KYBERNOLOGY AS AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE IN GOVERNMENTAL SCIENCE FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH: A CRITICAL COMPARISON WITH GOVERNANCE THEORY

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Abstract. *This article positions Kybernology as a Global South—rooted alternative in governmental science, engaging the mainstream governance paradigm in critical dialogue. Drawing on a systematic literature review (SLR) of 27 publications (1964–2025) from Scopus and Google Scholar, it synthesizes insights across ontology, epistemology, and axiology, and across macro, meso, and micro levels. Findings show governance excels in architecture and instruments (network design and accountability), while Kybernology foregrounds state–citizen relations and process values (procedural fairness, responsibility, and service recovery). Epistemically, standard good governance indicators should be complemented by citizen experience–based measures, i.e., trust, fairness, dignity, and civic voice, as coequal evidence. The article proposes a Hybrid Governance–Kybernology Model, encompassing macro institutional architecture, meso process values, and micro citizen control, undergirded by an epistemic layer of cognitive justice. Overall, government performance depends on the combination of institutional effectiveness and relational legitimacy. Kybernology is, therefore, not merely a*

critique but a strategic Indonesian contribution that enriches global theories and practices of governance.

Keywords: *Kybernology, governance theory, government studies, Global South epistemology*

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, governmental studies have undergone a paradigmatic shift, with governance becoming the mainstream framework. Emerging from the legitimacy crisis of the welfare state in the Global North during the 1980s, governance emphasizes collaboration among state, market, and civil society actors, network coordination, and institutional accountability. With these orientations, governance is regarded as adaptive to the complexities of modern administration and offers seemingly universal principles and indicators to measure performance.

However, when applied to the Global South—particularly Indonesia—epistemic and practical challenges emerge. Governance tends to normalize proceduralism, prioritize universal indicators, and highlight formal actors, while, in fact, local values, informal structures, and community spirituality strongly influence governance dynamics. The concepts of "cognitive justice" (Visvanathan) and "epistemologies of the South" (Santos) underline these asymmetries, showing how knowledge rooted in community experience is often marginalized within the governance discourse.

Indonesian studies show similar tendencies—governance practices are frequently shaped more by cultural norms, social relations, and patronage systems than by rational-bureaucratic models assumed in governance standards. Thus, there is a need for a framework that treats values, relationships, and citizen experience as core explanatory variables, rather than simply contextual background. This shift is crucial to better understand and improve governance performance in the Global South.

From this perspective, Kybernology—introduced by Taliziduhu Ndraha—emerges as an Indonesian conceptual contribution. Kybernology defines governance as "the art of steering collective life," conducted not only by the state but also by communities, families, indigenous institutions, and non-state structures. Ontologically, it situates governance as a living value system; epistemologically, it is inter- and transdisciplinary, embracing verstehen and community intuition; and axiologically, it emphasizes civility, social justice, and balance across subcultures. Hence, Kybernology is not merely a critique but an alternative framework rooted in the Global South experience, ready to engage on equal terms with Global North traditions.

This article formalizes Kybernology as an alternative perspective in governmental studies, placing it in critical dialogue with governance theory across three domains: ontology (what counts as "government"), epistemology (how knowledge is produced and

what indicators are legitimate), and axiology (the values and goals pursued). Empirically, it demonstrates the relevance of Kybernology in explaining Indonesian governance practices shaped by subcultural interactions and sociocultural capital, such as deliberation (musyawarah) and cooperation (gotong royong). The article contributes theoretically by constructing a comparative matrix of governance and Kybernology methodologically by presenting a transparent and replicable SLR protocol across North–South contexts, and practically by proposing citizen experience–based performance indicators, such as trust, procedural fairness, and dignity, as complements to good governance metrics.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Governance: Mainstream and Its Logic

Governance studies emerged as a critique of government-centrism and hierarchical bureaucracy. The governance literature emphasizes:
1. The shift from government to governance: multi-actor network coordination among state, market, and civil society (Rhodes, 1996; Rosenau, 1995)
2. Institutional architecture and governance instruments: *steering* rather than *rowing*, policy instruments, and *meta-governance* (Pierre & Peters, 2020; Kooiman, 2003; Peters, 2011)
3. Normative standards: transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and participation, formulated as *good governance* (UNDP, 1997)
4. Intellectual roots: Anglo-Saxon public administration (White, 1955), philosophical reflections on values in administration (Waldo, 1955), and interpretive approaches (Bevir, 2010)

Strengths: This framework provides the language of institutional design and performance measurement that is comparable across contexts.

Limitations: Particularly in the Global South, it tends toward proceduralism (compliance with standards) and universal abstraction, often neglecting micro-level government–citizen relations and local values that drive substantive compliance.

2.2. Global South Critiques: Cognitive Justice and Epistemic Plurality

Global South literature advances epistemic corrections to the mainstream:
1. Sociopolitical hybridity: Transplantation of *best practices* often fails due to dual structures (formal–informal), political culture, and patronage (Riggs, 1964; Dwivedi & Nef, 1982).
2. Cognitive justice: Visvanathan (2009) demands equal recognition of diverse ways of knowing; local knowledge must not be subordinated to "universal" indicators.

3. Epistemologies of the South: Santos (2014) warns of *epistemicide*—the erasure of local knowledge through the hegemonization of Western standards—and calls for an ecology of knowledges.
4. Alternative paradigms: Drechsler (2015) and Farazmand (2018) advocate *Non-Western Public Administration* and "governance from the South" that foreground context, values, and social justice as core variables.
5. Critical participation: Hickey & Mohan (2004) caution against the "tyranny of participation," where participation is standardized without granting substantive power to citizens.

The core of these critiques is the same: governance is proper as architecture but requires a value compass and epistemic justice to remain relevant in the South.

2.3. Kybernology: Foundations from Indonesia (the Global South)

Kybernology (Ndraha, 2001; 2003) offers a repositioning of governmental science:

1. Ontology: its *formal object* is governmental relations—interactions between rulers and the ruled in the provision of public and civil services
2. Epistemology: inter-/transdisciplinary, combining empirical analysis and *verstehen*, recognizing community intuition, and positioning citizen experience as valid evidence
3. Axiology: process values (reason-giving, fairness, responsibility, and service recovery), social justice, and dignity as service goals; trust as the relational outcome

Contributions from Indonesian scholars reinforce this framework by positioning governmental science as an autonomous discipline and clarifying its core focus. Labolo (2014) defines it as an independent field, while Wasistiono and Simangunsong (2015) emphasize government–citizen relations in authority and service as its central object, a point reiterated by Simangunsong (2022) through the ontological lens of authority and service. Philosophically, Kurniawati (2015) affirms that although governmental science shares the same material object with other disciplines, it is distinguished by its formal object of governmental relations. Complementing this, Van Ylst (2008) frames it as a critical, non-positivistic epistemology that is multi- and interdisciplinary, while Sutoro Eko (2016) provides empirical grounding through village-level governance practices centered on participation. Polyando (2016) further calls for clarifying the position of governmental science to better address contemporary challenges. All converge on one point: values, relationships, and citizen experience must be core explanatory variables, not mere contextual background.

2.4. Comparative Matrix: Governance vs. Kybernology

To avoid the bias of a "reactive counter-narrative," this study employs three comparative dimensions consistently throughout the manuscript: ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

Table 1. Comparative Dimensions of Governance and Kybernology

Dimension	Governance (mainstream)	Kybernology (Indonesia/Global South)
Ontology	Networks and institutional architecture	Government–citizen relations as the heart of governance
Epistemology	Universal indicators; *best practices*	Plural & contextual; citizen experience as valid evidence
Axiology	Effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability	Process values (reason-giving and fairness), dignity, and trust

This matrix is used to (i) assess the theoretical narratives of each article in the SLR, (ii) map epistemic gaps, and (iii) propose a hybrid model combining governance architecture with the value compass of Kybernology.

2.5. Research Gaps and Propositional Synthesis

From the corpus of literature, three significant gaps motivate this study:

1. Relational gap: *Good governance* indicators rarely capture relational outcomes—trust, fairness, and dignity—that determine legitimacy. **Proposition 1**: Integrating citizen experience indicators into evaluation frameworks enhances the explanatory power of governance performance in Southern contexts.
2. Epistemic gap: Knowledge production processes are more often centered on universal metrics than on cognitive justice. **Proposition 2**: Evaluation models that combine quantitative metrics with experience-based (coproduced) evidence yield more accurate policy diagnoses.
3. Design–service disconnect: Governance is strong at the design level but weak at the frontline where citizens encounter the state. **Proposition 3**: Strengthening Kybernology's "process values" at the meso–micro levels (procedures, service recovery, and reason-giving) increases legitimacy without sacrificing efficiency.

These propositions guide the design of the SLR and serve as interpretive frameworks in the Findings & Discussion, particularly when proposing the Hybrid Governance–Kybernology Model and citizen experience–based performance indicators (trust, procedural fairness, and dignity) as complements to *good governance*.

3. Research Method

3.1. Design and Reporting

This study employs an SLR to trace, screen, appraise, and synthesize literature on Kybernology and governance theory. Reporting follows PRISMA 2020 (selection flow) and the SPAR-4-SLR framework (process transparency and replicability). The review period

is set for 1964–2025, capturing both classical works (e.g., Riggs, 1964) and the latest developments. The last search was conducted on September 10, 2025 (Western Indonesian Time). Study selection followed PRISMA 2020; (identification n=200; duplicates removed n=30; screened n=170; excluded n=93; full-text assessed n=77; excluded n=50; and included n=27).

3.2. Data Sources and Scope

Two major databases were used: Scopus and Google Scholar. Both were chosen for their multidisciplinary coverage (governmental science, public administration, political science, sociology, and law) and their accessibility to both Indonesian and international publications. Accepted languages were Indonesian and English. The systematic search range was set to 1964–2025, because 1964 marked the publication of Fred W. Riggs's *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society*, widely regarded as the starting point of Global South administrative discourse. However, to strengthen the theoretical framework, this study also refers purposively to several classical works prior to 1964—such as Van Poelje (1953), White (1955), and Waldo (1955). These classics are positioned as background references that provide historical context for the development of governmental science from *bestuurskunde* and Anglo-Saxon public administration toward the governance paradigm. Thus, they are not part of the systematic corpus but serve as purposive references to ensure the historical continuity of the argument.

3.3. Inclusion–Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:
1. Contains concepts/theories/practices of Kybernology or governance (including studies on government–citizen relations, process values/procedural fairness, and citizen experience indicators)
2. Relevant to North–South epistemic comparison (e.g., cognitive justice, epistemologies of the South, and institutional hybridity)
3. Empirical or theoretical contributions that can be mapped to the ontology–epistemology–axiology dimensions

Exclusion criteria:
1. Non-academic publications (popular opinions and media articles) or policy documents without scholarly grounding
2. Studies discussing managerialism in administration without clear relevance to governance, Kybernology, or government–citizen relations
3. Duplicates, abstracts without full texts, or inaccessible documents

3.4. Quality Appraisal

Given the mixed corpus, a tiered appraisal was applied. Conceptual/theoretical studies were scored 0–2 on three items: argument clarity/coherence, contribution to the ontology–epistemology–axiology lens, and relevance to Global South/government–citizen relations. A total score of 0–6 was given, along with an inclusion threshold of ≥4. Qualitative studies used the CASP 10-item checklist with an inclusion threshold of ≥7/10 (scores 5–6 retained conditionally when thematically pivotal, with limitations noted). Quantitative studies were assessed with JBI checklists per design, requiring moderate–high internal and external validity for inclusion. Quantitative studies were assessed with the JBI Critical Appraisal Tools appropriate to design (e.g., randomized, quasi-experimental, and observational), requiring moderate–high internal and external validity for inclusion.

3.5. Data Extraction and Coding Scheme

Information extracted from each document included (i) bibliographic details (author, year, and publication type), (ii) focus/subject, (iii) approach/method, (iv) key findings, and (v) implications. The thematic coding scheme, derived from the research questions and theoretical framework, included:

1. Ontology: definitions and loci of "government" (network vs. government–citizen relations)
2. Epistemology: types of evidence/indicators (universal–procedural vs. citizen experience/cognitive justice)
3. Axiology: goals/values (effectiveness–efficiency–accountability vs. process values, i.e., reason-giving and fairness vs. dignity and trust)
4. Levels: macro (architecture), meso (process/rules of the game), micro (frontline service points)
5. Indicators: efficiency/efficacy, trust, fairness/procedural justice, and dignity
6. Contexts: Global North/Global South, Indonesia, and other countries

Reliability assurance: Coding was conducted by the researcher with a documented audit trail. To mitigate bias, 20% of the sample was re-coded after a seven-day cooling-off period and compared with decision rules. Discrepancies were resolved by revising coding rules to ensure consistency.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Corpus Mapping

The 27 selected articles cluster into three strands. Mainstream governance works (White, Waldo, Rhodes, Rosenau, UNDP, etc.) focus on macro-level design networks,

accountability, and good governance standards. Global South critiques (Riggs, Dwivedi, Drechsler, Farazmand, Visvanathan, Santos) expose institutional hybridity and epistemic asymmetries, calling for cognitive justice. Kybernology and Indonesian scholars (Ndraha, Labolo, Wasistiono, Sutoro Eko, Geertz, Kurniawati) stress government–citizen relations, process values, and cultural practices such as musyawarah and gotong royong. In synthesis, governance provides the architecture, Southern critiques offer epistemic correction, and Kybernology highlights relational–value dimensions.

4.2. Comparative Synthesis: Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology

1. **Ontology: What is "government"?** Governance models government as institutional networks centered on design, architecture, and coordination. Kybernology, instead, models government as *living relations* between the rulers and the ruled at the service interface. Performance is, thus, located not only in structures but in interactions and procedures experienced by citizens.
2. **Epistemology: What counts as valid evidence?** Governance relies on universal indicators such as transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. These enable comparison across contexts but risk overlooking local knowledge and lived realities. Kybernology emphasizes *cognitive justice* through citizen trust, fairness, dignity, and civic voice as valid evidence.
3. **Axiology: What values are pursued?** Governance seeks efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability as primary goals. Kybernology enriches this with process values—reason-giving, fairness, and responsibility—plus dignity and trust.

Implication: Governance and Kybernology are complementary; governance provides architecture and instruments; Kybernology provides the value compass and relational meaning.

4.3. Three Levels of Analysis: Macro, Meso, and Micro

1. Macro (design/architecture): Governance is strong in networks, steering, external accountability, and *good governance*. Kybernology evaluates whether designs align with citizens' lived experiences.
2. Meso (process/rules of the game): Kybernology contributes reason-giving, appeal rights, service recovery, and due process. These are often missing when evaluation stops at compliance.
3. Micro (frontline services): Kybernology stresses coproduction, feedback channels, and trust audits; governance ensures reporting and sanction mechanisms.

Conclusion at level: "Good" designs without process values at meso–micro levels tend to yield procedural compliance lacking meaning for citizens.

4.4. Hybrid Governance–Kybernology Model

Based on synthesis, we propose the Hybrid Governance–Kybernology Model:
1. Macro – Governance/Architecture: multi-actor networks, coordination and accountability, policy instruments, meta-governance, and performance standards
2. Meso – Kybernology/Process Values: reason-giving, transparency, fairness, responsibility, substantive due process, and service recovery
3. Micro – Citizen Control and Services: citizen contact points, coproduction, feedback channels, trust audits, and rapid service-recovery protocols
4. Epistemic Layer (cross-cutting): cognitive justice (Visvanathan) and epistemologies of the South (Santos) guiding the integration of formal metrics with citizen-experience evidence

Learning loop: citizen experiences → epistemic reflection → improved design & indicators → enhanced cycle

Result: governance that is institutionally effective, procedurally fair, and socially legitimate

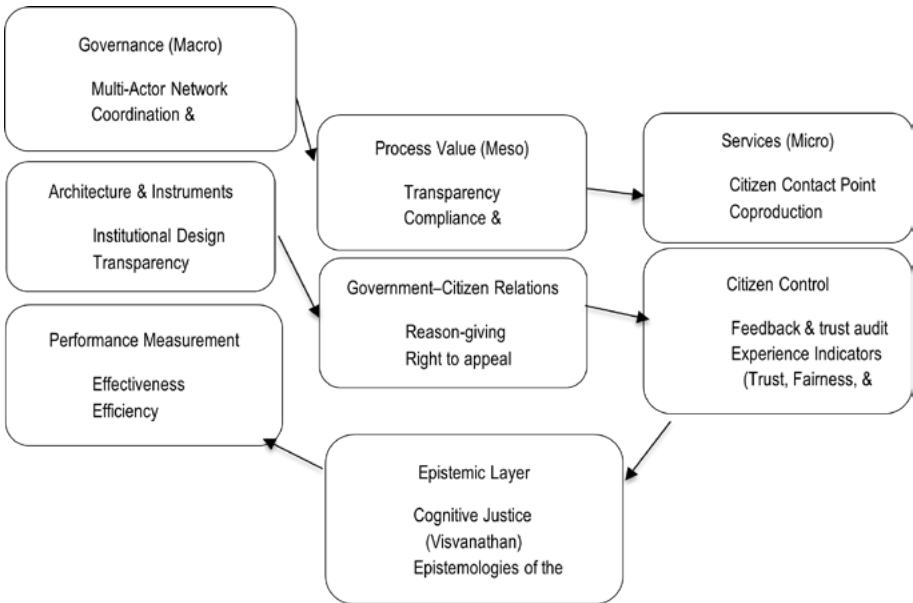This model can be described as follows:

Figure 1. Hybrid Governance–Kybernology Model

4.5. Citizen Experience–Based Indicators (Complementing Good Governance)

As operationalization, four citizen experience–based indicators are developed:
1. TS – Trust (Cross-Subcultural Trust): belief that government acts fairly/competently; Measure: Likert scale + quarterly trust audit
2. KP – Procedural Fairness: the perception that processes are clear, consistent, and include appeal mechanisms; Measure: indices of reason-giving, appeal use, and response time
3. KD – Quality of Deliberation: clarity, relevance, politeness, and empathy in communication; Measure: scorecards and citizen ratings
4. KS – Service Cohesion and Dignity: extent to which services uphold dignity and promote coproduction; Measure: proportion of coproduction cases and Likert dignity scores

These indicators do not replace *good governance* KPIs but bridge institutional performance and relational legitimacy.

5. Conclusion

Based on the overall arguments above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Kybernology offers a Global South–rooted alternative in governmental science and marks a distinctive Indonesian contribution. Rather than opposing governance, it complements it. Governance supplies institutional architecture and instruments, while Kybernology adds a value compass, a relational lens, and epistemic justice often missed by universal metrics.

Ontologically, government is not only institutional networks but also government–citizen relations at the frontline where legitimacy is formed. Epistemologically, standard good governance indicators should be complemented by citizen experience evidence—e.g., trust, procedural fairness, dignity, and civic voice—on equal footing. Axiologically, performance must be judged not just by effectiveness and efficiency but also by process values—e.g., reason-giving, fairness, responsibility, and service recovery—that cultivate public trust.

Practically, we propose a Hybrid Governance–Kybernology Model integrating macro-level architecture, meso-level process values, micro-level citizen control, and an epistemic layer of cognitive justice. The model supports governance that is institutionally efficient, procedurally fair, and socially legitimate. Thus, Kybernology enriches theory and offers a strategic pathway for practice in Indonesia while advancing a more epistemically just global discourse on government.

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