A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY OF URBAN GOVERNANCE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: THE CASES OF ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY (SOUTH AFRICA) AND COCHIN MUNICIPALITY (INDIA)

Bhoola Sheetal
The University of Zululand (South Africa)

Chetty Dasarath
Durban University of Technology (South Africa)

Moolakkattu John
Mahatma Gandhi University, (India)

Ngcobo Nolwazi
The University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa)

Chathukulam Jos
The Centre for Rural Management (India)

ABSTRACT

With rapid urbanization and migration to cities, particularly in developing nations, the focus and emphasis on city governance, politics, institutional capacity, and sustainability issues have become paramount in critical analyses and policy discussions. This paper examines the functional complexities of two large Municipalities in two port cities located in South Africa and India, specifically eThekwini (the city of Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal) and Cochin (in the state of Kerala). Following a brief overview of the characteristics of the two Municipalities, the paper delves into the system of governance, level of autonomy, participatory structures in place, the extent to which they can respond to the service delivery demands of the public in an inclusive manner, and approaches to addressing climate change concerns. The paper is contextualised with reference to the theoretical concept of the Right to the City.

Keywords: Urbanization, eThekwini Municipality, Cochin Municipality, Right to the City, Ward Committee, Climate Change and Urban Planning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanization has given rise to many challenges and opportunities in developing nations. The 2022 UN – Habitat's World Cities Report forecasts that India's urban population is expected to reach 675 million in 2035. India, China, and Nigeria are expected to account for 35 per cent of the world's urban population between 2018 and 2050 (Chatterjee et al., 2023). While today's global average of city dwellers is 55 % more than two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050, and Africa and Asia will drive this increase (Bos, 2023). South Africa is rapidly urbanizing, with 63 % of its people already living in urban areas, and by 2050, it is estimated that eight in ten people will be living in urban cities (UN-Habitat 2020). The administrative capacity of cities, which is responsible for providing services to all urban residents is taking strain. The lack of affordable housing has resulted in people living in slums. There has been an unprecedented rise in the people's reliance on informal urban economic activity. In India, growing urbanization poses serious environmental threats regarding increasing carbon emissions, widespread deforestation, solid waste generation, lack of scientific waste

disposal methods, air and water pollution, and poor sanitation amenities. These challenges arise when states and regions lack the resources and governance capacity to manage and control urban affairs. In this new era of municipal governance, the involvement of citizens in various management operations is crucial.

Cities in developing countries have borne the brunt of becoming the antinomies of misgovernance resulting in frequent service delivery protests in many African cities (Chiwarawara,2023). Issues such as waste collection, solid waste management, open drainages, and transportation have been pressing concerns in Municipalities in Kerala. The realization of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) mainly depends on how well cities are governed.

Background

Deregulation, increased planning 'flexibility', and increased private sector involvement have resulted in a decline in interest in expanding the public sector and ensuring socio-economic equality (da Cruz et al., 2019).

The South African Constitution (1996), which stipulates that each level of government is separate, interdependent, and interrelated, strongly emphasizes the role of Municipal government in deepening meaningful democracy. The Constitution uses the word 'spheres' while establishing the linkages between national, provisional, and local governments. 'Spheres' instead of 'tiers' are designed to offset hierarchy amongst the three public administration entities. Spheres have a round shape but not a top or bottom. This non-hierarchical form of intergovernmental cooperation is based on cooperative governance (Chetty, 2023).

In South Africa, local governments are expected to work with their communities, and an equitable distribution of resources is central to the system (Chetty, 2023). Local governments' most significant functions are providing water, sanitation, roads, stormwater drainage, solid waste disposal, energy distribution, and municipal health and policing services (Cameron, 2014).

A Municipality governs every spatial unit of the territory of South Africa. In India, the 'sphere' concept is alien, and the three levels of government (national, provincial, and local government) are placed in a hierarchical order. The local governments have not yet fully realised their constitutional obligations and status. Indian local government is a provincial subject, and power is distributed between the Union (Centre) and the state (provinces). Though the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950, local governments attained constitutional status only in 1992. Local governments lack functional alignment with national and provincial governments.

Approach and method

This paper examines the governance systems, service delivery mechanisms, participatory structures, e-governance practices, and climate-resilient initiatives of the Municipalities in eThekwini and Cochin, port cities located in South Africa and India, respectively. It reflects on the theoretical concept of the 'right to the city.' . The study's methodology is primarily desk-based, complemented by purposively selected interviews with key informants from both municipalities and focus group discussions (FGDs) with stakeholders in both locations.

A Brief Profile of the Two Municipalities

eThekwini

South Africa grants national and local governments, particularly metropolitan and municipal authorities, a disproportionately high level of political, fiscal, and administrative autonomy compared to the provinces (Steytler 2017). eThekwini contributes the third highest share (9%) to the South African economy, after Johannesburg and Cape Town (Cameron,2014)

and is one of the top tourist destinations in Africa and one of the continent's busiest ports (eThekwini District Economic, Profile, 2021). With dispersed settlement patterns, land holdings under the Ingonyama Trust and Traditional Authorities, and communal land tenure, most rural regions lie outside the urban growth line. Due to inadequate land use regulation, some homes are situated on environmentally sensitive territory. The city has 569 informal communities, home to about 250,000 households and more than a quarter of all residents, with a total population of just under four million. There is a spatial mismatch, an apartheid legacy, between the places where people live and work in eThekwini especially pronounced for the poorer segments of society who reside far away from the developed areas, where most jobs, social services, and economic opportunities are located resulting in the influx into informal settlements post the 1994 transition. In informal settlements, there is a lack of essential services like water, sanitation, electricity, waste management, and safety, thus denying the inhabitants the advantages of urban life due to poor access to infrastructure and transportation. This places in question their "*right to the city.*"

The Constitution grants the Municipality the authority to run its affairs independently. The creation of single-tier Metropolitan governments, which currently comprise eight metro areas, was seen as a method to address fragmented local governments and to provide a unified tax base for service provision in a still profoundly unequal country (Resnick, 2021). The Mayor is chosen by the City Council, which is elected through a mixed electoral system. The Council appoints the City Manager, the city's administrative head. There are systems in place to manage the Municipality with the support of provincial and national governments. Supporting and working with Municipalities across South Africa is the responsibility of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, which is part of the national government. A statutory autonomous organization of all municipalities, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), advocates on their behalf. This organisation is frequently consulted by the Presidential Coordination Council (PCC).

The South African Constitution talks about two types of majorities. A majority of the members of the Council is needed for key decisions, while only a majority of votes cast (even if this does not constitute the majority of the members of the Council) is needed to elect a Mayor. A Mayor can be elected without the majority, although such persons can be removed through no-confidence motions and instability as has been the case in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth, two major metros.

The African National Congress (ANC) branch chairpersons or regional secretaries or 'cadres' are regularly through a 'deployment' process offered posts in municipal administration, which are better paid than the elected Councillors. This politicization of cities is largely to blame for the nation's disappointing track record in providing municipal services (de Visser, 2010).
In 2014, eThekwini became the inaugural Municipality to create a City Planning Commission. The Commissioners come from a variety of backgrounds and are respected individuals from the private sector, academia, civil society, town planners, engineers, and other professions. Local municipal entities must create Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). The Municipal Systems Act names the IDP as a crucial element in establishing principles of progressive local administration. The eThekwini Municipal Council has granted the Municipal Manager authorization to create the IDP to comply with the Act's obligations. Although Kerala Municipalities engage in

participatory planning, there is hardly much participation or effective planning. Land use, regional, and spatial planning, especially in the core city area, are much more developed in eThekwini than Cochin. However, Cochin does not have as many informal settlements or encroachments as Durban due to the lack of vacant land owned by the Municipality, and it expands at a slow pace into rural areas by incorporating them within its jurisdiction (Interviews).

Durban has 111 wards, with 111 councillors elected through the 'first past the post system'(FPTP) and 111 elected through proportional representation (PR) using the list system. The municipal staff of eThekwini comprises over 24000. Senior managers, especially municipal managers and deputy municipal managers, who hold these positions by virtue of their status within the party, frequently lack the necessary skills and credentials to run local governments (Kanyane, 2014).

There are two systems operating in South Africa viz. an Executive Mayor system where the Mayor is the CEO and has a mayoral council (executive) to assist with portfolios. Then, the Executive Committee system, where the Mayor in eThekwini has far less power than an Executive Mayor but chairs the executive committee elected by the full Council.. Unlike the Mayor of Cochin, the eThekwini Mayor is seen primarily as a part of the executive, and the Council meetings are chaired by a Speaker who is expected to enforce the Councillors' code of conduct and ensure smooth council meetings every quarter. The Mayor cannot make all the executive decisions, which the full Council alone will be able to do, presided over by the Speaker (de Visser, 2010). Cochin also has the same problem of fusion of the legislature and the executive in the Council. However, unlike eThekwini, the Mayor chairs all meetings and behaves in a partisan manner, often leading to unruly scenes in the Council (Interview).

Cochin

Cochin is the largest Municipal Corporation in Kerala with a total area of 94.88 square kilometres and an estimated population of 889,893 in 2020. The Councillors are directly elected, and the Mayor is elected from among the Councillors. Fifty per cent of the constituencies are reserved for women, of whom three are reserved for the scheduled castes. It has 74 wards, each with a population of around 12000 people. There are 39 women and 35 men in the present Council. The Council is now ruled by the Left Democratic Front (LDF)led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) with a narrow majority.

In Cochin, all the 74 members elected through the 'first past the post system' (FPTP), are distributed among the eight standing committees (SCs), namely development, welfare, health, works, the town planning committee, tax appeal committee, education and sports committee, and the finance committee. A well-developed party system exists in both Cochin and eThekwini Municipalities, and independents are generally not elected. Since the accountability of the Councillors in Cochin is to their individual wards, they make claims to the ward share of the divisible pool of the grant for their respective wards alone not giving attention to the city as a whole. The SC does not play its executive role concerning the portfolio assigned to it. There is a Steering Committee consisting of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, SC chairpersons, and the secretary. It seems that there is a considerable authority vacuum in Cochin. Decisive action is unlikely given the lack of a directly elected Mayor or an effective Mayor-in-the-Council as in the parliamentary system. This is intensified by the fact that the employees are recruited by the province, deployed in individual Municipalities, and transferred at will by the provincial government, leading to a high employee turnover. At present, there are 2000 employees in the corporation under six sections namely accounts, Council, engineering, general, health, and

revenue. All the sections are seemingly obsolete and not suited to address the modern challenges of city governance, whereas eThekwini Municipality, apart from traditional divisions, also has a governance and international relations division. (Ruffin, 2013). Other eThekwini departments include environmental planning and protection, human settlements, community participation, supply chain movement, and geographic information system (GIS), which helps businesses and the public to achieve their outcomes. In Cochin, the health section has the highest number of employees (1426), whereas the accounts section has only 27. The state   government frequently transfers the staff, without consulting the Municipal Corporation. Staff consider themselves state employees rather than local government employees because of the lower prestige associated with the latter (Chathukulam and John, 2002). There is another category of employees from the 'transferred institutions', and their accountability is primarily to the respective line departments, though they are in effect 'under dual control' *(FGD with employees of the transferred institutions, 4 September 2023).* The staff structure in the Corporation has not been modernized yet. Narayana, 2022 states that " the significantly larger size of urban local governments in terms of employees for a comparable to rural local governments in a rapidly urbanizing state raises sustainability population questions."

Cochin's infrastructure growth was fragile, and sewage networks were highly erratic. Only five per cent of the city's sewer system was treated, and most stormwater was permitted to enter the area's existing canals and backwater networks because there were very few (stormwater) drains in place. (Government of Kerala, 2014). As a result of encroachment, the disposal of solid refuse, and siltation, many of the intercity canals have lost some of their ability to hold water (Kumar et al., 2017). Large portions of the city are made up of low-lying areas extremely susceptible to flooding, coastal erosion, and rising sea levels. This is not taken into account in the broader context of the prevention of the effects of climate change. Extreme rainfall events and rising sea levels are not considered significant factors in the risk evaluation for the City of Cochin (Government of Kerala, 2010, Vol. I, p. 239). The Kerala State Action Plan on Climate Change, which recognizes the increased danger of rising sea levels and urban flooding due to climate change, later modified this lacuna (Government of Kerala, 2014, p. 25). Cochin does not have a planning commission of the nature of eThekwini. However, it comprises a 20-member planning committee whose ex-officio chairperson is the Mayor, the Secretary is the convener, and a vice chairperson who is supposed to be an expert in planning. Councillors are wary of accommodating expertise from outside the Council. Those from outside the Council are usually former employees of the Municipality. The majority of the Councillors are unaware of the existence of such a committee (*FGD with Councillors, 5 September 2023*). Party loyalty is the only consideration for inclusion, rather than merit. (*FGD with Councillors, 5 September 2023; key informant interviews with 2 members of the Planning Committee, 5 September 2023*). As in the case of eThekwini Municipality, one can assert that this politicization of the planning committee is largely to blame for the Cochin Corporation's dismal and inconsistent track record of urban planning. Before 31 March of every year, every local government is statutorily mandated to prepare and approve a budget. An analysis of the ritually approved budget document reveals that it is not a realistic financial exercise. Instead, the purpose is to meet the statutory requirement as is the case with the budgets of other local governments in Kerala. Further discussion with the planning committee revealed that while preparing the budget, none of them was consulted (*key informant interviews with 2 members of the Planning Committee, 5 September 2023*).

Ward committees

Ward committees were envisaged as participatory forums for citizen involvement in governance and is expected to improve the representation of citizens, especially of the poor and marginalised. These outcomes are believed to contribute to larger goals of improving democratic legitimacy and developing an engaged citizenry (Chhotray and Stoker 2009).

The South African Municipal ward committee is a legally mandated structure that encourages participatory governance and allows the local community to be engaged in municipal affairs by offering suggestions and criticisms on the budget, plans, programs, and operations. It consists of 10 members and the Councillor chairs the committee. Its role is primarily advisory and intended to incorporate civil society inputs into the local 'non-partisan' governance process. In 1998 the Municipal Structures Act (Act No. 117) authorized the creation of ward committees. Piper and Deacon (2009, 416) state that such committees have the potential to deepen local democracy provided competent ward councillors, non-domination by party-political agendas and the material and institutional support of the Council are present. The small percentage of the eligible voters who participate in the voting makes the exercise less fruitful. Alternatively, there is the option of nominating members from the different interest groups in the ward. It has been seen that despite its expected non-partisan character, the nomination process has been influenced by political party considerations, and given the socially identified character of the parties, they may entrench race and class divisions at the neighbourhood level.

Like other South African municipalities, eThekwini's primary source of funding (mainly its rates base) is its own sources, which accounts for almost 85 percent of the expenditure, with the remainder coming from grants. The city's general financial health is supported by a strong cash collection rate (97% in 2019/2020 , up from 95 % in 2018 -2019. The Municipality can effect an increase in rates. This is not the case with Cochin, as the state government determines tax and service prices. Dependence on the state/provincial regime is the hallmark of the existing system in Cochin Municipal Corporation, as in the case of other local governments in Kerala. Control of finances is however critical for autonomous functioning.

Ward committees function as "institutionalised channels" of communication and interaction between communities and municipalities. They are treated as "advisory bodies" created within the public sphere in South Africa (Chetty, 2023). While Ward Committees in Kerala can have 61 to 81 members, in South Africa, it is limited to 11 (Table No.1). Despite having a robust constitutional framework and resources, Ward committees in both countries are not vibrant and are not performing as expected due mainly to party politicisation.

Table 1. Comparison between ward committees in ethekwini and cochin

		eThekwini	Cochin
1	Constitutional and Regulatory Provisions	(i). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, chapter 7, section 152. (ii). The local government Municipal Structures Act 1998, sections 73& 74. (iii) The National Guidelines for the establishment and operation of Municipal Ward Committees, 2005.	(i)74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. (ii). Article 243 S on Constitution and Composition of Ward Committees. (iii). Clauses 42- 47 of Kerala Municipalities Act, 1994.

2	Method of Constitution	Elected through ballot or show of hands.	Nominated by the Councillor from specified groups.
3	Total membership	11, including the Councillor (Chair).	61 to 81, including the Councillor.
4	Quota for women if any	50%	Not mentioned.
5	Nature of membership	Fixed representation.	Fluid, the individual representative may change.
6	Interests represented	Geographical location, traditional council, disabled, business groups, residents associations.	Resident associations, women's neighbourhood groups, political parties represented in the Municipality, trade unions, heads of educational institutions, voluntary and cultural organisations.
7	Powers and functions	(i)Makes recommendations on any matter affecting ward to Councillor, the Council, Executive Committee. (ii) Serves as a consultative body on ward matters and a communication channel. (iii)Serves as a mobilizing agent for community action. (iv)May express dissatisfaction to the Speaker on the non- performance of a Ward Councillor.	(i) Preparing and supervising ward-level development schemes. (ii) Identifying beneficiaries of welfare schemes.
8	Effectiveness	Sound in theory but has several loopholes in practice including the Councillor being all powerful.	Ineffective as a deliberative body and subject to manipulation by the Councillor.
9	Portfolios if any	Clearly defined (i. Secretary. ii. cleaning and solid waste iii. Electricity iv. water & Sanitation v. entrepreneurship & vi. small business).	Not defined.
10	Role of the Councillor	Acts as Chairperson. The members are elected by the communityand the role of Councillor is minimised. as There is theoretically less scope for manipulation.	Acts as Chairperson. Here, members are nominated by the Councillor, giving a free hand in selection. There is a greater space for manipulation in this context.

Source: Interviews and FGDs with elected functionaries, members of ward committees in both eThekwini and Cochin Municipal Corporations as well as secondary literature reviews.

While literature on decentralization portrays Kerala as a frontrunner in decentralisation, the ward committees in the Municipalities and Municipal corporations are ineffective as a part of the governance system. In Kerala, Municipalities where the population is greater than one lakh, ward committees are instituted, and these committees consist of nominated members from residential associations, civil society organizations, representatives from educational institutions, *Kudumbashree* members, frontline healthcare workers, political party representatives, and other stakeholder groups. Since the Kerala Municipality Act of 1994 does not specify special provisions to ensure the participation of women and other marginalized groups, they remain underrepresented in the ward committees. In areas where population is less than one lakh, ward sabhas are in place, where every voter in the ward is a member. Though the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 brought significant changes to the urban governance structure in India, its provisions are far stronger for rural areas (73rd Constitutional Amendment) than urban. While the three-tier government structure for rural areas, is more robust, the same cannot be said about urban areas; the provisions incorporated for urban governance were more of an afterthought

(Shah and Bakore, 2006 and Natarajan, 2019). The 74th Amendment delegated crucial legislation to the states. Most states, including Kerala, have implemented it poorly (Shah and Bakore, 2006). In South Africa, the major reasons for ward committees remaining less vibrant include political differences (Councillor and ward committee members from different parties resulting in oppositional tendencies, Councillors and ward committee members from the same party but supporting different leaders and factions), and multiple allegiances resulting from the proliferation of structures (Ward Committee, Area Committee, War Room, Branch Executive Committees, Street Committees other Community Based Organizations, Non- Government Organizations and Non- Profit Organizations), total dominance of ward Councillor and undue political influence, exclusion of certain interests groups, poor representation of women are some of the major reasons (Chetty, 2018; Smith and Visser, 2009). Similar trends can be observed in Kerala and specifically in Cochin.

As per the 74th Amendment (Article 243 S of the Indian Constitution), ward committees must be formed in all Municipalities with a population of more than 300,000. In Kerala, it was decided to have ward committees in Municipalities with more than 100,000 people. For those with less than a 100000, there are ward sabhas. In Cochin, although the number set is 50, there are some wards where the number has even reached 80 or more, suggesting no rigid rule on its composition (Table No 1). This is due to the preferences of the ward councillor. Councillors, citizens, and officials are often confused between ward committees and ward sabhas. There are no separate documents forward committees and ward sabhas, including the minutes book. It was opined by councillors   that if the participation is less, the meeting can be treated as ward committees, otherwise as ward sabhas. But nobody is clear on the critical number determining whether it is a ward committee or ward sabha (Interview with ward committee members and Councillors, 6 September 2023). Overall, the Councillor's interest determines the extent of the effectiveness of the ward committee.

Unlike eThekwini, the Cochin corporation serves as an implementation point for several central and state government schemes based on centrally set regulations, which account for a substantial part of the funds received and the developmental activities undertaken. Unlike Cochin, which has an Ombudsman shared with all other local governments at the provincial level, eThekwini has an Ombudsman Officer of its own attached to the City Integrity Investigations Unit which reports to the City Manager with its impartiality therefore being questioned.

On E- governance

The Revenue Management System (RMS) at the eThekwini Municipality has been in development for a long time. However, there are still problems with the system's effectiveness and complaints from the general public arise about incorrect billing. The RMS, a billing system meant to reduce expenses, was put into place by the eThekwini Municipality for about R1 billion (US$ 52.23 million). However, it has been discovered that R1.5 million (US$ 78343) more is given to consultants each month to keep the system running (Shaikh, 2018) with corruption being assumed in media and other reports. Support from national and subnational political leadership and integration and coordination between different levels of government are necessary for digital projects to succeed. It is argued that to guarantee that 4IR is beneficial for citizens multilevel governance collaborations must be launched (Govender & Reddy, 2019).
eThekwini seems to have a more fragmented spatial form than most South African cities, claims Turok (2012). According to the indigent policy, most of eThekwini's rural and peri- urban areas

can access basic services through a differentiated service delivery strategy. The policy aims to improve the lives of people experiencing poverty by providing various levels of free access to essential services like electricity, water, sanitation, and garbage collection (Mbatha and Mchunu, 2016). The Cochin Municipal Corporation, in contrast, does not have powers relating to transportation, fire, electricity provision, and metro police. The stategovernment or parastatals undertake all these.

Urban planning

While urban local governments in South Africa, particularly eThekwini Municipality, are relatively advanced in urban planning, the same cannot be said about the urban local governments in India. Regrettably, urban planning practices in cities in Kerala are suboptimal and lack integration with service provisioning. Most urban administrations do not prioritize urban planning, and the limited efforts in this domain are typically driven by state governments employing rigid, top-down approaches that resemble older colonial practices, albeit with some modifications (Jacob and Jacob, 2023). The criticisms of Patrick Geddes, a renowned urban planner, during the 1920s still resonate today. Geddes perceived British planning as a predicament rather than a solution. Furthermore, the authorities deemed his ideas excessively idealistic, holistic, and community-oriented rather than being focused on the technical aspects of constructing buildings and roads by trained engineers (Spodek 2013, 60). No city in Kerala has had a master plan for decades. Geddes advocated for a planning approach that prioritized fulfilling "primary human needs" in all interventions emphasizing the importance of "constructive and conservative surgery" in urban planning over grandiose and inflexible schemes (Haworth, 2000). However, it was the inflexible schemes that were necessary for the continuation of colonial exploitation.

As of November 1995, urban aggregations (UAs) with more than one million need metropolitan planning committees (MPCs) to be constituted. After 25 years, Cochin Urban Agglomeration, with a population of more than two million (as per the 2011 Census) and an area of 440 km^2, still does not have an MPC (Karunakaran, 2020).

Service delivery and politics

Among other things, inadequate planning, limits on capacity, and problems with service delivery are manifestations of weak governance. Overcoming municipal service delivery difficulties is about focusing more on professional knowledge free from party politics and monitor and evaluate service delivery (Kanyane, 2014).

In the eThekwini case, variables such as apartheid disparities, relative deprivation and disparity, inflated and unfulfilled political promises, and unequal access to services all create discontent. The indifference of officials and council members, the absence of clear lines of communication, the delivery of subpar services, and the severity of poverty all add to the frustration (Masiya et al., 2019). Several reports of regional party structures attempting to influence municipalities remotely are available (Swanepoel, 2021). Studies have shown poor service delivery in the wards run by the opposition parties due to political interference by the governing party. The administrators are forced to favour the ruling political party Councillors in allocating money for ward projects. (Mngomezulu, 2020). Such politicizationis visible through partisan hiring practices, in which political allies and family are hired as opposed to a meritocracy necessary for better service delivery and professionalism (Madumo, 2016).
Another issue that vitiates the atmosphere in local governance is deploying or recruiting managers who hold high positions within the party ranks. Such appointments of leaders, who

may be higher in status within the party than the Mayor leads to complex power dynamics and questionable lines of authority.

Reddy (2016) explains

"…Having 'struggle credentials' is not good enough as ANC 'deployees' will be playing a pivotal role in formulating and implementing policies relative to service delivery and development. Such delivery is the essence of developmental local government and it is also a constitutional imperative. In the final analysis, there should be a radical shift from the policy of 'cadre deployment' and political patronage as it violates the essential principles of good local governance."

Kanyane (2014, p 94) is more forthright

"…local politicians are rarely the kind that inspire confidence …In fact, local government appears to be the dumping place for those of mediocre talent who missed more gravy lined political posts elsewhere. The cadres of political leadership in local government should have the institutional memory and technical expertise regarding how to run the affairs of the municipalities. The lack of these vital elements is a recipe for disaster which compromises the delivery of basic services by the municipalities to their respective communities."

The local government election process adds to the trend of political centralization. A party-list proportional representation (PR) system is used to elect the first half of council members, with the other half being chosen on a ward basis. As a result, party leaders now hold a tremendous amount of authority. The choice of candidates for local elections is made at the regional level and by the President in consultation with the ANC's National Working Committee in the case of mayoral seats in metropolitan towns. Therefore, accountability is to political leadership rather than to the community. This is problematic for the ANC and the opposition Democratic Alliance Party, which is ruling Cape Town (Cameron 2014).

In the Kerala context, there is no culture of politics and protests surrounding local service delivery at the grassroots level. The people in Kerala feel that local governments are not sufficiently empowered and capacitated enough to handle "local service delivery" (Key informant interviews with two experts on decentralisation in Kerala, 8 September 2023). The people's perception in Kerala and India is that local service delivery is the duty of the state and union governments such an ideological belief having a demobilising effect. Local governments are not viewed as "powerful" on their own; hence, there is no meaning in protests and party politics surrounding service delivery issues . In addition to that, there is proximity and closeness between the elected functionaries in local governments and the people which prevents people from open confrontation.

Climate change adaptations

The eThekwini Municipality is a pioneer in efforts to adjust to climate change (Diederichs and Roberts, 2015). This is due to the Municipal Climate Protection Programme's efforts to address the issue of heightened climate change susceptibility in the context of pervasive poverty (Roberts and O'Donoghue 2013), accelerating urbanization, and ecosystem degradation(Diederichs and Roberts 2015). The Durban Adaptation Charter (DAC) for local governments, which was developed in 2011, was largely influenced by climate change response tactics at the Municipal level(eThekwini Municipality 2014). The Charter allows Municipalities worldwide to officially support the cause in light of the increasing realization that local governments are essential for strengthening local adaptive capacity(eThekwini Municipality

2012). The Buffelsdraai Landfill Site Community Reforestation Project (BLSCRP) was launched to reduce carbon emissions, improve climate change adaptation, and create jobs by restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services. (Douwes et al. 2016; Mugwedi et al, 2018). In Kerala, the landfill process is one of the most misunderstood concepts for the common people and the elite sections of the community. The scientific experts, as well as environmentalists, are also ignorant about this process (Chetty, Democratic Decentralisation: South Africa and Kerala, 2023).

In many ways, the eThekwini Municipality has greater autonomy, responsibility, and leeway in performing its tasks than Cochin. Even the bylaws prepared by Cochin Municipal Corporation in 2021 are silent on the method of waste management. The crude manner in which waste is being dumped without segregating them and the absence of a buffer zone in the dumping site aimed at land restoration and afforestation also make it inferior to EThekwini. Without a master plan, the city expanded haphazardly. The Cochin Corporation struggled to coordinate different agencies to carry out various projects because the Kerala Government handled most services like transportation, electricity, and water distribution. In addition to all of these, the Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA) received a large portion of the city's infrastructure development money. Waste management became a serious problem in 2002 and was only partially resolved by the commissioning of the Brahmapuram Solid Waste Treatment Plant in 2008. Almost 70 -80 per cent of the garbage in this plant is not segregated, a mix of both bio-degradable and non-biodegradable waste. It is estimated that 390 tonnes of waste are dumped daily in the Brahmapuram treatment facility (Shaji, 2023).

A massive fire outbreak at the Brahmapuram facility in 2023 unleashed toxic fumes. It was doused only after 13 days, causing significant damage to the air quality of Kochi and drawing the ire of the citizens who lost confidence in the municipal government's governance capacity. Kochi residents claimed they have witnessed the annual burning of plastic waste within the Brahmapuram plant for the last 11 years (Shaji, 2023 and FGD with the local people near the Brahmapuram plant, 18 August 2023). On climate change issues, the Cochin Corporation has not taken the type of initiatives that eThekwini had.

The Right to the City

The concept of a right to the city (RTTC) is a collective right of the citizens in the city, especially the marginalized, for the equal use of the city, city spaces, and services within the limits of social justice and sustainability conditions (Sorenson and Sagaris 2010). It inevitably includes social struggles for appropriating and reclaiming urban spaces, and it must begin with a critical knowledge of urban structural inequalities. These include conflicts over asserting particular rights, such as housing, mobility, citizenship, involvement, leisure, and rest. Cities are seen as shared spaces and not the exclusive sphere of some privileged groups. It speaks of the right of the marginalized to act as key stakeholders in the making and remaking of cities and "is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire" (Harvey, 2008, p.23). Agenda 21 of the Rio Earth Summit cited citizen participation in planning to strengthen social cohesion (Sorensen and Sagaris 2010). There is a significant difference between a reformist approach aimed at securing specific human rights in cities and the right to the city, which implies fundamental systemic change through collective mobilization (Turok and Scheba, 2019). The assertion that the ability to shape the city belongs equally to all of its residents also emphasises the importance of the use value (as opposed to the capitalist exchange value) of urban space and resources (Purcell 2014).

While making linkages between RTTC and rights ensured by the Indian Constitution, Kothari says, "The right to the city is not to be viewed as a new legal right, but as an articulation to consolidate the demand, within city space for the realization of multiple human rights already recognized internationally" (Kothari,2011). He further argues that Articles 14,15,19,21, and 51 of the Indian Constitution are substantial for the RTTC, both implicitly and explicitly. There are some flagship programmes that have been launched with a seemingly RTTC framework, for example, Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY). It envisages a "slum free India with inclusive and equitable cities in which every citizen has access to basic civic infrastructure, social amenities and decent shelter". Although RTTC is hard to come by in the discourse on urban India, the gendered nature of city spaces has been highlighted in some studies (Phadke et al. 2011). In Ajay Maken vs. Union of India 2019, a Delhi High Court division bench ruled that New Delhi slum residents have a right to housing and should be shielded against forcible and arbitrary eviction. The Court referred then to "the right to the city" defending the housing rights of slum dwellers, taking its cue from the South African Constitutional court judgments. This was a departure from the Court's earlier decisions, which allowed evictions on the grounds of removing nuisances to urban life (Idiculla, 2021).

The RTTC, especially on matters related to housing, is found in the South African Constitution. According to Section 26(1) of the Bill of Rights (RSA,1996), everyone has the right to obtain decent housing. The word 'obtain' seems to imply that this is not an unconditional right; as the distinction between 'the right to decent housing' and 'the right to obtain decent housing' has not been clarified by the courts. The word obtain seems to introduce the neoliberal element of the right to purchase. Section 26(2) says that the state must, within the limits of its means, take reasonable legislative and other steps to ensure that the right is gradually realized. Citizens are safeguarded by Section 26(3) from arbitrary evictions and destitution. Following the law, both the federal and provincial governments are responsible for housing. Due to its struggling economy, eThekwini's population is expanding more slowly, but there is still significant migration from the agricultural periphery to the city centre. A severe lack of affordable housing in both areas contributes to societal unrest within and between communities. The municipalities must balance their legal duties to citizens needing housing with complex dilemmas like preventing land occupations.

The RTTC discourse is yet to gain traction in Kerala however contradictions on the ground expressed in protests reflects the validity of the discourse. For greater inclusion of migrant workers, the *'Apna Ghar'* project to provide decent accommodation to migrant workers at affordable rates was launched by the state government. Already, Kozhikode and Palghat have such hostels (Peter et al. 2020). Local governments in Kerala, seen through the lens of local capacity in programme implementation and fund utilisation, is critical to implementing RTTC. In the case of health grants (recommended by the 15th UFC) only 0.95% has been utilized. This is against the RTTC principle. Similarly, an urban job creation programme of the provincial government guaranteeing 100 person days of work for poor men and women living in Kerala's urban areas was also badly implemented (Chathukulam et al., 2021).

2. CONCLUSION

The two cities selected in the study have similarities and differences. According to Patel et al. (2016), elite capture of participatory spaces and the limited devolution of duties, power, and responsibilities to these spaces are the main issues facing participatory governance in Asian cities. But such a kind of capture is not overtly visible in these Municipalities. eThekwini is a

large municipality with four times more population, finance, autonomy, staff, informal settlements, and areas of functional competence than Cochin Municipal Corporation. It can theoretically function with complete freedom limited only by the Constitution. However, since the role of the political parties is firmly established through the electoral system, the extent of efficiency it can achieve depends on the capability of the politicians regardless of the adoption of NPM principles and neoliberal policies. Cochin has a ward-based first-past-the-post method of representation. The city is less unequal compared to Durban, and NPM ideas have been difficult to sink in until recently, given Kerala's generally Leftist character averse to private players' involvement in service delivery. The participatory base of both Municipalities is quite robust in theory. In practice, the ward committees seldom play an intermediary role between the elected Council or Councillor and the community. The Cochin Municipality depends on the state not only for resources but also for direction, especially when matters of a serious nature are to be decided upon, and it has no right to borrow independently. It is very seldom that they take the initiative on their own. Planning in Cochin is fragmented, and Municipality-wide projects with considerable investments are rare. Substantial funds are allocated on a ward basis. In this respect, the ruling party and the opposition Councillors get more or less equal amounts, leaving out a few Municipality-wide projects. Most of the staff of the Municipality, except the cleaning staff, are transferable and have no sentimental attachment to the Municipality. But politicization is a common problem in both. While in eThekwini, it often takes place through appointments and dismissal of staff not selected through a fair system based on merit, in Cochin, it is done through the control of the Municipality exercised by the local party machinery (more common among Leftist parties from which tradition the ANC itself emanates). The bureaucracy in Cochin has organized unionism, as in eThekwini, through which they assert themselves vis a vis elected functionaries. The party mechanism mediates decision-making considerably in both places, leading to sub-optimal outcomes. However, environmental practices are much more developed in Durban than in Cochin, which is still in a crude form with very few credible and sustainable efforts made so far. In India, despite constitutional amendments, which initially created euphoria, aimed at state governments transferring certain powers to local governments most cities are still caught in a state of dependence on the state government. One constraint for robust urban studies in Cochin and Durban is the lack of data necessary to back up more conclusive claims about how government functions in cities The range of cultural and legal contexts that cities function in sometimes makes comparisons difficult but similar neoliberal macro-economic policies and citizen struggles for the right to the city are seemingly ubiquitous even though they may manifest in slightly different ways.

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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