of disputes and even violent conflict breaking out among rival religious organizations. Novel public safety arrangements were introduced, including CCTV cameras monitoring the festival site and feeding a room full of terminals in a command post, as well as a scheme to reunite "lost" festival-goers with their families.

Although the Allahabad Kumbh Mela of 2013 was widely praised, a number of issues had drawn public, expert and political concern (Khanna et al, 2013; Singh and Bisht, 2014). The most significant ones were a stampede killing 42 people; fires in the mela area; unpaid workers striking; vendors incapable of satisfying procurement contracts; unclean festival grounds and river water; and unchecked open-air defecation and untimely waste management.

1.2. *Formulating the Mandate and Structure for the 2019 Kumbh Mela*

The idea of hosting "the greatest Kumbh ever" made its way onto the UP state government's policy and program planning agenda in April 2017, following a sea-change moment in state politics. During the state election a month earlier, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won enough seats in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly, the lower chamber of the state parliament, to form a government². Within weeks of taking office, the new government led by Chief Minister (CM) Mahanth Yogi Adityanath³ started giving

² The BJP had been part of the first electoral coalition, the National Democratic Alliance, to defeat India's long-ruling Congress party in national elections in 1998 (to hold government until 2004). The BJP originally came from a variety of ideological positions built around a stress on India's Hindu identity (*Hindutva*, or "Hinduness") that evolved in a less religious, more nationalist direction, as parliamentary politics and heterogeneous constituencies infused negotiation and consensus building. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the BJP's strategies for strengthening public legitimacy and garnering electoral support were re-centered on transforming India through rapid economic growth, institutional modernization and upgraded governance. This orientation within the BJP had been clearly established in the aftermath of the national elections of 2014, which brought Modi to power as prime minister.

³ Born as Ajay Mohan Bish in 1972, Adityanath had already served for five terms in the Assembly, from first being elected at the age of 26. A member of the BJP since 1991, Adityanath headed both a Hindu monastic order and a religious-political youth organization.

institutional form to the vision of hosting a Great (Kumbh) Mela, by mandating the state's civil service to implement it. Following precedent, overall administrative responsibility was to be placed at the field level, specifically to the Divisional Commissioner for Allahabad.

As elsewhere in India, the largest territorial grouping within UP is a division. Each administrative division is headed by a division commissioner, customarily belonging to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), who is specifically responsible for maintaining law and order and collecting revenue. Each administrative division is further divided into districts. The Allahabad/Prayagraj Division is composed of four districts, the most populous of which carries the same name as the division⁴. District-level administration, including that of the Allahabad District, is headed by an IAS officer, and holds the title of District Magistrate as well as that of District (Revenue) Collector. In keeping with this pattern, responsibility for hosting ordinary, annual ("magh") melas at the Ganges-Yamuna confluence (the "Triveni Sangram") has been carried by the Allahabad/Prayagraj District Magistrate, under the general authority of the Divisional Commissioner (DC). However, the DC was given lead responsibility for preparing to host the 2019 Kumbh Mela.

As for staffing the role, the CM along with the official heading the state civil service, the Chief Secretary, reached out to Ashish Kumar Goel, an officer in the IAS, assigned to UP⁵. Mr. Goel was not a newcomer to organizing melas. He had been part of team organizing a "maha Mela" in Haridwar in 1998, and he had previously been posted in Allahabad. Mr. Goel accepted the posting as Allahabad DC, along with field-level responsibility for preparing to host PKM 2019. In line with precedent, Mr. Goel's role in hosting the Kumbh Mela was labeled that of "nodal officer" at field level. As the term suggests, the role was conceived as being placed at the very center of an organizational network, where each individual organization would have its own important role to play in hosting the festival, in preparing and subsequently delivering it. The term also implied that Mr. Goel would be expected to work collegially with peers re-presenting all such organizations, and he was to function as an authoritative spokesperson for their collective efforts whenever he engaged with UP government's central-level. Structurally, the DC reported to the Chief Secretary, just his counterparts in other Divisions.

In the first months following the CM's mandate to host the Kumbh Mela, the undertaking began to take shape. Organizationally, the central-level of state government

⁴ India's peculiar combination of democratic federalism and resources centralization, generating nationally-assisted local government has been called "cooperative federalism" (Tillin, 2019) and it reflects downwards on subnational governance. As local governments are, constitutionally speaking, state affairs, specific forms of organization vary. Local (district) government in urban areas is delivered partly by a municipal corporation headed by elected authorities and administered by state-appointed professionals. Many local government functions are in the hands of division-level, state-appointed field administrations. Although municipal corporations in large cities control important budgets, most financial resources come from the State (Aijaz, 2008).

⁵ An electrical engineer educated at Indian Institute of Technology - Delhi, Mr. Goel joined the IAS in 1995. He had held a series of field-level administrative positions, in keeping with IAS career progression, prior to transitioning to central-level roles.

began to adapt to the reality that hosting the Kumbh Mela would require a very sizable level of public expenditure, as well as coordination among numerous departments performing a wide range of institutional roles. In time, a structure settled down whereby a nodal officer role at the central-level was established, as a functional counterpart for the field-level nodal officer. That role was specifically assigned to the top official – the Principal Secretary – of the Department of Urban Development, a senior IAS officer, Mr. Manoj Kumar Singh. In elaborating the special purpose structures at central-level, an inter-departmental committee composed of the principal secretaries of such departments as Finance, Urban Development, Public Works, and Tourism was formed. It was designed to handle issues that required action at that “apex” level of state government. The so-called Apex Committee was presided over by the UP Chief Secretary and staffed by Mr. Manoj Kumar Singh with the aid of the Urban Development Department.

The DC would naturally be working closely with the District Magistrate from the start. It was anticipated that the area within which the festival was to take place would be organized as a temporary district, in due course, with its own temporary magistrate⁶. However, that move was months away.

1.3. *The Preparations for PKM*

As nodal officer, the DC promptly began to form a “core team” of participants in the process of making preparations for the Kumbh Mela. Some participants took part on an *ex officio* basis, as was the case with the Prayagraj’s District Magistrate and the Inspector-General heading the police service for four of the districts within the Division including the Prayagraj District. Others were involved through contract, as was the case with consultants from Ernst and Young’s India practice and an expert adviser seconded by the state Department of Health. In time, the core group expanded.

As part of transitioning into the role of DC, Mr. Goel came to know the CM’s vision for the Kumbh Mela as well as some of the strategic elements of its implementation. Above all, funding the preparations and infrastructure would be made a major state budget priority. In addition, UP’s central-level of government would seek national support, particularly through cooperation of national missions, such as those dealing with environmental policy areas, and through planning of joint effort with national services, such as Indian Railways.

After a matter of weeks in the role, the DC shared with his opposite numbers at the central-level an outline of a strategy for the Kumbh Mela, building on the mandate that has been made clear earlier. The elements of this strategy included a hosting a socially inclusive event, Allahabad-Prayagraj’s infrastructural transformation, technology-assisted safety and security measures, enhanced cleanliness, timely procurement, and transparent handling of projects. To optimize cleanliness at the festival site, there needed to be decisive action to

⁶The *Triveni Sangam*, a 3.2 square kilometers “spit” or sandy peninsula where the Ganges and the Yamuna meet. The area is ordinarily covered by river waters a least half of the year, leaving a limited time window for positioning of temporary infrastructure, hosting the festival, and removal of infrastructure afterwards.

abate upstream river pollution, and a full rethinking of how to deliver sanitation. To achieve efficiency and speed for the less than 20 months preparation process, there needed to be fast appointment of key collaborators, “untied funds” for technological innovation and experts hiring, and a “dedicated cell” within the state government to support procurement operations. To guarantee governance and enhanced transparency, he requested to contract-out to a professional services firm to provide “third party” monitoring of projects as well as procedural compliance. Beyond that, he identified a requirement for the production and systematization of information from all projects, with one objective being to leave behind documentation that could be used by successors facing similar mandates and wishing to access objective information about what was done the time before.

In an interview granted later for the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) report team, Goel recounted: “With the sole aim to enhance pilgrim experience, the Kumbh 2019 vision rested on five key pillars: Inclusion of all sections of the society, improved quality of services and new cultural/spiritual experience, aesthetically coherent and pleasing Mela, use of digital technology as an enabler to further planning goals and overall efficiency improvement, and finally, creation of a worthwhile legacy for future Kumbhs” (Ramesh et al: p. 11).

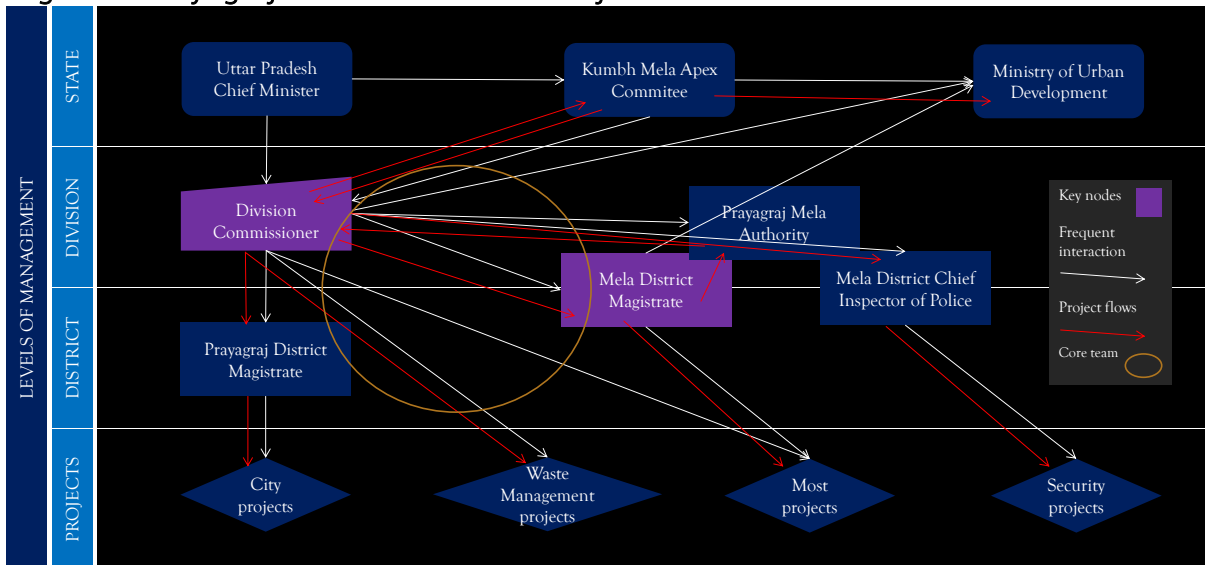
From an early point, establishing a special-purpose state government entity for hosting mela festivals in Prayagraj was a definite aspect of the strategy. Among its functions and powers would be to lease land and arrange for installation of infrastructure to be used specifically for the mela festivals, a good deal of which was removable for storage or other use in other venues. It would correspondingly handle the tasks of procurement and financial management and be a vehicle for contracting with service providers such as consulting firms. In time, the concept was fleshed out, to the point that it became clear that it would be a permanent “authority” rather than a temporary body, to be governed by a sizeable board and headed by its Secretary/Chief Executive.

As conceived, the Authority’s chairman would be the Divisional Commissioner, while the vice-chairman was the District Magistrate, on an *ex officio* basis. The role of Secretary/Chief Executive would be filled by the officer who would be serving as the magistrate for the Mela area, the so-called “Mela Adkihari.” It would, however, be some months before the legal steps were taken to establish the Prayagraj Mela Authority (PMA). Indeed, it was established by ordinance in November 2017⁷ and by an act of the Assembly the following month. Accordingly, the work of preparing for PKM during 2017 was handled administratively out of the office of the Division Commissioner with support from other parts of state government.

Projects management became the spine of the undertaking, evolving into a complex system of networks activated and supervised by the Core Team at all times. Figure 1 offers a schematization of the way this network worked.

⁷ See [http://urbandevelopment.up.nic.in/data/GO-2017/NV-1-2190\[13-11-17\].pdf](http://urbandevelopment.up.nic.in/data/GO-2017/NV-1-2190[13-11-17].pdf)

Figure 1: Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 Project Network



Source: Authors.

The second half of 2017 saw the Core Team actively designing projects, PMA making its committees work on the discussion, approval and planning for each of them, and the first projects reaching UP state-level committees and following the procedure: PMA proposal, UP level discussion and in-principle approval (an administratively new figure providing for an immediate start for operations while impending controls were finalized), and the Ministry of Urban Development facilitating the financial flows for PDC operations. In the meantime, negotiations and design started for most regional and city infrastructure projects requiring national level funding and agencies.

A (very simplified) overview of the multiple activities and projects provides an idea of the magnitude of the campaign and the strain relative to its 20-month timeline.

Figure 2: Overview of the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 Project

TRANSVERSAL PROGRAMS (to run all the way)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Prayagraj Mela Authority (projects design and monitoring). ❖ UP State Committees (projects green light and “in-principle” approval). ❖ Online Project Monitoring System (subcontracting, e-tendering, acquisitions, payments). ❖ Third party auditing and control. ❖ Command and Control Centre and CCTV grid. ❖ Communications (public and social media-oriented production). 	
INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (to be started in the second half of 2017 and concluded before December 2018).	FESTIVAL PROGRAM (to be started in the second half of 2017, tested in early 2018 and ready for December 2018).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ City highway system construction. ❖ Airport construction. ❖ Train station enlargement. ❖ Access routes enlargement and upgrade. ❖ Parking areas preparation. ❖ City re-zoning and circulation plan. ❖ City electricity grid redeployment. ❖ City sewer lines upgrade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Upstream river pollution management. ❖ Tent city (plot allocation and tent procurement). ❖ Security and disaster teams deployment. ❖ Waste management (system design and procurement). ❖ Cleaning army (<i>swachhgrahis</i> subcontracting and training).

❖ City beautification.	❖ Volunteer army (recruitment and training).
TEMPORARY INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (to be prepared between November and December 2018, as the rivers' waters recede).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Temporary district enlargement (land acquisition). ❖ Temporary coordination, security, health and education facilities (deployment and distribution). ❖ Tent city (tent deployment and distribution). ❖ Safety preparations (light, sounds, area roping and roads). ❖ Upgrade and extension of <i>ghats</i> (riversides). ❖ Liquid waste management (deployment). ❖ Solid waste management (deployment). 	

Source: Authors.

The Magh Mela 2018 was cleverly discovered as a testing opportunity for projects related to the running of the festival. This early 2018, lower turnout version of the festival had approximately 8 million visitors, defying the highest expectations. The “pilot experience”, as it came to be known in the team’s jargon, was particularly useful to fine-tune safety arrangements and test waste management. According to the Core Team, it provided “a measure of what was still needed” to be wrapped up, but also reassurance on how “preparations were headed in the right direction”. It was also a source of new ideas for the management of VIPs visits; social media; negotiations with religious organizations on spot allocation and activities; and strategies for the retention of workers in exhausting circumstances. After Magh Mela 2018, the PKM 2019 project’s front end adopted its final form.

Waste management was seen as one of the most crucial domains in which PKM had to make the difference, and the least charted territory, a dedicated special-purpose team was constituted, coordinated by a subcontracted World Bank expert, Ms. Saloni Goel, and supervised by a senior UP Health officer, Dr. Ashok Paliwal. The concept to be operationalized, arising from iterations with the National Government’s Clean India Mission and the India’s World bank office, was to develop a “no manual handling” and “rapid evacuation” of human waste, allowing “no ground contact”, and “no odor, no flies” outcomes. Social behavior was considered a key aspect of this. But unlike previous experiences involving active intervention on people’s attitude toward waste⁸, the new concept relied on “nudging” people toward cleanliness by making toilets and rubbish bins available and clean at all times. The new waste management strategy entailed innovative technical systems (at least in human resources and technology aspects) and change relative to established habits in the management of local waste (at least in procurement, as well as waste handling and removal aspects). Such a break with path-dependency needed to be developed, planned, programmed and managed especially for PKM 2019, but (as the Sub-Core-Team put it) with “as least financial impact as possible” on the final budget.

The waste management sub-campaign was the activity requiring the largest sub-

⁸ The social practices around human waste, particularly rural open (air) defecation, have been hotly debated in India for most of the present century. The tendency has been to change the treatment of the problem from behavioural induction through education and information (dominant in the 1999- Total Sanitation Campaign), towards incentives through sanitation and infrastructure (dominant in the 2014-Clean India mission).

contracting and procurement efforts, as well as the one most dependent on critical monitoring technology, together with crowd management measures. Two completely new systems were created, for solid and liquid waste management. The first one entailed a closely knit grid of regularly cleaned, plastic-bagged rubbish bins, handled by protected workers and evacuated by a fleet of trucks. The second and most impressive one entailed the installation of a massive quantity of no-discharge toilets, gender and disability specialized, with regular cleanliness control with mobile-phone traceable devices for location and cleanliness control, and temporary septic tanks regularly emptied by a fleet of specialized trucks. The idea defining intent for the two systems was quite simple: there ought to be bins in sight all the time, and easy-to-locate decently clean toilets with no large queues.

During the rest of 2018 infrastructure preparations went ahead, while new technical systems evolved from innovation, trial and error to solve potentially insufficient provisions or potentially disruptive situations in the festival. Among some of the most interesting were the development of digital, cell-phone-based contract-payment techniques (which made disappear a good part of the reasons behind worker strikes) and ground facility control; the development of standardized tentage and equal sector basic infrastructure (which substantially reduced conflict with and between religious organizations); and the development of a procurement strategy of actively collaborating with contractors to meet design and quality requirements (which critically helped to neutralize rent-seeking behavior). It was also agreed that staff involved in the festival would be given special accommodation arrangements during the festival, as well as education facilities within the city (which dramatically increased staff sense of “ownership” and cooperative behavior).

1.4. *The Festival*

Even if the Triveni Sangam grounds were liberated from river waters only in November 2018, almost a month later than usual, the temporary facilities were constructed in time; the special living and social activity areas were attributed to the in-coming religious organizations with no major conflicts, and the safety preparations were ready for the flow of visitors.

The campaign clock-worked in outcome to intent alignment, as much as in the meeting of everybody's expectations. The festival rolled out between January 15 and March 4, 2019 with no significant issues despite the unprecedented number of attendants, and received wide praise by the vast majority of visitors and observers, particularly on its cleanliness⁹. According to PMA, the final bill was almost exactly five times bigger than the 2013 Kumbh Mela, at constant prices. The numbers were the ones planned upon, with no

⁹ Two field surveys conducted by the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (Ramesh et al, 2020) after the start, and into the festival, showed notorious approval of visitors. In the first one, all facilities were rated quite positively, with the three most notable services being safety, hygiene, and *ghats* arrangements. In the second one safety, hygiene, sanitation facilities, *ghats* arrangements, and electricity and lighting were noted as the most approved features of the event.

substantial alterations of the budget. Approximately two-thirds were absorbed by infrastructure development, representing a substantial public investment in the city and region. Although there was heavy, triangular scrutiny (third party, UP and judicial authorities), no significant observations were made to the operations and procedures. Last but not least, the Indian General Elections of 2019 were won by the incumbent at both national and state level¹⁰.

2. A re-discovery of the design-project

How can PKM 2019 be of interest for public management students and practitioners? PKM 2019 was a successful enterprise. The results were better than expected by political authorities and management, particularly in terms of social and political repercussions. There were, practically speaking, no issues or accidents, in spite of the remarkably higher than expected turnout. By viewing PKM2019 as a campaign that has timely aligned the enterprise's outcomes to its intent, our design-focused case study (Barzelay, 2019) offers two explanations of its success: it was a good (design) project, and it worked (functioned) well (Andrenacci, 2020). Our case analysis will focus on the design-project (what was the enterprise for and what it consisted in) and how it was expected to become a functioning-whole (how it was expected to work). We will first explain what kind of public enterprise a campaign is, and why PKM 2019 should be treated as one. We will then move to rediscover PKM 2019 campaign's purpose and plan. We will finally discuss how it expected to overcome its foreseeable difficulties.

2.1. *A campaign for a very large festival*

Public enterprises adopt different forms, according to the way their activities are organized to fulfill intent. Delivering an on-going service, reforming a sector of public interest, or attending to the consequences of a catastrophe present different organizational and environmental challenges to enterprises, thus usually requiring different design and management. We call these different forms "archetypes". Archetypes are referred to, in a wide variety of scientific fields, as a phenomenon presenting pattern and/or situational similarity-proximity to a number of other phenomena, thus becoming the source for an abstract representation of that pattern or situation as ideal-type, model or prototype¹¹. In the professional discipline of public management, archetypes can be seen as groups of organizations or enterprises sharing structures or dynamics frequently providing precedent in form of "pools" of specialized practices, and knowledge in form of "niches" for argumentative development.

¹⁰ Nation-wise, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) got 31% (BJP) and 37% (NDA) of the 615 million cast votes, representing a 6% increase relative to the 2014 elections, and thus achieving majority at the Lokh Sabha (the Indian Parliament). In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP and the NDA got 49.98% and 51.13% of the total 86.5 million votes, a 7% relative increase, and 64 of the 80 seats in UP's Assembly (the State Parliament).

¹¹ The use of "archetype" in contemporary social sciences is frequently credited to psychology (see Jung, 2003: chapter 1). For a review of its uses in organization / management studies, see Greenwood and Hinings (1993).

To what public management archetypes can our case be linked? There seems to be no single “natural” family for PKM 2019. But the available literature on event management in general, and festival management in particular (leaving aside the writings related to their importance to the field of tourism studies) gives us interesting cues on the kind of issues faced by a one-time very large human gathering. The field stresses the importance of at least three dimensions relevant for our case: (a) collaborative governance when involving multiple stakeholders (Cabral and Kane, 2018; Cho et al, 2019); (b) performance and “foolproof” oriented standardized planning and coordination when dealing with multiple types of risk (Goldblatt, 1997; Salam et al, 2004; Tum et al, 2006; Getz et al, 2010); and (c) strategies to deal with the relative dramatism of one-time events: once they started, there are no second chances (Allen, pp. 335-340)¹². Two more aspects common to the management of larger human events can be brought up from specific cases: (d) the unique uncertainty attached to multi-type, multi-level projects combining infrastructure, stakeholders and people, such as the Olympic Games (Pitsis et al, 2003; Theodoraki, 2007); and (e) the technological and organizational problems tied to crowd monitoring and management in large human gatherings and how circumstances or contingencies can easily turn them into chaotic episodes (Wijermans et al, 2016; Sharma et al, 2018).

From the management point of view, to these five considerations about what PKM 2019 entailed as a one-time extremely large festival, we ought to add (f) the centrality of the dimension *time*. PKM required the careful preparation and strategic management of several interconnected activities in a severely time-constrained environment, for a final flash-like event. The preparations that started in mid-2017 had to provide the capability to finalize Prayagraj transformation and lay out the temporary city in November and December 2018, for most stakeholders to arrive from December 2018 on, and visitors to swarm in (literally) between January and March 2019, with peaks in holy days equivalent to more than 30 times the daily commuting to Manhattan, the central area of New York City.

Such time, space and complexity considerations invite to find analogies between PKM 2019 and military *campaigns* (Sharp, 2011).¹³ Modern military theory refers to *campaign design* as the key way to prepare complex missions through a combination of heuristic and predictive elements (Bullock, 2008: pp. 25-29). A campaign plan conceptually phases the attainment of operational objectives within specific times and areas of operations, or by progress toward their attainment. Each phase typically develops preconditions and criteria assessed by command to initiate the succeeding or simultaneous related phase (Pirnie and Gardiner, pp. 22-24). The most frequent use outside

¹² A fourth dimension could be added: the way in which events define communicational messages (Berridge, 2007; Foley et al, 2012: part II). But given its specificity, and the fact that aspects like “branding” and “diffusion” are common to any festival, we will stick our interest to the other three.

¹³ According to warfare historians, the word “campaign” (from the Latin *campus*: field) seems to have been taken from European pre-industrial agricultural practices, when it was used to refer to the strategic actions taking place between planting and harvesting (*campagna*). The word acquired its warfare modern meaning already in the Late Antiquity for timeline-constrained military operations needing strategic thinking (Dupuy and Dupuy, 1993).

military strategy is also linked to time-constrained operations entailing a complex task: political campaigns, or campaigning, as the preparation and running of a candidate communication strategy to attract vote in the periods prior to elections.

The term campaign adequately captures the gist of PKM 2019 as an enterprise: an effort to achieve festival readiness in a severely time-limited scenario, requiring substantial strategic planning and careful preparations for a one-time, flash-like, high-stakes event. If a campaign is to become a meaningful archetype for public management, the ideal-type or prototype should lie in the relation between its activity pattern (strategic preparation, dramatic running) and its situation (time constrain, possible environmental low malleability or hostility). Let us turn then to what was its design-project: how these activities were envisaged to fulfill intent.

2.2. Purpose and plan

Most officials, stakeholders and staff used the expression “a great Kumbh” as a shared, encompassing term for KM 2019’s *vision*. To build a representation of the campaign’s *mission* we use an adapted version of Michael Porter’s value-chain configuration analysis (Porter, 1988). In Porter, “value-chain” analysis is a way of examining how the relevant activities a firm performs strategically interact to produce “margin”. Margin is the outcome of a firm’s adequate functioning to secure an advantage for the firm’s relative position in a competitive environment. This competitive advantage is created by “chains” of articulated activities forming a functioning configuration capable of producing value. A value chain configuration is a way in which *primary activities* that physically create products or services (production and sales) are made possible by *support activities* or “firmwide functions” (procurement, technology, human resources) (Porter, 1988: p. 38).

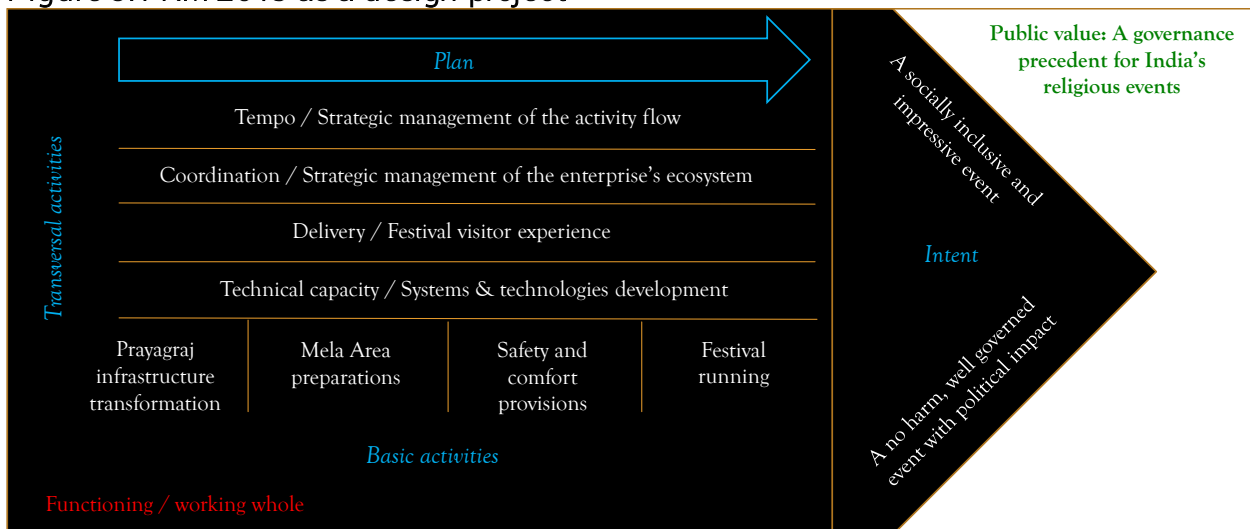
Porter’s concept of an organization producing value through configurational wholes can be usefully adapted to the study of how a *public organization* produces value. In the terms proposed by Mark Moore (1995) a public organization creates public value by producing a socially substantive purpose (thus generating public support) and strategically achieve such purpose through the “upward” management of its ecosystem (thus enabling legitimate and political sustainability), and the “downward” management of resources and activities (thus creating operational and administrative feasibility). The schematization of this representation is known as Mark Moore’s strategic triangle (Moore, 1995: pp. 70-71).

A Porter-Moore representation of a public organization or enterprise can provide a schematic but powerful “whole picture” of the PKM 2019 campaign’s purpose and plan, in terms of the relation between intent and activities. In PKM 2019 **intent** (as equivalent in to Porter’s representation to margin) was a great Kumbh, which in terms of *public value* (as equivalent in to Porter’s representation to competitive advantage) meant enhanced governance of a socially inclusive, accident-free festival. The plan to fulfill intent and thereby create public value seems to have entailed four “bundles” of *basic* (in Porter,

“primary”) activities and four “families” of transversal (in Porter, “support”) activities.

The campaign’s **basic activities** transformed the physical environment of the event and provided the safety and well-being desired for the event to be “great”. They were formed by interwoven bundles of projects providing for the city of Prayagraj’s infrastructural transformation, the Mela area preparation, the development of the festival’s safety and comfort provisions, and the running of the festival proper. The campaign’s **transversal activities** were organization-wide “families” of actions providing direction to, generating the capacity for, and enabling the operation of these projects. Strategic management of all moves was the first and foremost requirement to meet the timeline. Coordination was essential in an ecosystem made of decisions and actions taken by multiple actors and stakeholders. The festival’s “visitor experience” was the point of it all: adding a layer of visitor satisfaction to the more basic goals of accessibility, safety and comfort. Finally, there was consensus around the idea better systems could be developed and technologies could be adopted, extending technical capacity for all of the above.

Figure 3: PKM 2019 as a design-project



Source: Authors.

Thus re-discovered, the design-project for the PKM 2019 campaign presented some fearsome challenges. In its midstream phase, the bulk of the basic activities needed to be fully developed and ready to operate before December 2018, which naturally placed the strain of the enterprise on *how management could achieve the right pace for uneventful delivery*, or, as we have it, “tempo without tears”. If the midstream phase evolved adequately, the risk control required for its downstream phase, the running of the festival, was likely to be significantly less problematic.

2.3. The campaign’s problem-solving design

To perform in the transversal activities of the campaign, which would in time enable or furnish the capacities needed to run its basic activities, a number of problems had to be solved: initial conditions had to be changed, and potentially adverse situations had to be

overcome. Following a heuristic approach to problem-solution in public organizations (Cellucci, 2008), adverse situations or “problems” can be best understood as the *capability gaps* of an enterprise (deficiencies assessed in existing possibilities to perform the tasks needed), while situations overcoming adversity, or “solutions”, can be regarded as the *requirements* (criteria according to which deficiencies can be overcome) of an enterprise. Thus seen, requirements can be addressed in different possible ways. Solutions are about *harnessing requirements*, thus *creating a new situation in which the capability gaps are non-existent*. This approach helps to hold at bay the idea that solutions are a menu of techniques that are to be coupled by expertise to a given menu of problems. It tends to highlight, instead, the agency of management in creating new systems for unique environments, making sense of situations and using the support of repertoires of professional experience¹⁴. Under this light, management is *the* overarching activity creating these new situations in which requirements will be harnessed towards fulfilling an enterprise’s functional intent, or neutralizing processes that threaten such fulfilment.

Let us take a look at the kind of challenges lying ahead of the PKM 2019 campaign as design-project. We shall do this by highlighting, for each family of the transversal activities we identified in the enterprise’s value-chain configuration, the most important challenges (capability gaps) and how they were paired with solutions (requirements). Within these challenge-solution pairs, strategic activities were expected to activate needed processes and/or neutralize adverse ones. We present them briefly below, then proceed to their analysis. It is important to consider that these families and pairs are schematic representations intended to support analysis. Empirical processes integrated them in different degrees and fashions.

Figure 4: Challenges and Solutions in PKM 2019

Transversal activities	Challenges / Capability gaps	Solutions / Requirements
1. Tempo (strategic management of the enterprise’s flow of activities)	An unusually large quantity of projects to prepare and run the facilities and safety provisions needed to be timely activated and made to produce interlocking results.	Phasing (synchronization) of project inputs, flows and outputs had to produce a sustainedly quick tempo without sacrificing quality of the performance.
2. Coordination (coherence through the strategic management of the enterprise’s	Potential mistrust or non-cooperative behavior of political and administrative oversight could compromise the campaign.	Trust and collaborative behavior building by frequent/systematic interaction with oversight.
	Potentially non-cooperative or sub-standard quality behavior of staff and	High commitment of staff and stakeholder empowerment through dramatization and power diffusion.

¹⁴ This is the same principle underlying TRIZ (теория решения изобретательских задач, or “theory of the resolution of invention-related tasks”), a tool developed in the late 1940’s Soviet Union for problem-solving, analysis and forecasting, derived from the study of patterns of invention. It evolved into a set of organized answers to key questions allowing to break through apparently insolvable contradictions, thus innovating. See <http://www.xtriz.com/competence.htm> (consulted 01/16/21).

ecosystem and risk)	stakeholders could compromise the campaign.	
	The festival was to be a highly vulnerable event to contingent interlocked risks in crowd management.	A number of emergency scenarios (“plans A to F”) and levels of carefully pre-discussed teams’ discretion were planned.
3. Delivery (production of the festival experience)	A potentially chaotic flow of pilgrims and tourists needed to be harnessed into the safe and enjoyable visit of a place.	The place was made hospitable and safe by physical, logistical and behavioral preparations.
	A predominantly religious event needed to become a socially attractive and inclusive one.	Communication strategies targeted youth political and religious sensitivity, tourist curiosity and public rejection.
4. Technical capacity (performance and reach by systems and technology development)	Control systems needed to be developed and upgraded to provide for enhanced security and safety to an expectedly very large turnout.	Safety and security monitoring became the central aspect of smart-city technologies.
	Encompassing information systems needed to be developed to thoroughly document the enterprise.	A protocol for information production and management became mandatory for all operations.
	Unprecedented systems for waste management needed to be developed to guarantee a clean festival.	Solid and liquid waste management new and adapted technical systems created a campaign-within-the-campaign.

Source: Authors.

Looking at the table as a whole, it might have become evident that the two first families of transversal activities were the crucial management functions expected to furnish capacity to the organization as such to fulfill the requirements of the enterprise at all: control and speed. The third was to provide meaning and coherence to the enterprise: what in fact it was for. And the fourth was to add reach through technical possibilities: how well or how better the festival could be performed.

The **first family** of transversal activities was the crucial for the enterprise as an *archetypical campaign*. Strategic management (planning, communicating and operating) had to provide the synchronization or “phasing” required to achieve very rapid tempo for the flow of preparation projects and the flexibility for the running of a high-risk festival. Produced mainly by the Division Commissioner and the Core Team, “phased” strategic planning had to enable most other activities (including the other two transversal ones) thus generating a key part of the necessary organizational capacity.

As for most public enterprises in democratic environments the **second family** was critical, since it was to be the one providing coordination and therefore, as we shall see below, an important portion of its organizational consistence. In the case of PKM 2019, this was all the more important given the fact that the campaign management ecosystem was formed by heterogeneous and multiple organizations, above, below and outside the span of the festival’s authority. A “political management”¹⁵ of this ecosystem was essential to

¹⁵ Political management can be seen as the aspect of governance embodied by the strategic management of the actors and stakeholders forming the environment or ecosystem of any public enterprise. The expression is used in other senses most usually, namely the political strategies of firms (see Oliver and Holzinger, 2008), as

achieve the organizational coherence needed to integrate activities coming from multiple and differentiated nodes and processes into one orderly and timely flow, as well as to provide risk management in the running phase of the operations.

The **third family** of transversal activities was to be the most specific to the *kind of enterprise* for which the PKM 2019 campaign was: a human gathering performing and celebrating cultural traditions. The key purpose of the campaign was to deliver a best Kumbh Mela ever, not only in the safety provisions traditionally associated with the large congregation's risk, but in the kind of impressions the festival would leave in its participants. As the Core Team put it, the festival had to convey a message of visitor inclusion and respect. Producing and communicating this meaning had to be hardwired to all activities of the campaign, and it was indeed the case.

The **fourth family**, finally, was expected to make things easier, providing new technical solutions to the specific challenges entailed by the purpose of achieving a clean and enjoyable visitor experience through and impeccably governed campaign. The three areas of development were to be the use of technology to control the grounds during the festival, the management of waste and the thorough documentation protocols. Of the three, the management of waste was the most sensitive variable in the cleanliness "problem system" (and the one least successfully managed in the past). Moreover, the solution had to evolve from existing systems, technologies and human resources, with limited time and procurement restrictions. It was to be arguably a campaign-within-the-campaign.

Together, the four families of transversal activities were intended to furnish the capabilities needed by the campaign to achieve speed, coordination and effectiveness.

Conclusion

The re-discovery of the PKM 2019 campaign's design-project essentially shows the plan was adequate to the task, thus providing a plausible and useful explanation on why and how it was ultimately successful. The project's vision was converted into a *manageable enterprise*, amply fulfilling its political intent and producing substantive public value in form of a new benchmark for India's melas. This was achieved by means of a public campaign that adequately identified the interlocked basic activities that could bring about an inclusive and agreeable experience to an enormous amount of people. These basic activities were in turn made possible by a set of transversal activities that proved adequate to furnish the needed capabilities and/or to overcome the foreseeable difficulties of the campaign's institutional environment and its practical challenges: tempo, coordination, specific delivery, and enabling technical systems. The processes creating and operating such a working or "functioning" whole (Barzelay, 2019: pp. 51 and 191) can be the source of precedent for

well as the management of political relations within government (see Ingraham et al, 1995) or between government and the community (see Fenwick and Elcock, 2004). Although not all actors and stakeholders of a policy ecosystem are political in the stricter sense of the word, the kind of relations a government enterprise entertains with its environment is inherently political in a wider sense (see Lemke, 2002).

India's melas of course, but also, in a broader sense, to "campaigns" as archetypes of timeline-limited, high complexity public enterprises.

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Research Paper 2

Reverse-engineering the Indian Kumbh Mela 2019 festival campaign

Introduction

In April 2017, the newly elected Chief Minister (CM) of the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP), India, put together a team of state officials to prepare for the major Hindi pilgrimage festival or Kumbh Mela which was to take place in Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad) between January and February 2019¹⁶. Preparations for the 2019 Prayagraj Kumbh Mela (PKM) were guided by the specific intent that the festival be completely free from what had been theretofore its most feared issues – stampedes, drownings and other personal accidents, widespread dirtiness and pollution, disease outbreaks and people going missing. PKM 2019 had to provide, also, an inspiring and socially more attractive experience to visitors from all sector of Indian society. PKM 2019 had to be, finally, a showcase of governance in effectiveness and transparency.

Preparations for such a challenge involved performing multiple technical –urban infrastructure provision, transportation planning, sanitation, health, and policing– and administrative functions –organizing, staffing, project planning, budgeting, procurement, and coordination– in little over 1.5 years. To become physically welcoming and safe/secure for the event, the entire city of Allahabad/Prayagraj had to be transformed through intensive infrastructural work involving complex interlocked action from local, state and national agencies. The temporary area allocated for the festival facilities – much of which remains covered by river waters most of the year – had to be prepared in record time (two months) and the systems to guarantee safety/security and cleanliness had to be entirely revised or created anew. The whole was to be coordinated by a nodal authority, the Division Commissioner (DC) of Prayagraj aided by a team of administrators and experts.

The festival took place in January-February 2019, receiving five times more visitors than expected, gathering up to 240 million people, and up to 50 million in its peak day, according to the festival planning and monitoring board, the Prayagraj Mela Authority (PMA). All severe risks were effectively avoided, and the event received widespread political, expert and public praise.

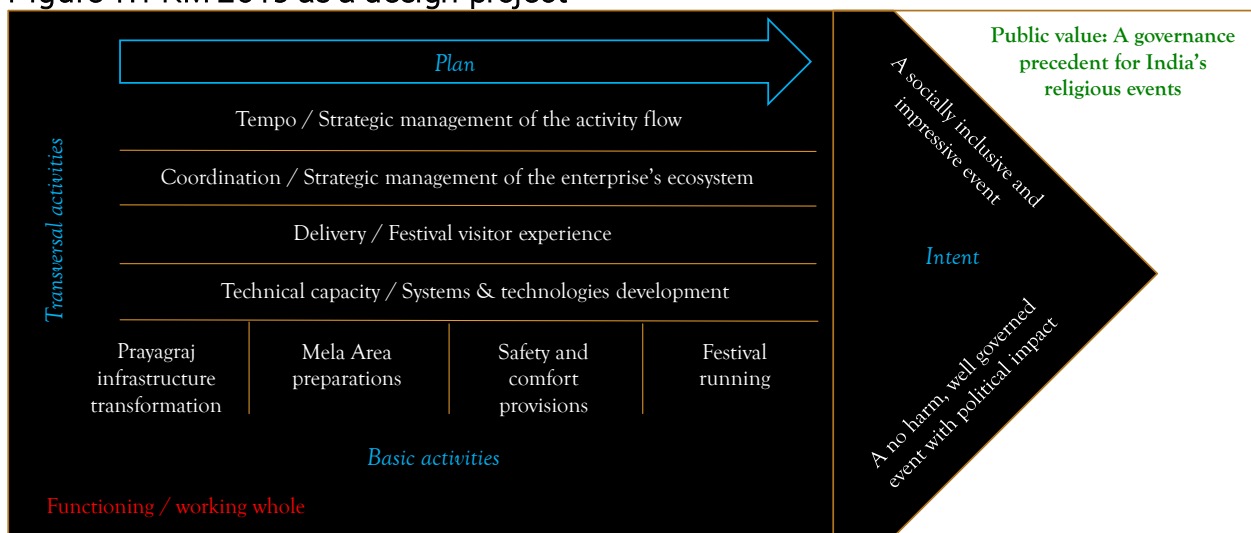
What made this possible? PKM was a public enterprise conducted as a *campaign*, that is, a time-limited public undertaking proceeding from preparation to execution stage,

¹⁶ Kumbh Melas are the largest regularly held Hindu religious events in contemporary India. In four different locales across India (Allahabad/Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain) millions of people gather to meditate about and bathe off their sins in the sacred waters every year. On a rotational basis, one bigger festival occurs in one of the four locations every three years. Responsibility for hosting any Melas is on the state governments where they take place, with financial and organizational support by the national government.

and then brought to an end in a final, generally rapid event¹⁷. PKM 2019 was a campaign that needed achieve festival readiness in a severely time-limited scenario, requiring substantial strategic planning and careful preparations for a one-time, flash-like, high-stakes final event.

A re-discovery of the design-project (Barzelay, 2019) underlying this campaign shows the relation between the campaign’s activity pattern (strategic preparation, dramatic running) and the situation in which these activities had to take place (time constrain, possible environmental low malleability or hostility) using a schematization known as a value-chain configuration.¹⁸

Figure 1: PKM 2019 as a design-project



Source: Authors.

Schematically put, for the campaign to fulfill intent, transversal activities had to furnish the capabilities needed to run its basic activities. In so doing, a number of problems, or “potentially adverse situations” (Cellucci, 2008) had to be overcome. The *capability gaps* of the enterprise (the deficiencies assessed in its existing possibilities to perform the tasks

¹⁷ Modern military theory refers to *campaigns* (Sharp, 2011) as complex time and environment-constrained missions designed through a combination of heuristic and predictive elements (Bullock, 2008: pp. 25-29). A campaign plan conceptually phases the attainment of operational objectives within specific times and areas of operations, or by progress toward their attainment. Each phase typically develops preconditions and criteria assessed by command to initiate the succeeding or simultaneous related phase (Pirnie and Gardiner, pp. 22-24). The most frequent use outside military strategy is also linked to time-constrained operations entailing a complex task: political campaigns, or campaigning, as the preparation and running of a candidate communication strategy to attract vote in the periods prior to elections.

¹⁸ In Michael Porter (1998), a “value-chain” analysis examines how the relevant activities a firm performs strategically interact to produce “margin”. Margin secures the advantage for a firm’s relative position in a competitive environment. It is created by “chains” of articulated activities forming a functioning configuration capable of producing value. In a given configuration, *primary activities* physically create products or services (production and sales) while *support activities* (procurement, technology, human resources) create the “firm-wide” organizational capabilities for the primary activities to work (Porter, 1988: p. 38). Porter’s representation can be adapted to the study of public organizations considering primary activities as *basic*, and support activities as *transversal*.

needed) had to become the *requirements* (criteria according to which deficiencies can be overcome) of its management functions. Since requirements can be addressed in different possible ways, solutions are about *harnessing requirements*, thus creating a new situation in which the capability gaps are non-existent.

How were the PKM 2019 campaign’s requirements harnessed? In the following figure we highlight, for each family of transversal activities identified in the enterprise’s value-chain configuration, the most important challenges (capability gaps) and how they were paired with solutions (requirements). Within these challenge-to-solution pairs, strategic activities were expected to activate needed processes and/or neutralize adverse ones.

Figure 2: Challenges and Solutions in PKM 2019

Transversal activities	Challenges / Capability gaps	Requirements / Solutions
1. Tempo (strategic management of the enterprise’s flow of activities)	An unusually large quantity of projects to prepare and run the facilities and safety provisions needed to be timely activated and made to produce interlocking results.	Phasing (synchronization) of project inputs, flows and outputs had to produce a sustainedly quick tempo without sacrificing quality of the performance.
2. Coordination (coherence through the strategic management of the enterprise’s ecosystem and risk)	Potential mistrust or non-cooperative behavior of political and administrative oversight could compromise the campaign.	Trust and collaborative behavior building by frequent/systematic interaction with oversight.
	Potentially non-cooperative or sub-standard quality behavior of staff and stakeholders could compromise the campaign.	High commitment of staff and stakeholder empowerment through dramatization and power diffusion.
	The festival was to be a highly vulnerable event to contingent interlocked risks in crowd management.	A number of emergency scenarios (“plans A to F”) and levels of carefully pre-discussed teams’ discretion were planned.
3. Delivery (production of the festival experience)	A potentially chaotic flow of pilgrims and tourists needed to be harnessed into the safe and enjoyable visit of a place.	The place was made hospitable and safe by physical, logistical and behavioral preparations.
	A predominantly religious event needed to become a socially attractive and inclusive one.	Communication strategies targeted youth political and religious sensitivity, tourist curiosity and public rejection.
4. Technical capacity (performance and reach by systems and technology development)	Control systems needed to be developed and upgraded to provide for enhanced security and safety to an expectedly very large turnout.	Safety and security monitoring became the central aspect of smart-city technologies.
	Encompassing information systems needed to be developed to thoroughly document the enterprise.	A protocol for information production and management became mandatory for all operations.
	Unprecedented systems for waste management needed to be developed to guarantee a clean festival.	Solid and liquid waste management new and adapted technical systems created a campaign-within-the-campaign.

Source: Authors.

This document will center its analysis on the reverse-engineering of the processes that put the project to work. We perform this reverse-engineering for the two first families of challenge-solution pairs, because they were the ones responsible for four essential management dimensions of the campaign, that we will call flow, environment, ecosystem and risk control. In the terms used by Henry Mintzberg (1993) that we shall revise below, they were to provide *consistence* and *congruence* to the organization, thus permitting the expected “fit”, or alignment of outcomes to intent that made the whole “functioning” (Barzelay, 2019; Andrenacci, 2020). The other two shall be the future object of more specific expertise.

The first part of the document presents an overview of the four key reverse-engineered processes. Each of the next four sections will be dedicated to one of them. In the last section, we present a conclusion in terms of the case’s value for Public Management studies.

1. PKM 2019 key scenario-processes as mechanisms

Purposeful phenomena like public enterprises can be re-discovered as design-projects and reverse-engineered to understand the *scenario-processes* (Barzelay, 2019: pp. 127-129) that made them “working” or *functioning wholes* (Ibidem, pp. 51 and 191). Crucial among these processes are those allowing an enterprise to produce solutions for its most important challenges or, as we proposed above, “harnessing requirements”. Since solutions are processes involving sequences of activities that produce expected outcomes, they can be represented for their study in ways not completely unlike other design-oriented disciplines study their own: as “mechanisms”.

In engineering, mechanisms are devices gearing the conversion of given inputs into desired outputs. Technical systems are complex, standardized combinations of mechanisms usually embodied in an “artifact”¹⁹. A number of mechanisms gear these technical systems, in combinations solving both physical and organizational problems. In processes involving social relations, mechanisms hardly become technical systems, even if important strands of social science consider behaviour “engineerable”²⁰. Inputs, conversions and outputs tend to be affected by a high number of variables, and take place in contexts presenting generally unique configurations. Moreover, similar configurations and analogous processes can lead to different outcomes, as well as similar outcomes can arise from different configurations or processes²¹. The term “mechanisms” usually refers to representations coding *patterned sequences* of events leading from initial conditions to outcomes: “similar (social) events that produce similar effects across different

¹⁹ A technical system such as refrigeration, for example, produces an output “cold” out of the inputs “gas” and “electricity” and preserves it through the technical system “isolation” in an artifact “refrigerator”.

²⁰ For an overview of this long-standing debate within the social sciences, see Graham (2015).

²¹ Although configurations can be institutionalized (in the contemporary world mostly by states) and become stable forms of social organizations providing order and control (Abbott, 2016).

circumstances”²².

The identification of these sequences, and their coding as mechanisms, has a two-fold value. It helps the design-oriented discipline of Public Management to better understand the mechanism-intent logic underlying public organizations and enterprises as design-projects and working phenomena (Barzelay, 2019). And it helps to detect “clever practices” (Bardach, 1994; Barzelay, 2007), “customized” solutions sustaining scenario-processes that can potentially become professional precedents. Capturing such scenario-processes in form of mechanisms helps to convert their understanding into mechanism-intent, useful knowledge.

In PKM 2019, *tempo* and *coordination* were the overarching challenges to be dealt with. As soon as preparations started, the enterprise’s design proved correct. To harness requirements, four major outcomes needed to be secured: *flow, environment, ecosystem and risk control*. They are arguably very important for any public policy, but critical for an enterprise with unnegotiable delivery timeline, complex institutional environments and highly volatile variables. A number of strategies was prepared and deployed to secure these outcomes. We will call “mechanisms” these strategic activities that allowed the campaign’s management to harness requirements. They are briefly presented in Figure 3, then explained below.

Figure 3. Mechanisms used in the management of PKM 2019

Challenges	Requirements	Strategies	Outcomes
Tempo (strategic management of the enterprise’s flow)	Synchronization of projects’ cycles at the high speed required by the nature of the campaign.	Strategic planning and management of projects’ cycles (“phasing”) according to the required tempo.	Flow control
Coordination (strategic management of the enterprise’s ecosystem and risk)	Active collaboration of UP authorities and national state agencies (“upward” coordination).	Work constellations and frequent/systematic interaction (“iteration”) with key actors.	Environment control
	Active cooperation of key staff and stakeholders (“downward” coordination).	Participatory planning and organizational commitment through conflict neutralization and motivation.	Ecosystem control
	Special provisions for unprecedented and emergency scenarios preparation (“failsafe” coordination).	Teams operational autonomy (“locale” discretion).	Risk control

Source: Authors.

The campaign had less than two years to achieve a substantial infrastructural transformation of a medium-sized city and to provide for an accident-free very large human

²² As credited to Charles Tilly by Demetriou (2012). For a discussion of related literature, see also Abbott (2016, part 3) or Hedström and Swedberg (2005).

event. The **flow** of a campaign consisting in a multitude of interrelated projects was met with planning and management strategies creating a sustaining a high-paced tempo, say *vivacissimo*²³. A high number of project outputs were requirements of other projects. For instance, the settlement of relocations for the enlargement of Prayagraj streets was a condition for the renovation of sours and electricity lines. A delay in one line of projects could cause critical delay in the following line, producing a nightmare domino effect. So that tempo was not only about speeding up project cycles, but about their synchronization, a practice the Core Team called “phasing”. Phasing gave coherence to an unusually big number of preparation projects in a very limited timeline.

In a “political” map of the enterprise, within the campaign management’s directly controlled area, there was only the festival organization proper, formed by the Division Commissioner with his Core Team (including the Temporary District Commissioner), and the Prayagraj Mela Authority, a planning board representing public stakeholders²⁴. “Above”, there were the political and administrative UP state authorities, source of mandate and oversight, without whose active commitment about half of the projects (those financed by or through the state) had to be ruled out. And, albeit technically countable as allies, there was a number of national agencies of whose participation and funding depended another half of the projects, including the Army, the National Railways and the agencies of government providing infrastructure and river pollution control. Phasing was unthinkable without relative control of this political and administrative authorizing **environment**. Strategically interacting with this environment was the way of building and maintaining control.

Even with the authorizing environment actively collaborating, the campaign’s immediate **ecosystem** had to be under control, too. Within the campaign’s “precinct” there was the staff. Having been in the past an important source of potentially non-cooperative behaviour, synergic relations had to be built carefully. Outside the “precinct” of the campaign there was a number of key stakeholders. The most important were probably the religious organizations producing most of the activity in the Sangam area during the festival had to be made felt welcome, while avoiding frictional surfaces between them wherever possible. The private contractors had rent-seeking path-dependent practices that had to be deactivated or neutralized.

Finally, in the running of the festival, **risk** was high. An accident had tarnished what would have otherwise been a successful Kumbh Mela, relative to past ones, in 2013. High-risk incidences may include not only stampedes, but also mass health or discomfort episodes arising from the malfunctioning of services, water or waste management. For

²³ The second fastest standard tempo in classical music, above *vivace* and below *allegriissimo*. The fastest possible tempo should probably be reserved for analogies regarding the management of disaster, catastrophe or war.

²⁴ In many ways this was a “temporary organization” that had to run the interconnected activities and ultimately deliver the festival, then enter “hibernation” or disappear as such, to be (re)activated or (re)created again when the circumstances required so (Kenis et al, 2009).

PKM 2019, national authorities introduced the need to consider terrorist attack and get prepared accordingly. Beside planning, field autonomy, or local (we will relabel “locale”) discretion provided the failsafe systems to deal with the risk of potentially volatile scenarios aptly.

We found these to be the most important scenario-processes throughout which specific sequences of activities helped to provide the needed outcomes “fitting” intent and making the whole functioning. Can they become the matter of conceptual abstraction and theorization in the form of mechanisms? Can they become professional precedent for future customizations? Let us take a closer look at them and their related literature, to see if and how they can add or teach to this existing knowledge.

2. Flow control

As the title of our report suggests, very rapid tempo for such a multi-activity campaign with such timeline limitations was probably the most impressive of its management achievements. According to a standardly acceptable definition, strategic management is about “(a) focusing attention across functional divisions and throughout various organizational levels on common goals, themes, and issues; (b) tying internal management processes and program initiatives to desired outcomes in the external environment; and (c) linking operational, tactical, day-to-day decisions to longer run strategic objectives” (Poister and Streib, 1999: p. 308). PKM 2019 required this kind of strategic management for a high number of heterogenous projects across a remarkable variety of institutional settings, most of which, as we will see in the next section, were not under control of the enterprise’s management.

But *vivacissimo* for a “tempo without tears” required these projects’ cycles to be *synchronized at high speed*, since their outputs were interrelated, and in many cases interdependent. The overall campaign speed had to be the highest possible, given the time window. So, infrastructure projects and preparations requiring the participation or the financial support of the Indian national state needed assistance for “high-speed-sync”²⁵. They had to be pushed as much as possible to achieve a cruising speed higher than usual, while locally controlled projects had to be timed to couple their cycles to those beyond management control. We call this mechanism “flow control”. For flow control to be achieved, projects had to be planned and implemented in “phased” fashion, as the Core Team put it²⁶. “Phasing” meant the most important aspect of planning was the multi-project flow control.

Figure 4: A Core Team retrospective schematization of the campaign’s flow

²⁵ In photography, “high-speed-sync” is a device speeding up a camera’s native capacity to improve its synchronization to flash light. This is done to capture scenes where differences of light and shade are crucial.

²⁶ For the English Oxford Dictionary, “phasing” is the relationship between the timing of two or more events. In Physics it is used as a synonym of “synchronizing”: the adjusting of the phase of something to that of something else.



Source: Ernst & Young, 2020.

The rationale of classic planning was well engrained in the PKM 2019 campaign, as it has been a customary practice of civil service in India at all levels, and a building block of the Indian State, both in its classic authoritative/indicative and its contemporary strategic fashions (Chaterjee, 1998: pp. 276-280; Singh and Singh, 2011: pp. 218-228). What was peculiar to the PKM 2019 campaign was not so much the use of strategic planning, but how phasing provided the quickest possible tempo for two interlaced multi-project “sprints”, one to prepare the infrastructure of Prayagraj (in a maximum of eight teen months), and the other to mount the Sangam temporary facilities (depending on the river water levels, in about two months). To achieve that, the Core Team needed to “gently trod” on practices and protocols of twenty-eight agencies at the UP level and four at the national level, ranging in a great variety of sectors (railways, defence, power, sanitation, conservation, health, local services and public works).

“Phasing” these two “sprints” meant synchronizing at least three institutionally different types of project cycles: projects financed by public funds through the municipal corporation of Prayagraj, with mostly local actors involved in the design, planning and implementation; projects financed by the State of Uttar Pradesh through the Division or through specific Ministries, involving the Apex and Administrative state committees in planning and operations; and projects depending of national agencies or services, where most or all the cycle was outside the reach of the campaign. Key devices for phasing at the first two levels were the participatory planning and supervision provided by PMA; and the “in principle approval” status to projects at state committees’ level (a provisory approval to start with the administrative steps of projects while other administrative conditions were completed), which ceded the full control of the flow to the Division. In the third level, ear-marked funds had to be “pushed” (followed and unblocked) in such a way that infrastructure project delays would not compromise entire parts of the city’s preparation. To achieve the adequate phasing, follow-up contacts had to be regularly made by the Core Team at key points of each cycle type bureaucratic circuit, and “emergency interventions” to unblock or speed up were regularly performed, many times through the personal mobilization of authorities or team members to the state capital, Lucknow, or to the nation’s capital, Delhi.

Although this flow control, as well as the institutional (political and administrative) networking it requires, are a usual aspect of public administration, “phasing” gave this networking a crucial strategic importance in flow control: a “strategic planning of the strategic planning” of sorts. An example²⁷ can illustrate this mechanism. To guarantee access, connectivity and circulation, while upgrading infrastructure, an important number of roads of Prayagraj (including all the main roads) had to be widened and strengthened. The same space had to be used, at the same time, for the laying out of new sewerage lines, while footpaths had to be built on the sewerage covers. This had to be done avoiding the removal of trees when possible, thus respecting the new “green belt” plan for the city. In the same space, fibre optic lines needed to be laid, while existing electricity lines and platforms had to be elevated to poles to avert electrocution dangers. As the roadwork advanced into the city, roundabouts needed to be built on key traffic junctions generating periodic congestion. Specially designed sculptures, of varying size, shape and heights, had to be placed in the middle of the new roundabouts catering to different public (and officials’) tastes. At the same time, important front portions of the buildings in the selected roads, needed to be demolished, and sometimes their occupiers relocated.

If one of the subprojects required to operationalize these public works was delayed because of usual financial matters, protocol consideration, stakeholder negotiations, or shifts in requirements, all other subprojects needed to be rescaled and re-planned, so as to allow the “whole” to move on. Flow control depended on how the campaign managed its institutional and political environment. The inseparably co-related mechanism furnishing capacity for flow control by “phasing”, was “environment control” by coordination.

3. Environment control

In environments or scenarios of power diffusion or “multi-agent systems”, where coherence is needed but authority is not centralized, units managing their own decisions and resources face the option of “coordinating” their actions. The sociology of organizations usually refers to this as the coordination-control “problem”²⁸. Coordination in public policy is a traditional, encompassing tag for the discussion of how public organizations in democratic environments achieve coherence and consistence during “policy implementation” (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984), or how they avoid “administrative dysfunctionality” (Hood, 1974) when they deal with the alignment of interdependent, distinct organizations and units (Chisholm, 1992: pp. 3-4). Coordination can also be seen as the necessary coherence-generating counterpart of specialization or division of labour in organizations (Mintzberg, 1993: p. 2).

For public organizations, coordination is about strategies, beside authority, put in

²⁷ This description is taken from our interview to Bhanu Goswami, Prayagraj’s District Manager, on January 14th 2020.

²⁸ For an overview of related sociology of organizations literature, see Godwyn and Hoffer Gittel (2012), parts II, III and IV.

work to achieve vertical and horizontal coherence, if that is what is actually needed (Peters, 2006). Coordination problems can be considered to be the result of functional differentiation or specialization leading to “underlap” (units only perceive or act upon selected fragments of a problem’s system) or “overlap” (units’ perceptions and activities collide over a problem’s system) (Wegrich and Štimac, 2014). Public policy literature frequently points at how coordination has become a ubiquitous governance issue as political authority disperses and problem complexity increases. Most widely praised areas of “active” policy coordination in polyarchic political regimes or non-hierarchical organizations, when it is not advisable or desired to rely in existing forms of spontaneous mutual adjustment (see below), are the reduction of policy fragmentation, stakeholder involvement, and knowledge management (OECD, 2002).

To study the coordinating mechanisms developed in PM 2019 we will follow Henry Mintzberg’s perspective on organizational design (Mintzberg, 1993). This shall require a brief detour. For Mintzberg, “the structure of an organization can be defined simply as the sum total of the ways in which its labor is divided into distinct tasks and then its coordination is achieved among these tasks” (Mintzberg, 1993: p. 2). An organization’s “configuration” is the final result of design choices arising from parameters provided by its environment, and how these choices are made. In a way, organizations “structure themselves” (choices are made under changing circumstances) creating decentralization parameters that allow them to produce the effective coordination of tasks in their environments.

According to Mintzberg, five coordinating mechanisms, formal and informal, are usually present in organizations: mutual adjustment (informal communication between “doers”), direct supervision (someone taking responsibility for most of the others’ actions through instructions and monitoring), standardization of work processes (when tasks follow programming and specifications), standardization of work outputs (when the programming and specifications structure the results), and standardization of worker skills (when what is standardized is the very working force). Although organizations mix all of these, growing organizational complexity has been a factor pushing supervision over mutual adjustment, and standardization over supervision. Modern bureaucratic organizations are the result of this shift.

Contemporary organizations resulting from this coordinating mechanisms are pyramid-like structures functioning in such a way that a base line of units or “operating core” converts inputs into outputs; a top line or “strategic apex” produces decisions; a “middle line” of managers and supervisors operationalize decisions into flows of operations and monitor the results; and two specialized positions of analysts and staff side the middle line providing the technical or clerical control and the specialized support needed by standardization. Most action takes place under the form of flows of formal centralized authority (decisions and instructions) and the regulated activity they order (operations). But an important part of the activity flow (the one Mintzberg’s work help to discover and conceptualize) functions differently: clusters of units form localized “work constellations”

combining middle line and operational core in different ways, many times through *ad hoc* decision processes and informal communication circuits and channels. The “organigram” hides a “sociogram” (Mintzberg, 1993: p. 21).

The “discovery” of work constellations opened the door for different approaches to the right configuration of positions, linkages and flows within organizations, mostly because work constellations make organizations more sensitive and flexible to their environment. Configurations depend, according to Mintzberg, of “centralization-decentralization” parameters. Five usual configurations range from (type A) vertical and horizontal centralization (complete power concentration) to (type E) vertical and horizontal decentralization (complete power diffusion to the work constellations). In the three middle ones there is limited and/or selective vertical and horizontal decentralization of processes (type B), skills (type C) and outcomes (type D). Types C and D made organizations smarter. Type D, “adhocracy”, made them smart and democratic.

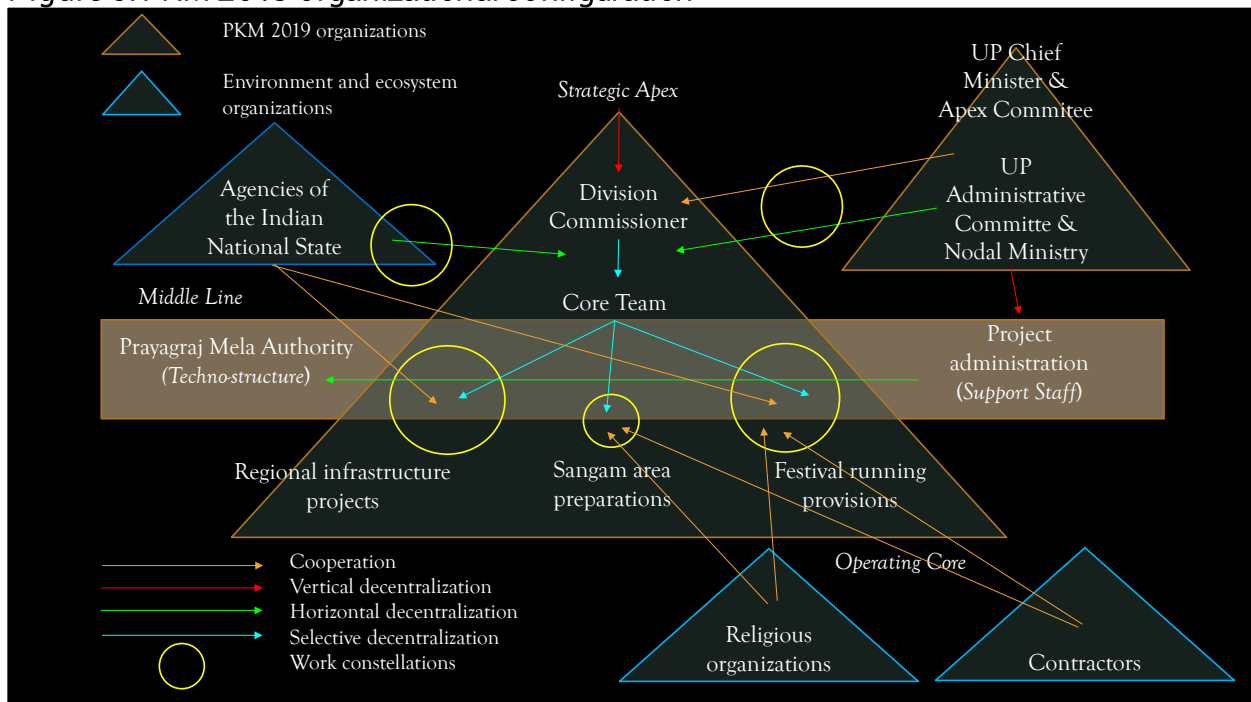
What makes a particular configuration work is a delicate equilibrium (with eventual trade-offs) between *consistency*, or coherence between organizational parameters, meaning a structure of positions and linkages allowing the right kind of flows; and *congruence*, or fit (adaptation) to situational or contingency factors and conditions, such as organizational state (age and size), technical systems involved in the input-output processes needed by the operating core, power relationships, and aspects of the environment (notably stability, complexity and hostility). Complex organizations in complex environments tend to produce the right kind of flows when working constellations are acknowledged and empowered through vertical and horizontal decentralization, the strategic apex retaining more (types C and D) or less (type E) oversight and authority powers. How are the right configurations achieved? By organizational design²⁹, assessing trade-offs between consistency and congruence; adjusting (“extending”) the configuration to achieve congruence; or, ultimately, by reconfiguration.

Using this perspective to help us understand what enabled the PKM 2019 campaign to achieve environment control, we can see that the campaign *achieved congruence* (it prepared and delivered the event, adequately standing to all situational and contingency factors expected, and to some unexpected) *while remaining highly consistent* (maintaining unity of purpose, coherence between activities, and political/administrative satisfaction of the apex). Moreover, unlike in what has been called “interstitial bureaucracies” to explain well-performing units within poorly-performing systems (Mc Donnell, 2017), where distinct-yet-embedded subsystems are characterized by practices inconsistent with those of the dominant institutions, in this case there was no clash or major friction of the organization with its authorizing environment. Quite to the contrary, the campaign seemed to make the environment *work along*.

²⁹ Organizational design, in practice, is not just producing a “project” and putting it to work but an adaptation or learning process arising from testing, experiencing, reading the environment, accepting uncertainty and the “slippage” and “drift” they entail, and moving structure with strategy acknowledging and respecting the collective aspects of organizations (Mintzberg, 1990: pp. 182-187).

What positions, linkages and flows made this configuration so fitting for such degree of (relatively) “tranquil” environment control? The trick seems to have been done by a vertically and horizontally decentralized structure, with (i) the lower layer of a two-layered strategic apex making the calls, (ii) the middle line providing articulation and cooperation between bundles of operations analogous to Mintzberg’s work constellations, and (iii) the operating core having a degree of field autonomy furnishing rapid adaptability. In the following figure we present a schematization of this, using an adaptation of Mintzberg’s basic configuration scheme (1993: p. 11). Political authorities and the PDC are seen as positions in the Strategic Apex, while the Core Team and PMA play the articulating middle management roles. Mintzberg’s technostructure and support staff correspond, in PKM 2019’s temporary organization, to national, state and local agencies providing planning and administration of the multi-projects bundle needed for the preparations and running of the festival. These activities are provided by the operating core. We use Mintzberg’s distinction between mutual adjustment, vertical, horizontal and selective decentralization mechanisms as corresponding to cooperation, power cession, power sharing / collaboration, and power diffusion to work constellations. We suggest the five work constellations identified are the centers of activity providing the organization’s consistency, which in turn allowed for congruence.

Figure 5: PKM 2019 organizational configuration



Source: Authors

This strategic organizational design can be seen as a potentially useful management mechanism. In the first place, the *two-layered strategic apex*, reserving powers of oversight and support to political and administrative state authorities, while decentralizing most of the campaign management powers in the PDC, was a useful device to *combine political command with operational capacity*. This configuration of the organization’s upper section

proved to be an adequate choice for a campaign-like enterprise, where most of the coordination had to take place close to the field level, with an apex retaining authority and providing strategic institutional support, while “making sure” things were heading in the expected direction. Trust was thus built. But it needed to be constantly activated. Such was the role of a frequent and systematic type of interaction between the lower and upper layer of the strategic apex that the stakeholders called “iteration”. Iteration is a synonym of repetition. Repetitive contact through frequent meetings and visits between members of the Apex seem to have adequately “dramatized” the need for trust around the campaign’s decisions and activities. The organizational configuration thus provided the consistency and congruence needed for environment control.

4. Ecosystem control

We reserved the term “environment”, as in Moore (1995), for the institutional and political complex surrounding the public organization in charge of the campaign. We use the term “ecosystem” for the “community of interacting organisms” in which the campaign had to take place: local actors, sub-organizations of PKM 2019, and stakeholders.

A substantial amount of the strategic planning and management of preparations had to be carried out by a middle line formed by organizations and agencies that were not under the direct authority of the PDC. Automatic mutual adjustment was risky in the given goals and timelines, therefore *mid-level coordination was critical*. PMA was the crucial artifact providing effective means to achieve coherence to the campaign’s management, through an active kind of participation that generated “ownership” (in the words of the Core Team) among stakeholders. In its regular, hours long meetings, the PMA board discussed all preparations and was the receptacle of all monitoring activities. PMA provided “brokerage” between sub-units of the festival organization (police, health, transit, waste), which neutralized potential misalignment and collisions threatening the control of volatile variables in the running stage of the festival, “pooling” decision-making and thus generating “positive coordination” (Wegrich and Štimac, 2014: p. 49).

Experts insist strategic planning’s most meaningful sense lies not in technical systems, or any set of specific steps to take, but in “how the process is used to promote strategic thinking, acting, learning and knowing” (Bryson et al, 2009: p. 174). The argument for strategic planning’s effectiveness lies on information-based, discursive and argumentative practices empirically affecting the flow of activities that produce organizational performance consequences, making a public program achieve its desired results (Bryson, 2004). In other words, how planning can make management become strategic at all. The dramatized discussion, decision-making and monitoring of projects in PMA -a participatory, multi-stakeholder board- gave mid-level planning the collective, argumentative and strategic character needed by the festival management.

As PMA was a key device of the complex mechanism building ecosystem control through coordination of field public authorities, another one was the detection of potential

frictions with staff, and stakeholders and a strategy to tackle them by developing *organizational commitment*³⁰, the active cooperative behaviour needed for the preparation and running of the festival. From the analysis of 2013 precedents and the 2018 pilot experience three groups were identified as crucial in this respect: religious organizations, workers and contractors. For the three groups, a strategic approach of dialogue and preemptive conflict neutralization was developed, so that, as put by an interviewee, “rightful fires wouldn’t break at the wrong moment”.

Religious organizations (particularly those developing the bulk of religious activities during the festival) had to be attended for, striking an equilibrium between satisfying their expectations and avoiding unequal treatment. The strategy used was to produce the minimum possible differentiation in accommodation and services, removing most sources of conflict around place attribution and thus generating collaborative behaviour in the very process of place attribution / distribution³¹. To do that, the Core Team radicalized the already existing practice of (a) taking over the responsibility of the “tent city” construction, using similar layouts and materials, and installing similar water and electricity provision (the only remaining significant difference being the distance to the core Sangam ghats); and (b) attributing spaces and positions through patient negotiations upon evidence of arrival and use of the facilities. The significantly upgraded facilities of the temporary city greatly impressed the religious organizations as a sign of respect, collaborating to avoid mistrust and conflict.

Workers (particularly the most numerous and worst paid staff that would collaborate in waste management activities) had to be actively involved in the ambitious pace of preparations and the ambitious standards of the outcomes. In particular, strikes had to be avoided, as they could endanger the tempo of preparations and the running of an issue-free festival. The strategy used was to (a) remove the most important source of conflict (wages), while (b) building up commitment through symbolic (acknowledgement) and material (facilities) motivation³². The wages problem was achieved through harnessing new contracting and payment technologies through cell phone applications. This removed the informality of appointments and the delays in payments. The staff was provided accommodation and services within the festival area, eliminating precarious quarters and long commuting; and was actively positioned in public as one of the most important

³⁰ Organizational commitment is frequently used to refer to the sharing of goals and codes by different parts of an organization, in spite of asymmetries (such as owner-employee in a firm). It is generally attributed, in part, to the negotiation of mutual benefits, and, in part, to varied sources of motivation (see below). For the discussion around the concept and its key variables see, among other, Mayer and Schoorman (1992); Liu, Chiu and Fellows (2007); or Filstad (2011).

³¹ This technique is known, in conflict resolution studies, as “integrative bargaining” (where parts are driven by negotiation away from zero-sum situations). For a thorough review of classic conflict and negotiation models, see Lewicki et al (1992).

³² Strategies of this kind in organizational studies are sometimes called “affective commitment” (psychologically empowering styles of leadership) and “behavioural integrity” (patterns of alignment between an actor’s words and deeds in employee’s perceptions that produce commitment effects). For the former see Pentareddy and Suganthi (2015). For the latter, see Leroy et al (2012). For an overall review of employee commitment literature see Sahoo et al (2010).

resources of the festival. This strategy produced a proud sense of “ownership” among workers, which seems to have greatly facilitated their upgraded commitment to the running of the festival.

Contractors, finally (in particular vendors for sanitation procurement) had to be involved in the development of better products, faster delivery and reasonable prices, breaking with traditional rent-seeking behaviour. The strategy used was to (a) involve them in the early phases of the procurement process, helping some of them to develop their products according to requirements; (b) push down prices by raising the quantity of contracted products (so that every vendor could meet its expected total return); and (c) involve vendors in the product use lay-out and monitoring to detect quality problems.

The high organizational commitment of staff and stakeholders was an evolving feature of the campaign. It was more the result of learning and adaptation, than of design or planning. But it turned out to be one of the main keys to guarantee critical aspects of the campaign. It was crucial to achieve cleanliness, as it was the single activity demanding the cooperation of most staff and stakeholders.

5. Risk control

Environment and ecosystem control provided maximum functionality to the campaign and its operation, optimizing the use of the time gained by flow control. But the campaign management took additional measures adding a layer of control on potentially adverse situations. We shall thus call this fourth and final key management mechanism “risk control”.

A key benchmark for the management of the festival stated it had to be “issue-free” or “accident-free”. Was it possible to run a human congregation of such characteristics with low or zero risk? A frequent point came up among officials with team responsibility in the running of the festival proper, when the research team asked about crises. There were none, or they were sufficiently insignificant (“no crises, only hiccups”) as to require a few minutes of memory scavenging. Associated with this absence of significant crises came the idea in many of our interviewees that critical situations were responded to with on-the-spot action, and necessary decisions were backed by authority, without the need of going through a long chain of command. Was a degree of team autonomy an important dimension of the functioning-whole?

Let us take a closer look. For a human congregation of that size to be accident or issue-free, an important number of risks³³ needed to be considered. The campaign

³³ Although the existence of one definition of “risk” for all the circumstances in which the term is used is a debated issue (Adam et al, 2000), a useful idea for our study is to consider risk as “heterogeneous phenomena that preclude standardized evaluation and handling” (Aven and Renn, 2010: p. 2) related to “outcomes regarded as amenable to human decision and intervention” (Power, 2004: p. 14), “institutionally shaping” (Ibidem, p. 15) the acceptable level or scope of uncertainty for a given situation.

management concentrated its attention on three most important sources of risk on which to make a serious attempt at deploying maximum variable control. Two of these risks were classical to Kumbh Melas, while the third one was relatively novel: *safety*, or accidents and issues associated to the circulation of people; *sanitation*, or accidents and issued associated human waste; and *security*, or accidents and issues generated by potentially harmful human behaviour. A multi-layered risk reduction strategy seems to have been preferred to an “acceptable risk” approach (affordable cost-opportune precautions, or dangers below socially and politically tolerated level³⁴). This kind of risk management was tackled with expert advice, participation of state and national specialized teams, and clever scenario planning. In the words of the Division Commissioner, “as planned, there were no crises, [because] we had plans A, B and C; but also D, E and F”.

But a final layer of additional emergency response was “discretion”, or a degree of autonomy placed in the field teams to solve specific problems and situations. This mechanism seems to have emerged and evolved in the last phase of the campaign (more than actually planned or foreseen in design) and became crucial in the eyes of many stakeholders, providing a reasonable management of uncertainty³⁵. Field discretion can be seen as having provided *failsafe* capabilities on varying problematic scenarios entailing “multiple possible sources of failure” (Bryson et al, 2009: p. 176) to the festival proper. Key team leaders knew they would have to make quick decisions affecting other teams, especially for crowd or waste management. “Adaptive management” to specific situations was thus incorporated as a potentially useful practice³⁶.

In organizational theory, discretion can be defined as “ability to alter” (Mintzberg, 1993: p. 25), or “the latitude of action or control over one’s work” (Caza, 2011). It is also seen as the measure of available possibilities from which an action choice can be made (Ibidem). Even if discretion is understood to be inherent to interdependent activities, it is seldom planned for, coming most likely as a consequence of role and task distribution. In PKM 2019, discretion was a responsibility invested in teams after planning and simulation drills to respond to specific, “on-the-spot” emergencies that could nevertheless arise. We shall use the expression “locale” discretion for this, with “locale”³⁷ referring to the place where material events take place (to avoid the mechanical confusion with the political-geographical expression “local discretion” common in public policy decentralization/devolution studies³⁸).

³⁴ See Hunter and Fewtrell (2001).

³⁵ For what the management of uncertainty means for different practices and domains, see Bammer and Smithson (2008).

³⁶ For adaptive management as a technique / approach to project management, see Wysocki and McGary (2003, part 2). The term is popular among environmental policy-makers debating resources management in the context of climate change (see Allen and Gunderson, 2011).

³⁷ According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, “locale” is an area or place, especially one where something special happens, such as the action in a book or film. In Spanish and French “local(e)” can be used as both the English local and locale.

³⁸ Being “discretion” a synonym of “autonomy”, the expression “local discretion” is frequently used in the study of centre-local or decentralization studies to refer to the way in which institutional and political relations

In situations where many things can go wrong, notably in crises or disasters, organizational responses are shaped by a “steady stream of *ad hoc* responses to ‘what do we do now?’ questions [...], [many of which] flow from pre-existing plans and controlled improvisation by front-line officials” (Boin and t’Hart, pp. 180-181). How did locale discretion work in our campaign? Teams had previously discussed emergency scenarios and potential actions to be taken, mostly after Magh Mela 2018. The technique of simulation drills was also used to reinforce team preparedness. Locale discretion was implicitly the last block of the chain, the failsafe for situations in which field teams knew (crucially crowd management in hot spots, and waste management within the Sangam area) disruption could compromise an important part of the campaign, and on-the-spot action could replace reports and orders emanated from central command³⁹.

6. Case value

The purpose of a design-oriented case analysis is to provide valuable knowledge for students and practitioners of public management. In cases where intent is fulfilled, the epiphenomenon “functioning” or “working whole” can be re-discovered as a design-project and reverse-engineered as an enterprise through research. Once these processes are empirically understood, conceptual work discusses and theorizes the key sequences of events and activities underlying the ways their management functions were performed. The representations of these sequences we called mechanisms are potentially (albeit not necessarily) useful information as source of precedent for design-projecting public organizations and enterprises, particularly in situations where analogous or comparable challenges and requirements are present.

Certainly, for PKM 2019, many of the initial situations and management mechanisms were either too contingent or too peculiar to the situation. Yet, some of the requirements arguably belong to universal challenges, and the solutions may prove a valuable source of future public management design-oriented problem-solving. The very human gathering is unlike anything found elsewhere, but not the organizational challenges and risks. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh had substantial political and financial firepower, clearly refrained from micro-management, and instructed the state authorities to do so, too. But clever organizational design helped strategic trust to be built and maintained. The selected Prayagraj Division Commissioner, as well the Temporary District

between central and subnational or local levels of government enable or impede the making of authoritative or significant local decisions without central government intervention (Bolgherini, 2016: p. 75). Indicators of local discretion are not only institutional provisions distributing formal power, but also political customary relations allowing local government to make calls superior authorities will endorse. Local discretion is usually associated to enhanced flexibility for administration, procurement, employment, as well as for “downward” or social accountability (Yilmaz et al, 2008).

³⁹ This mechanism offered an invaluable failsafe for at least two critical situations on the festival’s peak day: a crowd saturation at the railway station that came close to a stampede; and a blocked route for waste disposal trucks that could have triggered massive cleanliness disruption. Both were neutralized by this on-the-spot reaction under the confidence authority would back decisions made under such “locale discretion”.

Manager and most of the team, were highly professional individuals, committed to the job in ways above standard. But the processes in which they converted this personal thrive in institutional motivation, or transmitted it to the organization, is an interesting source of strategy. Both the nature of the Indian Administrative Service (an integrated, hierarchical organization of professional cadres), the “messages from above”, and the political conjuncture (same party governing nation and state, heading for key politically validating elections) are likely to have made it easier to find collaborative attitudes in key national and state agencies. But inadequate organizational design and unawareness of synchronization problems would have compromised the festival, as would compromise any multi-project, timeline limited enterprise. Last, but not least, the overall purpose of a better festival was corresponded by a public opinion and attitude friendly to the spirit of governance, safety and cleanliness displayed by PKM 2019. Yet, the campaign management didn't refrain from failsafe preparations, as in universally useful catastrophe scenarios.

For the archetype of interventions that we have called “campaigns” -timeline restricted preparations for a flash-like succession of final events- the experience of PKM 2019 showed design-projects ought to consider all of the above: the importance of organizational design, the way a multi-project enterprise will control its flow of resources and activities, its environment and ecosystem and, as much as possible, prepare for zero-risk. Some of the strategies used can be seen as mechanisms: how project synchronization is a crucial aspect of a multi-activity enterprise; the way organizational design is activated by the campaign management to maintain a non-hostile environment; and how multi-layered risk management provides low probability of accidents and issues. Moreover, some of these findings could and should be further refined for precedent by experts on large human congregations, as it is acknowledged and expected to become a benchmark for future Kumbh Melas in India.

From a more general, design-oriented take on public organizations, the case shows an interesting example of a design-project evolving into a functioning-whole throughout the “meandering” scenario-processes of festival preparation and running, confirming the usefulness of the framework used (Barzelay, 2019). It is a peculiarly enticing example of how implementation is better understood as “evolution”, the success or failure of an enterprise involving social action being not so much determined by whether a policy was “carried out to the letter”, but by “rational, evolutionary use of resources” as a part of its dynamic (Majone and Wildavsky, 1978).

Both ideas help to an ever more cautious use of the classical vision classifying design and implementation as stages of a sequenced process, particularly for a professionally oriented perspective, and ever more curious attitude to a “designerly” approach to public management.

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Sources

1. Primary

Type	Activity and place	Dates (2020)
Observation	1. Kumbh Mela area, Prayagraj	January 11th
	2. PMA Key management functions, Prayagraj	January 15th
	3. KM pre-peak day operations, Prayagraj	January 23rd
	4. KM Mauni Amavasya (peak day), Prayagraj	January 27th
Semi-structured interviews	1. Durga Shanker Mishra (Schwachh Bharat Urban), Delhi	January 10th
	2. Amitabh Kant (National Institution for Transforming India - NITI Aayog), Delhi	January 11th
	3. Saloni Goel (PMA environmental and sanitation consultant), Delhi	January 11th
	4. Saloni Goel (PMA environmental and sanitation consultant), Delhi	January 12th
	5. Parmeswaran Iyer (Dept Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti), Delhi	January 12th
	6. Rajiv Rai (Deputy Mela Officer), Prayagraj	January 12th
	7. KP Singh (Inspector General, Prayagraj Police), Prayagraj	January 14th
	8. Bhanu Goswami (District Magistrate, Prayagraj), Prayagraj	January 14th
	9. G Ramesh (Indian Institute of Management Bangalore), Prayagraj	January 14th
	10. Ashish Goel (Division Commissioner, Prayagraj Mela Authority Chairman), Prayagraj	January 15th
	11. OP Singh (Uttar Pradesh General Director of Police), Lucknow	January 16th
	12. SN Sabat (Associate Director General, Lucknow Police), Lucknow	January 16th
	13. Suresh Khanna (Minister of Urban Development 2017-2018), Lucknow	January 16th
	14. Dr Ashok Kumar Paliwal (former Additional Secretary to Prayagraj Health Department), Lucknow	January 17th
	15. Dr. Anup Chandra Pandey (former Chief Secretary Uttar Pradesh), Lucknow	January 18th
	16. Sri Yogi Adithyanath (Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister), Lucknow	January 19th
	17. Siddarth Nath Singh (Uttar Pradesh Minister of Health), Lucknow	January 19th
	18. Vijay Kiran Anand (Mela District Magistrate / PMA CEO), Lucknow	January 18th
	19. Suhas LY (Prayagraj District Magistrate), Lucknow	January 18th
	20. Awanish Avasthi (Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary of Home Affairs), Lucknow	January 19th
	21. Manoj Kumar Singh (Principal Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development), Lucknow	January 19th
	22. Ravi Sharma (Prayagraj Mela Authority Kumbh Young Professional)	January 23rd
	23. Ravindra Tyagi (Prayagraj Mela Authority Sanitation Consultant)	January 24th
	24. Ashish Goel (Division Commissioner, Prayagraj Mela Authority Chairman)	January 31st
	25. Vijay Kiran Anand (Mela District Magistrate / PMA CEO), Lucknow	February 2nd

2. Secondary

2.1. Methodology

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2.2. Information

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