

# Principles for Ecosystem Governance in Societal Platforms

---

Aapti institute & Societal Platforms



# Thinking around Societal Platforms and Governance

---

## Situating values in societal platforms:

- Mission is centered on values and principles –rooted in values of rights, equity and freedom to enable choice, nurture dignity, and restore agency for all
- Values established through relational approaches critical for amplification of rights, equity and freedom

## This set of principles tries to:

- Articulate good governance where stakeholders use each others' resources to achieve better societal outcomes with improved efficiencies
- Embed societal values drawn from constitutionalism, democratic values, and individual liberties

*Primary focus on samaaj and sarkaar platforms*

*Here, we aim to discuss concerns, limitations and challenges in taking principles to practice.*

# We built the principles through conversations with the ecosystem

---

We used a collaborative approach to arrive at the principles by talking to experts and practitioners – bottom-up

---



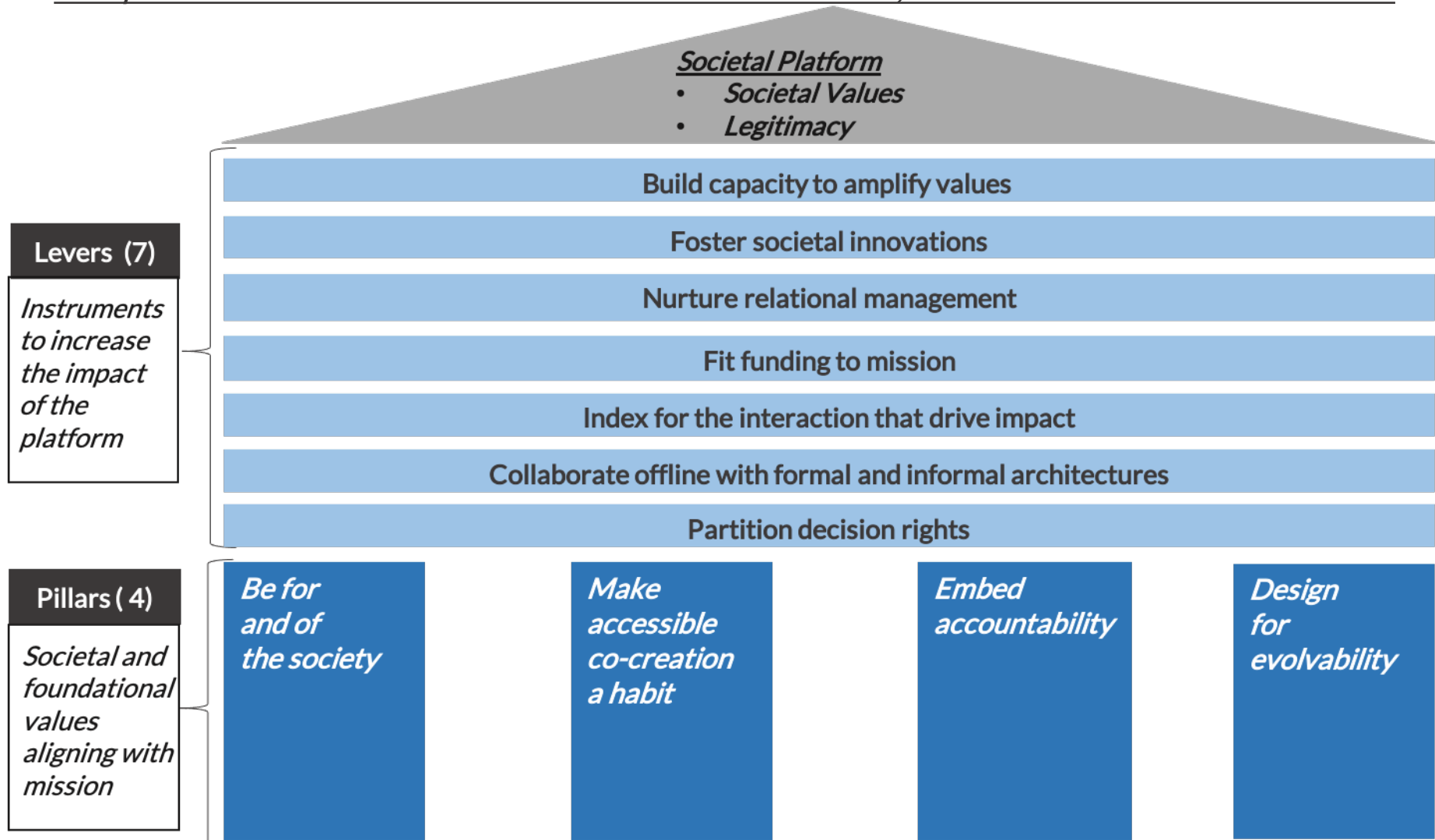
*We hope to widen the scope and scale of conversations in order to calibrate the principles in the future*

*\* List of interviewees: Dr Lalitesh Kathragadda, Dr. Sunil Anand, Stina Heikkila, Dr. Santosh Mathew, Khushboo Awasthi, Hiren Doshi*

*\*\* Organisations in roundtable: EkStep, eGovernments Foundation, Avanti, Digital Green, Arghyam, Reap Benefit*

# Aapti arrived at 11 principles with a '*pillar and lever*' framework

*Principles seek to embed societal values - drawn from constitutionalism, democratic values and individual liberties*



[Link to doc : Principles](#)

# *Pillar principles*

## Be for and of the society



*Embody societal cares and concerns into governance and co-creation processes to unlock imagination and problem-solving.*

# Be for and of the society

---

## Why: Restoring agency and system leadership

*Societal platforms exist to serve communities of interest, not the other way around. To go beyond just delivering services, towards restoring agency and system leadership, platforms must embody community in their very essence (Dr. Lalitesh Katragadda).*

Who	How	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Actors who are co-creating upon and amplifying the shared enabling societal platform infrastructures.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Seats on the board</li><li>Manage established governance frameworks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How to identify the right representatives?</li></ul>

*Example: Amul, is an Indian dairy cooperative society managed by a cooperative body, which today is jointly owned by 36 lakh milk producers in Gujarat. Elected representatives manage the board, which is responsive to the farmers needs and suggestions.*

# Make 'accessible co-creation' a habit



*Integrate co-creation interfaces across multiple facets of the platform and share co-creation opportunities proactively.*



# Make 'accessible co-creation' a habit

## Why: Share Solvability and Inspire Co-creation

*Embedding any value system by design (impact, privacy, inclusion - by design) requires discovering the parameters from those who are affected by it. Co-creation engages communities to embed longer-term values of citizenship, trust and responsibility and for the platforms to be sustainable in the longer run.*

Why	Who	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Co-creation requires acknowledgment of power relations for network effects to become fruitful</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Actors who build shared infrastructures must engage with users for innovation and co-creation to foster</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exploring short cycle co-creation models to identify what works is critical</li><li>How to establish iterative processes of co-creation as the platform scales?</li></ul>

***Example:** ShikshaLokam was developed by leveraging Sunbird - a shared infrastructure for learning created by EkStep Foundation - to create a learning platform for school leaders.*

# Embed accountability



*Ensure clearly articulated responsibilities, indexed for context. Establish accessible grievance redressal processes.*

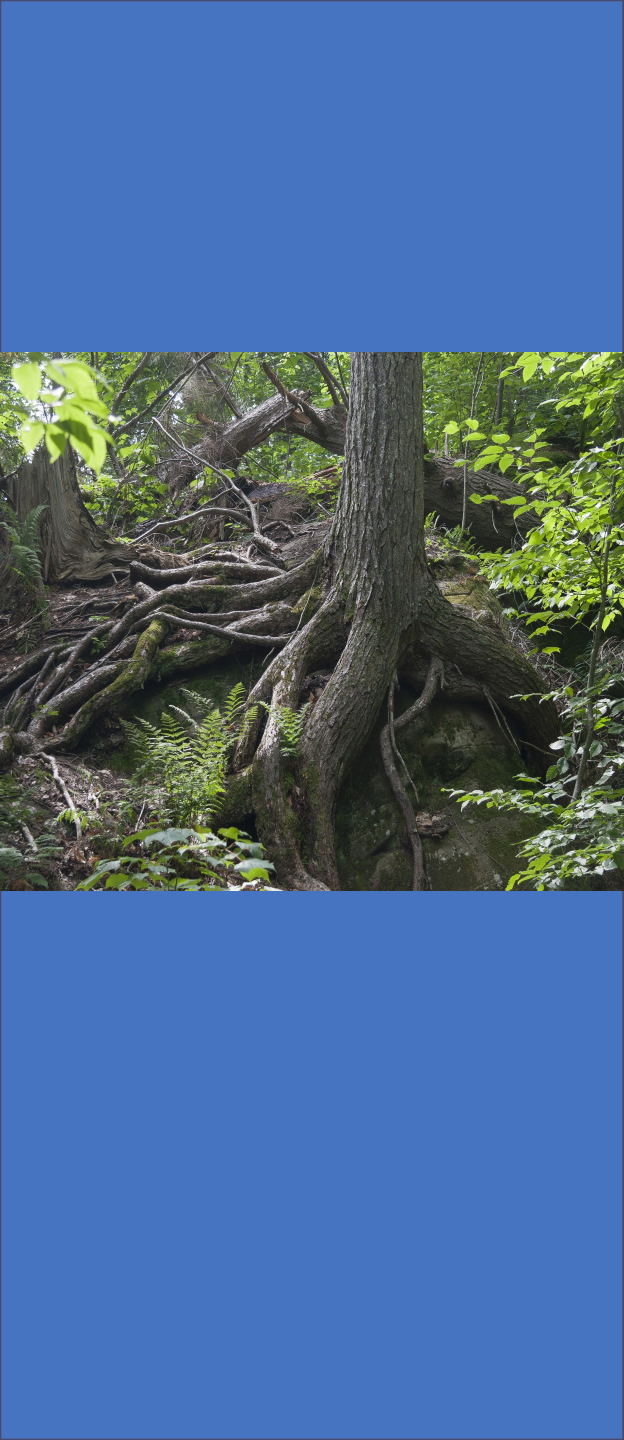
# Embed accountability

## Why : Restoring agency

*Platform operation without articulated consequences and liability, risks alienating and losing trust of communities of interest. Clear articulation incites compliance with principles (Dr. Santosh Mathew).*

Who	How	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clear codification of accountability processes is important with respect to the assets , processes and the interactions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establishing clear, and accessible grievance redressal mechanisms, likely embedded in the platforms themselves</li><li>For sarkaar platforms, engaging civil society can be helpful in translating accountability into action</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Accountability values and processes must be codified right from the start of the platform and constant modifications are needed as time evolves.</li></ul>

*Example: To counter the problem of late filing of performance appraisal reports, the digital platform of Sparrow, a lock-in period was ensured ( by 31st December of each year) , beyond which the APARs could not be edited*



# Design for evolvability

*Ensure that governance processes adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities for the platform to be resilient and sustainable.*

# Design for evolvability

---

## Why: Seek Rapid Evolution

*Just as technical architectures should allow for structures and features to evolve and adapt to challenges and opportunities, so too governance must evolve. Governance processes must be harmonised with the broader needs of the ecosystem rather than just with respect to the platform.*

### Who

- While extenders, amplifiers and participants can engage in claiming iterations, ultimately each governance evolution must come from platform builders and owner entities.

### Concerns at scale

- At scale, there may be conflict between rapid evolution and evolvability.
- Having the right checks and balances, distributed leadership so that embedding diverse experiences is achieved.

*Example: ECHO India has a fidelity team to ensure that the values and norms are being adhered to. As the hubs evolve into superhubs over the course of the platform, the values keep evolving to account for the localities of the patients*

# *Lever principles*

# Partition decision rights



*Minimise process latency by modularising decision-making powers. Enable autonomy for self-governance by the society.*

# Partition decision rights

*Articulating clearly the decisions (on the platform, assets/content, applications) that are to be taken by each actor, and minimising decision dependency between them through modularity. Enabling and empowering them vs replacing is critical (Hiren Doshi).*

Why	Who	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensuring a reduction of latency in governance processes by modularity in decision making</li><li>• To make sure that all actors have clear roles in the platform</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decision rights with respect to asset content, app interfaces are retained with those who are in the co-creation environment.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As platforms scale, during each potential iteration by either addition of new actors or by process changes, modularity and autonomy processes must be reoriented.</li></ul>

*Example: Wikipedia has the governance mechanism of 'Wiki Projects' where the small, decentralized social structures govern themselves in a locally organised manner, dealing with developing guidelines for stylistic conventions and the creation of content.*



# Collaborate offline with formal and informal architectures



*Leverage long-standing embedded societal relationships of offline networks to amplify interactions and address breakdowns.*

## Collaborate offline with formal and informal architectures

*Leveraging the long-standing, embedded relationships of trust of community organisations and individuals, while being cognizant of the power relationships, can provide significant amplification for societal platforms.*

Why	Who	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Offline architectures embedded in context to help in amplifying key interactions, addressing breakdowns of awareness and ability, and ensuring accountability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Platform builders, co-creators/extenders, would benefit from having their own approaches to engaging with offline architectures to amplify impact</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>As platform scales, systematising engagement with offline architectures by encoding the ways of engagement should be thought of</li></ul>

***Example:** Given the limitations of access to technology in rural areas, Pratham supports a hybrid learning program. This involves getting children in the age group 10-14 in a village to form their own groups of 5-6 each, thus enabling them to co-create a learning space within their community.*

# Index for the interaction that drive impact



*Identify and index all processes that deliver  
higher impact. Foster adjacencies that amplify  
the impact on the ground.*

# Index for the interaction that drive impact

*Indexing all processes, including governance processes, to increase the interactions which drive impact on the ground.*

Why	Who	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interactions on platforms drive impact on the communities of interest, which is linked to their mission</li><li>• It is important to accurately identify and amplify the relevant interactions and foster further development.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Both builders and extenders need to be aligned to optimise platform interactions.</li><li>• Conflicts between these actors need to also be resolved with these interactions in mind</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When the scale of the platform is relevant, the ability to consistently and correctly determine interactions becomes difficult.</li><li>• Some interactions might be in odds with others.</li></ul>

*Example: In ECHO India's telementoring model, key interactions of value is the engagement between health care workers and expert doctors in a conversational, case-study oriented approach to ensure distributed capacity for healthcare.*

# Fit funding to mission



*Align the funding model and ecosystem with the societal mission and values for long term sustenance and evolution.*

# Fit funding to mission

*Funding models must be aligned with mission statements and platform values.*

Why	Who	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Funding models to align with the goals/plans for platform evolution and the underlying mission</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Financed/subsidised by public funding (sarkaar platforms) or receive subsidies, have differential obligations</li><li>Samaaj platforms, subsidised by philanthropic resources can explore community /co-operative funding models.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Revenue models are both pre-conditions and consequences of scale.</li><li>User fee based models provide funding at scale, but determining them upfront is critical for evolution.</li></ul>

*Example: In eGovernments Foundation's work, the core technology is developed through philanthropic/private capital, implementations/system integrations are paid for by state governments. Evaluating a pricing model must account for the source of funds (part private, part public), service type (govt to citizen, grounded in entitlement) and the mission (easier access to all to the state)*

# Nurture relational management



*Embed core values and norms into the mindsets of all actors rather than only express process controls.*

# Nurture relational management

---

*Platform governance needs to evolve to embedding norms and values in all actors, rather than express process controls and procedures.*

Why	Who	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Platform governance can emerge from gatekeeping and controls</li><li>• To move towards relational management focused on embedding norms and values (in code, where feasible) and in the actors in the system is critical</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Platform should embed values so every actor is a bearer of them so that they become replicable at every level of the platform.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Embedding values, which are not easily measurable, consistently across at scale is challenging</li></ul>



# Foster societal innovations



*Continually support all actors in the ecosystem to co-create innovations on the platform*

# Foster societal innovations

*Build ways for extenders and participants to co-create upon the shared digital infrastructure*

Why	Who	Concerns at scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Built on open resources and open processes for democratization of platform value</li><li>• Being deliberate and thoughtful in supporting extenders and participants is critical.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical to identify the innovators at the edge of the platforms.</li><li>• For societal platforms, capability concerns of innovators should be considered for ideas to take shape.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At scale, variation in the capacities and types of innovators, requiring customisation of programs and means of engagement should be taken care of.</li></ul>

*Example: Datameet, hasgeek and various state and central government departments, ministries have hackathon challenges for the innovators to gather and propose solutions*

# Build capacity to amplify values



*Strengthen the team with knowledge and skills  
to practice the core values and nurture the  
relationships that embrace them.*

# Build capacity to amplify values

---

*Building team and partnership capacities and skills to amplify societal values*

## Why

- Seeking relationships to nurture societal values
- To align hiring, training and incentive structures for these values

## Concerns at scale

- Difficulties in measuring and assessing societal values

# Further research

---

- Attempted to articulate an early version of principles and values to consider governance approaches within societal platforms
- Further research needed to calibrate principles, testing them in context, and to articulate a set of 'how-to's around governance