

Metropolitan Planning Committee

The Constitution of India makes it mandatory for the States to set up Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) in the metropolitan areas of the country. A metropolitan area is defined as an area having a population of 1 million. Article 243ZE of the 74th Amendment to the Constitution says “There shall be constituted in every Metropolitan area, a Metropolitan Planning Committee to prepare a draft development plan for the Metropolitan Region as a whole.”

The country has been tardy in setting up MPCs. A decade and a half has elapsed since the 74th Amendment was passed but so far, only West Bengal has set up an MPC for the Metropolitan Region of Kolkata. According to K.C. Sivaramakrishnan, “The Maharashtra government has given repeated assurances before the Bombay High Court over the past four years that an MPC would be set up. This is yet to happen. In Hyderabad in December 2007, an MPC was set up with composition as stipulated in the Constitution but its mandate was minimal. A few months later in June 2008, the Greater Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority was set up, with the Chief Minister as its head, consisting predominantly of officials. It is a super body with a significant mandate but singularly lacks political participation and therefore legitimacy and accountability.” sivarama@cprindia.org. The respondents to this study pointed out that it was the intention of the Constitution that the States should devolve power to local bodies. Then, why has this provision of the Constitution not been implemented for the last 16 years, they queried.

In Karnataka, conformity legislation was passed to usher in the MPC. According to Article 503 B of the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act Amendment, “the Government shall constitute a Metropolitan Planning Committee for the Bengaluru Metropolitan Area to prepare a draft development plan for such area as a whole.”

According to Article 243 P(c) of the 74th Amendment, a Metropolitan Area is defined as an area having a population of 10 lakh people or more. This criteria has been accepted by the conformity legislation of Karnataka. As Bengaluru meets this criterion, it was resolved to install an MPC for this City.

Bengaluru City

Bengaluru has undergone phenomenal growth in the last five decades. From a sleepy pensioner's paradise, it has hurtled towards becoming a booming metropolis. As Janaki Nair says in *The Promise of the Metropolis: Bengaluru's Twentieth Century* "no other contemporary Indian city allows us to track the passage from small town to metropolitan status within a few decades as well as does Bangalore."

The population of Bengaluru has grown from 0.8 million in 1951 to 5.68 million in 2001. It is the fifth largest metropolitan city in the country. The city houses a large number of Public Sector Undertakings. It has a number of premier educational institutions and has long been known as a centre for science and technology. In more recent decades, it has become a centre of the textile industry as well as the knowledge-based industries of IT and Biotechnology. It is regarded as a global hub along with Silicon Valley, Boston and London. "To be Bangalored" has entered the lexicon as synonymous with losing one's job to someone in this city!

The City is a key contributor to the economic growth of the State. While the area of metropolitan Bengaluru is less than 0.5% of the area of the State, it contributes 75% of the corporate tax collection, 80% of the sales tax collection and 90% of the luxury tax collection in the State. The city has seen a five-fold growth of state tax revenues during the period 1990-2003, which is unparalleled in this country.

Purpose/Objectives of a Metropolitan Planning Committee

The rapid and unprecedented growth of Bengaluru has created a great strain on the infrastructural facilities and urban services of the city. Adequate water supply for its burgeoning population, good drainage, street lighting, a good transport system, solid waste management and provision of other civic amenities are sorely lacking and are the need of the hour. The Committee on Urban Management of Bengaluru 1997 pointed out that "there is a total absence of an integrated planning machinery" in Bengaluru. One of the main tasks of the MPC will be to streamline and rationalize planning for the metropolis so that it is able to effectively cater to the demands of a large and growing population.

Functions and Powers of the MPC

The Constitution is clear about the functions to be assigned to the MPC. It states that the MPC shall be constituted “to prepare a draft development plan for the Metropolitan Area as a whole”. This then is the main function or the *raison d’etre* for the MPC.

The Constitution leaves it to the legislature of a State to “make provision with respect to the functions relating to planning and co-ordination for the Metropolitan area which may be assigned to such committees.”

At the same time, the Constitution states that “every Metropolitan Planning Committee shall, in preparing the draft development plan

(a) have regard to:

- (i) the plans prepared by the Municipalities and the Panchayats in the Metropolitan area
- (ii) matters of common interest between the Municipalities and the Panchayats, including coordinated spatial planning of the area, sharing of water and other physical and natural resources, the integrated development of infrastructure and environmental conservation
- (iii) the overall objectives and priorities set by the Government of India and the Government of the State
- (iv) the extent and nature of investments likely to be made in the Metropolitan area by agencies of the Government of India and of the Government of the State and other available resources whether financial or otherwise

(b) consult such institutions and organizations as the Governor may, by order, specify.

4. The Chairperson of every Metropolitan Planning Committee shall forward the development plan, as recommended by such Committee, to the Government of the State.

The Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, Art 503B, wholly reiterates and repeats verbatim the Constitution regarding the functions of the MPC and the manner in which the Committee has to carry out the functions.

Janagraaha, an NGO, in its study entitled Urban Government Reforms, points out that in preparing a comprehensive Metropolitan Plan, the plans prepared by the municipalities and panchayats in the MPC area will have to be consolidated and in turn, the MPC plan will act as guidance for each of these local governments to prepare their plans.

Jannagraha portrays a few steps which will go into the making of a consolidated Plan.

1. Preparation of Area Plans by the rural and urban local bodies.
2. Integration of area plans and departmental plans
3. Putting together all the plan proposals and formulating a draft Metropolitan Plan
4. Discussion of the draft Metropolitan Plan and forwarding it to the MPC/State Planning Commission.

According to Janagraaha, at each stage of formulation of the Metropolitan Plan, it is necessary to ensure:

1. Linkage with the three tiers of Panchayats and the ULBs.
2. Removal of overlapping/duplications.
3. Preparation of estimates
4. Estimation of likely employment generation and possible poverty reduction
5. Environmental check of the impact of the carrying capacity of the resources.

The plans will include not just spatial planning but also sectoral planning such as transport, solid waste management, and many other sectors which are delineated in the 12th Schedule of the 74th Amendment.

Lalitha Kamath, an independent researcher into urban issues, says that the MPC's planning function involves four aspects: consolidation, convergence, rationalization and integration. Consolidation takes place vertically, from lower level to higher level, i.e. from village to district level. The ward plans are submitted to the Gram Panchayat which consolidates them into a GP plan. A further consolidation of plans takes place at the

Block level and at the District level. Similarly, there is a consolidation of plans at the municipality level.

Convergence takes place when the municipality and panchayat plans are merged. These are then sent up to the MPC.

At every level, particularly the MPC, a rationalization of plans has to take place. Thus, if municipalities and rural local bodies make the same demands, say a market or a check dam or whatever, it need not be built in every single area but has to be rationalized in a common location which is accessible to both, the urban and the rural. Finally, the MPC will come out with an integrated plan for the whole Metropolitan Area.

Powers: Lalitha points out that the MPC would not be able to alter the plans that have been set up by the urban local bodies as that is the whole point of decentralized planning. “Whatever is actually reflected in the Local Body plans cannot be changed by the MPC; that is not in their power. What is in their power is to do some amount of integration of plans.” She says, “There is no point in going through an elaborate planning process if it can be overridden at the top level.”

According to Lalitha, the MPC can at best act as an arbitration forum when there is conflict between, say, the urban and rural local bodies. There should be an arbitration forum where conflicts can be discussed and negotiated and the MPC can serve this purpose. This is an important function that the MPC can perform. There may be conflicts between sharing of resources or issues such as management of pollution, the consequences of economic growth and so on. The MPC will be an ideal place to provide a forum for recourse to such conflicts. Representation should be given to all the parties involved so that they can discuss their grievances and negotiate a solution.

The Report of the Expert Committee on Governance in the Bangalore Metropolitan Region and BBMP, 2008, also known as the **Kasturirangan Report** however, says that in order to carry out its functions of planning and coordination, “the MPC should be vested with the necessary executive powers by law and regulation to perform this role.” It further states that “the MPC is not to be considered merely as a rubber-stamping authority which collates existing plans. The MPC must go beyond considering the plans submitted to it by the ULBs and the RLBs before proceeding to develop a comprehensive metropolitan-wide plan. To do this effectively, the MPC

should be given the statutory power to review and suggest changes and in certain cases overrule ULB and RLB plans on issues which have a regional significance.”

The Kasturirangan Report further states that “we need to develop and put in place a clear hierarchy of planning institutions and plans where the Metropolitan Development Plan under the MPC should co-ordinate and override all other plans developed by other state functionaries and local bodies in the metropolitan region” and “the institutional hierarchy whereby the MPC is conferred with the overall decision-making power in this area must be established in the statutes to be drafted for creation of the MPC in Karnataka.”

While the functions of the MPC are clear, the matter regarding the powers conferred on the MPC need to be discussed and debated. The relationship between the Urban and Rural Local Bodies (and there are many in the Bengaluru Metropolitan Area such as the BBMP, the CMCs, TMCs and GPs) and the MPC needs to be carefully nurtured, without any feeling of highhandedness on the side of the MPC. Any course other than this will tend to weaken local bodies, go against Article 40 of the Constitution, undermine the fragile democratic framework of the Metropolitan Area and have a countervailing effect on the MPC and its legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Hence, it may be wise to tread carefully. The MPC should not undermine the ULBs and RLBs and ride roughshod over the plans of these democratically-elected institutions. The RLBs and ULBs are directly elected bodies and closer to the people. The MPC, on the other hand, is a body of indirectly elected members, elected by a single transferable vote. It is hence twice removed from the people.

T.R.Raghunandan, Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, was wary of giving powers to the MPC. He said that “the moment somebody gets into an organization, he wants to use it as a mechanism for dispensing patronage. In many of the states, the DPC is emerging as the fourth tier of local government. In fact, it is becoming another centre of power. Sanctions have to be given by the DPC. So, the DPC is an insidious mechanism by which the Collector gets a commanding role. This is the case with Kerala. Every plan has to be sanctioned and approved by the DPC. And the Collector is the co-Chairman of the DPC.

So the whole thing is stage-managed. It is not decentralized planning but decentralized petitioning. People submit their petitions. Eventually who gives the clearance is a well-guarded secret; it goes all the way up to the DPC. This could well happen to the MPC. The politics of patronage will be very high in the MPC.”

Regarding regulatory powers, he said that the MPC should not have any ‘regulatory’ or ‘supervisory’ powers. It is twice removed from the people. It should not have a citizen interface; it can have an institutional interface. At best, it can knock institutions like the BDA for violating the plans. It should be a simple planning and co-ordination body.

On the whole, Raghunandan was against the concept of a hierarchy and the MPC emerging as a supra-local body over the municipalities. In fact, he wanted to do away with hierarchies within the local bodies such as the three-tiered Panchayati Raj system. He said that there should be only one tier, the municipality or call it what you will; that is the structure that one encounters in other countries like Norway. The present Panchayati Raj system has been structured like a government department, he said.

Regarding powers, **Anita Reddy, head of AVAS, (Association for Voluntary Action and Service) and member of ABIDE**, said that words such as ‘regulatory’ and ‘supervisory’ had a frightening connotation. She would prefer to use the word ‘monitoring’, in that the MPC could monitor the implementation of the plan and its members could ensure that the poor are indeed benefited.

P.R. Ramesh, ex-Mayor, BMP, pointed out that the MPC should have the function of co-ordinated planning. This planning process takes into account not only the plans of the urban and rural local bodies but of the parastatals as well. He emphasized that the MPC is merely a planning body and not an executive body. He also said that the MPC will engage in long-term planning; for a period of about 25 years.

In order to bring out its numerous plans such as a topographic plan, an economic development plan, a socio-economic plan, a plan of its natural resources etc., the MPC will need to have access to data on all these sectors. After collection and collation of all the data, the MPC will bring out a comprehensive and long-term plan, he said.

K. Jairaj, chief of BESCOM, said that as per his experience as BBMP Commissioner for two terms, “we require a body which will plan for the city cutting across the functional responsibilities of various organizations and departments. For instance, you have the BBMP, BDA, Water Board, BESCOM, Land Authorities, etc. We require one planning grid for the whole city.” He said that whereas the BBMP does internal planning, the MPC will be above that. It will do macro-planning and come out with a structural plan like the CDP.

Powers: He said that once the plan is in place and is approved by the government, there can be no violations of the plan. All the parastatals and the government departments will have to follow the plan.

Gopal Naik, Professor, IIM-B, said that the functions of the MPC should be coordinated and integrated planning. “It should not get into implementation. That should be left to the local bodies.” The BBMP would be able to implement projects but the capacity of the Rural Local Bodies within the Metropolitan area would have to be stepped up.

He said that the MPC should also have a monitoring function. “They should be able to come down heavily on the Local Bodies if they are violating the plans. Citizens should hold the MPC responsible for all the violations that take place.”

Ashwin Mahesh, Professor, IIM-B and member of ABIDE, said that the MPC will have the functions of planning and coordination. “We need to see that somebody does the planning in an integrated way. At present, there is no coordinated planning. Transport planning does not take water into consideration, it does not take health into consideration. Even officials who are alert to the idea of integrated conversations are surely going to draw borders. The MPC, on the other hand, being a regional planning body, will have the attitude to see things holistically. They will know what they put in their water plans and health plans, so if there are implications for the other plans, they will be aware of them.”

He pointed out that while planning is done by the MPC, implementation will be carried out by the Local Bodies.

Vinod Vyasulu, head of Centre for Budget and Policy Studies said, “now the planning is done by officials. Planning has to be done upwards in stages

through the elected bodies and not by the officials.” At the same time, he hastened to add, planning is not the making of a wish-list; it has to be based on data of natural resources and needs of the people. It is a difficult process but we will learn by making mistakes. A lot of data has to be collected and a lot of hard work has to be done.”

Vinod Vyasulu said that the MPC will coordinate plans and submit them to the local bodies. Each body will then have to approve the plans. Regarding powers of the MPC, he said “You cannot make the MPC a dictator which says, ‘this is the plan. No way. The clout of the MPC stems from the fact that it is the only body that has put the plans together in an integrated manner. With every decision, some people stand to gain and others to lose. The only way forward is to have discussions. It is very destructive politics which says that so long as I get what I want, nothing else matters. That has to change. There has to be more of a negotiating culture.”

Anil Kumar, Professor, Institute of Social and Economic Change, narrated the process of planning in rural areas and it may be instructive for us to understand this process and learn from it. He said, “rural planning and urban planning are two separate processes in Karnataka. Rural planning starts at the ward sabha or village level. The Gram Panchayat President, Vice-President and elected representative from the ward conduct a meeting with the villagers and decide on the priorities at the ward level. The minutes of the meeting are taken to the Gram Sabha. Gram Sabha fixes the priorities and finalized the plan. This is then ratified by the Gram Panchayat. From there, the plan goes to the Taluk Panchayat. The role of the TP is to inform of the technicalities of planning and sources of funding. From the various Taluk Panchayats, the plans go to the Zilla Panchayat. There the plans are finalized. This is the process of statutory planning and this planning is here to stay as it is in the 73rd and 74th Amendment of the Constitution.”

Anil Kumar said that he “was happy that statutory planning has taken firm roots in the peoples’ minds.” However, certain problems remain. 1) Processes of transparency and accountability are lacking. Anil Kumar linked this to the second drawback, namely that 2) Panchayats lack technical and financial capacity to do the job. He said that “as a political process, planning was on firm ground but as a technical process, it is not. Thus, there is always the possibility that funds will be siphoned off. There needs to be capacity-building of Gram Panchayat secretaries as well as elected representatives. This has to happen at all levels of the three-tiered

panchayats. Only then can we have good and systematic planning in the rural areas.”

He said that “in Karnataka, there is sufficient devolution of funds and functions to local government. But, the problem is with the functionaries. At the village level, planning is handled by the Gram Panchayat secretary. Some Taluk Panchayats have a TP Planning Officer. At the district level, there is the District Planning Officer who heads a District Planning section and is a senior officer. However, these officials are sent on deputation from the various government departments and lack a background in planning.” He stressed that a competent cadre of planning officials needs to be created. “Better formulation of plans would take place if they knew how to prioritize, to allocate resources, to plan for the natural resources in the area, etc.”

Anil Kumar pointed out that “the plans from the Zilla Panchayat should culminate in the District Planning Committee. The DPC should integrate the rural and urban plans of the district and prepare a consolidated plan which is to be forwarded to the State Government. But, this process is not taking place. The DPC was set up about three years but it is not functioning. Hence, the plans are implemented by the ZP.”

Anil Kumar was not very sure of why the DPC was not functioning. But he ventured to make an educated guess. He said that “the entire process gets highly politicized at the district level, as this is where the MPs and MLAs have high stakes. They are not taking the initiative for making the DPC functional as there is a lot of money and contracts involved.”

With the non-functioning of the DPC, there is no monitoring of the plans. Also, there is no convergence of the urban and rural plans in the district.

The experience of rural planning narrated above gives us a clue as to where the problems of the MPC will lie. It should be simply a planning body and no contracts or money should emanate from it. If it does, it will meet with the same fate as the DPC. It will undoubtedly encounter stiff resistance from the ULBs and RLBs as well as the MPs and MLAs in the metropolitan area.

Finance

Raghunandan said that there is a clause in the 74th Amendment by which there is an obligation by the Centre and State governments to make known the investments to be made by them in the metropolitan area, to the MPC. He is referring to the Constitutional provision that “every Metropolitan Planning Committee shall, in preparing the draft development plan

(a) have regard to:

- (v) the extent and nature of investments likely to be made in the Metropolitan area by agencies of the Government of India and of the Government of the State and other available resources whether financial or otherwise.

He said that ‘the Kolkata MPC Act does not amplify or speak on this Constitutional obligation.’”

He said that the expenditure for implementation of the plans will be made by the institution concerned, be it the Railways or Defence or Local Bodies. “It is not the intention of the Constitution that the expenditure should be the responsibility of the MPC. The MPC has certain responsibilities but expenditure is not one of them. The MPC has to do the planning and for this, the Constitution says that they must be aware of the various sources of funding. For instance, the Railways must say how much money they will put in; what the Defence will spend on civic responsibilities in Cantonment areas should also be made known. Therefore, the law for the MPC must amplify on how this information is going to be provided.”

Planning is a low cost exercise while implementation is a high-cost exercise. Raghunandan was against the MPC acting as a supra-financial body in which the finances for the plans are vested. He said, “the resulting power and clout of such an arrangement is what I am scared of. The MPC should be a simple planning and co-ordination body.”

When I suggested to **Vijaya Kumar**, MLA, that funds will come to the MPC, he reacted strongly. He said, “Funds will not come. Not a single pie will come. The BBMP and the Government will execute the plans and they will have the funds. The MPC is only an advisory committee. That is all. Nobody should think of making money from it.”

Krishna Kumar, retired Advisor to the Government of Karnataka, said that “the MPC should be a planning body and not a funding body. However” he added, “the MPC can have a kitty for rewarding innovative planning.”

Gopal Naik said that “we have not done very well in raising resources. Resources will come partly from the State and partly from BBMP and even from the Centre. The MPC will have a coordinating role in working out the finances for the various sectors. For this, they will need a lot of inputs from the local bodies and the parastatals.

Composition of the MPC and Selection of its Office-bearers

In developing a framework for the MPC, one has to consider the composition of the MPC. In this, as in all other matters, the Constitution and the State law have to be strictly adhered to.

The 74th Amendment, Article 243 ZE leaves it to the State to make provision, by law, with respect to the following:

(a) composition of the MPC

(b) the manner in which the seats in such Committees shall be filled. Here however, there is a caveat put forth by the Constitution that “provided not less than two-thirds of the members of the Committee shall be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members of the Municipalities and Chairpersons of the Panchayats in the Metropolitan area in proportion to the ratio between the population of the Municipalities and of the Panchayats in that area.” This ensures the representative nature of the MPC.

(c) the representation in such Committees of the Government of India and the Government of the State and of such organizations and institutions as may be deemed necessary for carrying out the functions assigned to such Committees

(d) the manner in which the Chairpersons of such Committees shall be chosen.

Thus, except for ensuring the representative nature of the Committee, the Constitution leaves it to the State Legislature to formulate the composition of the MPC.

The Kamataka Municipal Corporations Act, Article 503B, stipulates that:

“the Metropolitan Planning Committee shall consist of thirty persons of which:

- (a) such number of persons, not being less than two-thirds of the members of the Committee, as may be specified by the Government shall be elected in the prescribed manner by, from amongst, the elected members of the corporations, the Municipal Councils and town Panchayats and the Adhyakshas and Upadhyakshas of Zilla Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and Grama Panchayats in the Metropolitan area in proportion to the ration between the population of the city and other municipal area and that of the areas in the jurisdiction of Zilla Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Grama Panchayat.
 - (b) Such number of representatives of
 - (c) (i) the Government of India and the State Government as may be determined by the State Government and nominated by the Government of India or as the case may be, the State Government
 - (d) Such organizations and institutions as may be deemed necessary for carrying out of functions assigned to the committee, nominated by the State Government
2. All the members of the House of the People and the State Legislative Assembly whose constituencies lie within the Metropolitan area and the members of the Council of State and the State Legislative Council who are registered as electors in such area shall be permanent invitees of the Committees.
 3. The Commissioner of BDA shall be the Secretary of the Committee
 4. The Chairman of the Metropolitan Planning Committee shall be chosen in such manner as may be prescribed.

In the case of West Bengal, the MPC of Kolkata which has already been set up and is functioning, consists of 60 members. Of these, 40 are elected from amongst the Councillors/Corporators of the Urban Local Bodies /Corporations and Chairpersons of the Panchayats included in the Kolkata Metropolitan Area and 20 are nominated members. These 20 persons are

appointed by the State Government, including the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. Interestingly, the Chief Minister is the Chairperson of the MPC and the Minister of Urban Development is the Vice-Chairperson.

In a discussion following the presentation of the setting-up of the Kolkata Metropolitan Planning Committee by **Barun Ray, Secretary, Kolkata Metropolitan Planning Committee**, to a Bengaluru audience, **Vinod Vyasulu** suggested that the MPC should consist only of elected members with a provision to include invitees based on expertise. The invitees would not have voting rights which would be restricted to elected members of the MPC. Secondly, he said that he was disturbed that the KPMC had the Chief Minister as the head of the Committee and MLAs and MPs were on the Committee. He said that one of the problems faced by local bodies in Karnataka is the involvement of MPs and MLAs in it. He suggested that the MPC should consist of elected members of the local bodies and these members should then interact with the State Government on behalf of the local bodies.

Manu Kulkarni asked if there were any Ward Committee members represented in the KMPC. Barun Ray replied that none of the 20 nominated members were ward committee members. He clarified, “there is no representation as such for any NGO or RWA member in the KMPC.”

The programme, which was organized by the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Centre for Public Policy IIM-B and CIVIC, ended with the recommendation that civil society should find a place on the MPC. Various citizens’ groups should be allowed to participate in the deliberations of the Committee.

Thus, apart from the Constitutional mandate of two-thirds of the MPC consisting of elected members, the State has a lot of leeway in the composition of the MPC.

T.R. Raghunandan said that the Central nominee should be one who has a direct stake in the city’s plans, not someone who is appointed by virtue of his being in a Ministry, say the Ministry of Urban Development. Thus, someone from the Defense Ministry may be appropriate since Bengaluru has a large cantonment area.

Colonel Mathew, Secretary, Citizens'Action Forum, said, “all the MPC members should be elected. No one should be nominated. They can have experts as advisers. But how does one define an expert in planning? Does urban planning mean roads and flyovers or does it mean job creation? What does it mean?”

Colonel Mathew also said that the idea of having the Chief Minister as Chairperson is ridiculous. He will be presenting the matters of the Committee to himself! Also, a Panchayat member will hesitate to speak up in the presence of the Chief Minister.

Anita Reddy was emphatic that the voice of the poor should be represented on the MPC. She said that 30% of the population of Bengaluru was poor but they lacked a voice in the corridors of power.

She said that this voice should be built up from the grass-roots. There are structures of leadership in the slums and the leaders from the numerous slums should be federated into a body to form a network. Finally, an apex body would be formed to give voice to the poor. One representative would fill the nominated post in the MPC. The task of this network of voices of the poor would be to see that the plans built up from the ward level upwards for the poor are implemented. For this purpose, there should be a good flow of information, both upwards from the ward level regarding the needs of the people and downwards from the Centre and the State regarding the resources available to the city.

With regard to the urban poor, **Supriya Roy Chowdhary, Professor, Institute of Social and Economic Change,** said that civil society has played an important role in Bengaluru and they should find representation on the MPC in the nominated category. She said that they should have voting rights along with the elected members as they are on par with them in all respects within the committee.

Lalitha Kamath said that the reason for making a particular nomination should be made clear. In other words, there should be transparency in appointing the nominated members.

Gopal Naik stated that the nominated members of the MPC should be experts in their fields, be it environment, economic activities, infrastructure,

etc. NGOs and RWAs are good in developing grass-roots institutions and they should also be included.

K. Jairaj said that in the nominated category, he would like to see “all the civic chiefs, BBMP, BDA, BWSSB etc; I would also like to see on the Committee, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, leading NGOs, people with a social conscience like Samuel Paul, people who have done good work in urban planning etc. Bengaluru abounds in talented people and the government can pick and choose its nominees.” On who should be the Chairman of the Committee, he said that the Chief Minister should be the Chairman.

Vijaya Kumar, MLA, had very strong views on the constitution of the MPC. He said that the MPC should not consist of “hi-fi people”, who have lived in America and England. “Having become disappointed with those places, they have come down to Bengaluru and try to transform Bengaluru into those places. That is not possible. The culture is different, the people are different” He said that the ex-Chief Minister S.M. Krishna had constituted BATF but “it was not helpful for Bengaluru. Now, I don’t think the ABIDE people can contribute much to Bengaluru. They think that the city should be improved and we should live happily like in Switzerland! That is not possible.”

Vinod Vyasulu, head of Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, said that “it is unfortunate that such a large number of members of the MPC are nominated. However, that being the case, civil society members can elect one among themselves to the MPC. So also, there should be a representative for the Trade Unions, for the major industries, for arts and culture, an eminent writer like U.R. Ananthamurthy, an eminent Professor of Town Planning and so on. Certainly, no civil servants who are His Master’s Voice!”

“Unfortunately”, he said, “MLAs and MPs will be invitees although without a vote. The nominated members should have voting rights along with the other members of the committee” he said.

Vijaya Kumar, MLA, was keen to include NGOs and RWAs in the committee to get their suggestions and expertise. But he saw no role for them beyond that. He was not in favour of their having the right to vote as he probably thought they would be politicized. He said, “why should they

vote? This is just a planning committee. If we go for voting (for these sections), we will end up miserably.”

Regarding the role of MLAs in the MPC, Vijaya Kumar said that “their role was merely to make suggestions; nothing more than that.”

He said that the Chairman of the MPC should be elected from amongst the elected representatives of the MPC.

Ramalinga Reddy, MLA, said that the members of the committee should be technocrats and experts. He did not see a role for MLAs in the MPC.

Reddy also said that a technocrat should be the Chairman of the Committee. He said that Nandan Nilekani had been hand picked by the Prime Minister to head the committee on Unique Identity Number scheme. He did not have much confidence in either bureaucrats or MLAs. He said that many PSUs were not doing well because they were headed by bureaucrats.

Jurisdictional Area of the MPC

One question that arises when developing a framework for metropolitan governance is, what should be the extent of territory over which the MPC has jurisdiction? Once this is resolved, the area would be publicly notified by the Governor of the State to be the Bengaluru Metropolitan Area (BMA).

Article 243P of the 74th Amendment states that a “ ‘Metropolitan area’ means an area having a population of ten lakhs or more comprised in one or more districts and consisting of two or more Municipalities or Panchayats or other contiguous areas, specified by the Governor by public notification to be a Metropolitan area for the purposes of this Part.”

The **Kasturirangan Report** recommends the inclusion of the entire territorial jurisdiction of the BMRDA, currently comprising the three revenue districts of Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural and the recently carved out district of Ramanagaram as the area to be included in the BMA. The BMRDA has already initiated planning in this regard and has come out with a Structural Plan which can be used by the MPC.

The BMRDA is a land mass of approximately 8000 sq. kms comprising three revenue districts of Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural and Ramanagaram, as noted above. The region has 9 Local Planning Areas, 11 Urban Local Bodies and 329 rural local bodies located within it.

Prior to the creation of BBMP and Ramanagaram District, there were 19 ULBs (including BMP) and 338 Gram Panchayats in the Area apart from 12 Taluk Panchayats and 2 Zilla Panchayats. After the formation of BBMP, the number of ULBs was reduced to 11 and the number of Gram Panchayats also came down. The formation of Ramanagaram District increased the number of Zilla Panchayats to 3.

The present BMA covers a mere extent of 1307 sq. kms occupying most of the area of Bengaluru Urban District. The planning and development functions are overseen by the BDA in this area. The key acts administered by the BDA are the BDA Act 1976 and the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act 1961. Within the present BMA, the largest ULB is the BBMP whose current jurisdiction extends to about 800 sq.km.

Thus, the territorial jurisdiction of the MPC proposed by the Kasturirangan Report is a very large one, far outstripping the present BMA and other metropolitan cities of the country such as Delhi, Mumbai or Kolkata. The question for debate is whether such a large area needs to be included in the proposed BMA. What is the projection of economic growth made by the government for Bengaluru City which justifies the inclusion of such a large area in the Metropolitan Area? Will the city have adequate water supplies for such a large area, keeping in mind that the water for Bengaluru has to be transported all the way from the Cauvery river? Will the governance structure be able to handle such a large land mass, given its present inchoate state.

According to Professor **Gopal Naik**, the inclusion of such a large area in the MPC will encourage urbanization and the placing of Bengaluru on a pedestal isolated from the rest of the State. He queried, “Do we just focus on urban areas and leave everything else. Then what is likely to happen is that only urban areas will start growing. It will encourage urbanization... The State should have urban-rural integrated planning. If you are able to provide reasonably good facilities in rural areas, viz the PURA concept, then there will be no need for migration. Again, if you are able to create economic activities in rural areas, there will be no need for migration to urban areas.

This means that you can manage with smaller cities rather than cities becoming so big that you can't really manage them. Start with a small area and link it with planning bodies in other areas. In other words, Bengaluru should not develop in isolation from other areas. There should be smooth integration between cities and towns and between urban and rural areas, the reason being that what people do in urban areas has implications on rural areas and vice versa.'

He continued, "If you just focus on this large area and if you start building infrastructure, all the 8,000 sq. km. will be urbanized and very soon all the people from the rural areas will come and settle here. Moreover, rather than integrating Bengaluru and Ramanagaram, the latter should grow at its own pace and Bengaluru should have its own set-up."

He also pointed out that, "It will be such a huge area and it will be very, very difficult to manage. We don't have a proper governance structure to manage such a large area. Who is going to be in charge of this 8000 sq. km? It will be a State within a State. The number of people who will reside here will probably be 40% of the population of Karnataka. So, it should be a smaller area, for instance, Bengaluru Urban District, which is manageable."

Supriya Roy Chowdhary, Professor at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, was also against the inclusion of such a large area in the MPC. She said, "I think it should be a smaller area because in whatever work we have done, we have seen that government structures are unable to deal with large areas. They can't even do such small things like drainage, how will they administer such a large area. It makes sense to have a smaller area for the MPC."

Secondly, she believed that "in a smaller area, community participation is possible. The present BMRDA area contains many diverse areas and if you don't have local involvement, you will have a top-down kind of Master Plan which just will not work."

On the other hand, **P.R. Ramesh** and **Vinod Vyasulu** were in favour of a large metropolitan area comprising of the BMRDA area of 8000sq. km. According to Vinod Vyasulu, "it will enable us to plan for a large area." According to P.R. Ramesh, "we need a long-term plan for the area and the MPC will provide for coordinated planning to take place."

T.R. Raghunandan was of the view that “the MPC framework should provide space for flexibility. The city will keep expanding so there will have to be notifications in advance to determine the new jurisdiction. The law may state that expansion takes place “as the State government may determine” This is the normal legal provision.”

According to **Vinay Baindur**, the jurisdictional area of the MPC should include the BBMP area and the BDA area outside the BBMP, including Malur taluk in Kolar district. Many other respondents also made the same recommendation.

Thus, there were different opinions on the size of the area to be included in the MPC. While most of the respondents were of the opinion that it should be a smaller, more manageable area, there were a few respondents who believed that the larger area would facilitate planning in advance.

Parastatals and the MPC

Lalitha Kamath pointed out that parastatals have to be accountable to the elected bodies. They have an important role to play as technical bodies. They need to share information and report to the local government and the MPC. However, the final decisions should be taken by the elected representatives. She said, “They could be located within the structure of local government as its technical wing. What is non-negotiable is that they be reporting to local government and not taking decisions on their own.”

According to **Vinod Vyasulu**, “there is no role for parastatals, they should all be wound up.” He said, “For instance, the Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation (KUIDFC) is a vehicle which has been set up solely to keep the money. Why can’t the finance department receive it or the BBMP? Money which the BBMP receives is subject to the control of the BBMP which is a good check and balance. Unless it is an extremely special case, there should be no parastatals. Take for example KEB. It can get a contract from BBMP to supply electricity. This is a new approach and we will learn as we go along. If there are parastatals, the Mayor should be the Chairman and he should write the confidential report of the head of the parastatal. They should be accountable to the BBMP or to the municipality or any other local government.” Clearly, Vyasulu was not willing to concede to the parastatals the independent role which they now have.

Gopal Naik said that the parastatals will have to provide inputs to the MPC to help them in the task of making their plans. The parastatals have a lot of experience which can be put to use in solving problems. For instance, there may be problems with pipelines of water, sewage and telephones. The MPC will have to take technical help from the parastatals in solving these problems. But the final decision of how the pipelines have to be laid rests with the MPC. Thus, the main task of the MPC is coordinating the plans of the various sectors.

T.R. Raghunandan said that the MPC will play the important role of coordinating the plans of the parastatals. Talking in terms of realpolitik in India, he was skeptical of the parastatals becoming part of the BBMP or any of the municipal bodies as occurs in some other countries like Singapore. Rather, they will continue to remain independent bodies, the reason being that “in India we have an extremely corrupt and acquisitive political and bureaucratic culture. The city offers tremendous opportunities for corruption. The system of parastatal institutions allows many fingers in the pie, whereas if all of them were part of the BBMP, they would only be subject to the corruption monopoly of one person or one set-up. In that case, the Mayor will become the boss. The Mayor will be bigger than the Chief Minister because he will have greater corruption opportunities at his command than the Chief Minister.” This brings us to the subject of transparency and accountability in the MPC.

Transparency and Accountability

Institutional mechanisms for ensuring transparency and accountability are important. India has a high rate of corruption and Karnataka has one of the highest indices of corruption. The Lok Ayukta is doing a good job of uncovering corruption but it needs to be given more teeth.

The Administrative Reforms Committee recommends that “audit committees may be constituted by the State Governments at the district level to exercise oversight regarding the integrity of financial information, adequacy of internal controls, compliance with the applicable laws and ethical conduct of all persons involved in local bodies.” For Metropolitan bodies, it recommends more of the same. It says, “For Metropolitan Corporations, separate audit committees should be constituted”.

The respondents were greatly concerned about the matter of transparency and probity in public life and specifically, in the MPC which is soon to be set up.

Mr. Mukunda, President of Citizen's Action Forum, was skeptical of the institution of the Metropolitan Planning Committee. He said that it would merely be a body set up between the Legislature and the Corporation with the drawbacks of both. It would not make any difference in the matter of transparency and accountability. For the latter, Mukunda suggested the setting up of an institution of public hearing in which the citizens could be involved in the planning of their city. He said that, say, at the Assembly level, a call for public hearing is made regarding any major project in that area, above a certain limit, say 10 crores. The proposed project would be placed before the people and their opinion sought. After obtaining the people's opinion, it would be submitted to a committee of legal and technical experts. They would evaluate all the suggestions and come out with a project plan. More importantly, they would bring out a document of exclusion whereby they will clearly explain why and on what grounds certain suggestions were not acceptable. This would ensure that the bureaucrat and the politician were accountable and make citizen participation meaningful. What is happening now is that objections are sought but the plans are approved without making any changes and without providing any explanation as to why a particular suggestion was excluded. Hence, the plans are a fait accompli with the so-called public participation being a mere eye-wash.

Lalitha Kamath said that "audit committees look at expenditure after it has taken place. This is not enough. Prior to this, at the time of making decisions regarding the project, there definitely needs to be a process by which public consultations or public hearings take place, especially on the larger projects which are above a certain amount."

"For instance, in the JNNURM, there was no point in having a naam ke vaasthe public consultation at the time of releasing the CDP but no public consultation at the time of any of the DPRs (Detailed Project Report). The CDP is just a vision statement; the DPRs are more concrete, they talk about how a particular project will be conceived, designed and implemented. However, people are not involved in the project at this stage."

“Public consultation, in fact, should be an on-going process. It is important **when** the public consultation is held. It should be held at the design stage – do people actually want this project, does it make sense to them, does it contribute to their well-being and in what way, etc. Then, there should be consultation at the middle stage – what is the progress of the project, the amount of money spent, the outcomes, who is getting the benefits. Again, at the end, there should be a monitoring of the project.”

“All these public consultations should be institutionalized. There should be an institutional structure for ensuring transparency and accountability.”

Lalitha went on to say that the conventional audit done by chartered accountants was only one kind of audit. There should be other audits as well such as social impact, environmental impact, impact on marginalized groups etc.

There should be different kinds of disclosure systems. Financial models especially, need to be made clear and transparent before the implementation of a project. Lalitha also said that the RTI was a good system and should be strengthened.

Professor **Gopal Naik** said that “all decisions should be made available on the web-site, so that everyone has access to the information. Also, there should be a sound basis for taking a decision, and if a change is made, an explanation should be given which is equally sound regarding the change. Only then, will people believe in the system. Also, decisions once taken, should not be changed frequently. The process of making a change should be made very tough. It is not alright to just issue a notice and state that a change has been made. There has to be a clear explanation in a public hearing as to why the MPC is making the change.”

T.R.Raghunandan said that “financial transparency is the most important thing. The Metropolitan area will be an area where a lot of work will be done and a lot of monies spent. There is a clause in the Constitution that the Central government institutions will make known the investments to be made by them; e.g. the Railways are obliged to make known their budgets to be spent in the metropolitan area. With this, the MPC will be aware of the various sources of funding.” He said that the Calcutta legal framework does not amplify on this provision and concluded that “the law of the MPC for Karnataka must amplify or speak on how this will be done.”

When asked if there should be a supra-financial body which will hold the finances to implement the MPC plans, he said, “please do not suggest this. It will give rise to patronage, power and clout and all the negative connotations that go with it, such as hierarchy and centralization.”

He also suggested that transparency be imposed on everyone so that they will disclose their budgets with a code number through e-governance. A citizen can then click and find out the work done in his area and the monies spent on it.

Colonel Mathew said that “whatever the model of governance (Board, Department etc.), it must be accountable to the ultimate beneficiary and it must function in a completely transparent manner. For this, Part 2, Section 4 of the RTI Act must be implemented. It states that a suo moto disclosure by all possible medium be made. Then, the necessity of raising questions through RTI itself will not be there. The moment that all these organizations make disclosures, they will become transparent and corruption will cease.”

Jagannath, ex-President of Bellandur Gram Panchayat said that when he was president of the Gram Panchayat, he had telecast the GP meetings to the 24 villages in his GP. Similarly, arrangements should be made to telecast the MPC meetings to the people of Bengaluru. All information should be available to the public. For instance, in the building of a road, the names of the contractor and engineer should be made public as also the thickness of the road etc. This information should be available in public places and on websites.

Sub-committees of MPC:

Planning by the ULBs and RLBs includes not just spatial planning but sectoral planning as well. The Twelfth Schedule of the 74th Amendment indicates the sectors in which planning should occur. These include water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes, public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management, safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections, slum improvement and upgradation, urban poverty alleviation etc. The Corporations in all the States have obligatory and discretionary functions. The obligatory functions include supply of water and maintenance of waterworks, supply of electricity, road transport, provision of primary education etc. The discretionary functions include public housing, organization of fairs and exhibitions etc.

No doubt, the local bodies will prepare plans in all these areas with the help of the government line departments and forward the same to the MPC. So also the parastatals will submit their plans. The MPC may constitute sectoral committees to go into these plans and formulate a comprehensive plan for the metropolitan area. The Kolkata MPC had constituted 5 Sector Committees on:

Drainage, Sewerage and Sanitation
Traffic, Transportation, Railways and Waterways
Water Supply
Education, Health, Employment and Bustee
Environment, Wetland, Planning and Parks

According to the paper presented by **Barun Ray**, the sectoral committees of KMPC were involved in preparing “Sectoral Development Plan/Master Plan for the respective sector, after taking into account the plans prepared for the Metropolitan Area; the matters of common interest between the different units of local self-government and also the overall objectives and priorities of the Government.

Here, one may discuss as to what sectors should be included in the Bengaluru MPC. During the discussion on the Kolkata MPC, Kathyayini Chamaraj said that the sub-committees in the KMPC appear to go beyond the purview of the Twelfth Schedule, since it includes employment. She enquired if this subject has been devolved to local bodies and if so, who is the officer to deliver this service? Is it a state official or a local body official?

Barun Ray replied that there is a representative of the Chamber of Commerce on the Committee and hence the issue of employment was taken up. However, there is no official as such to deal with the subject. Rather, there is only a broad perspective which has been incorporated, which is to create jobs for the people. There is also an attempt to converge the various government programmes, e.g. the Rojgar Yojana and other employment programmes into an employment plan. There is also discussion regarding various vocational avenues of employment like welders, plumbers, etc.

One of the recommendations put forward in that presentation was that “the plan should be a developmental plan and not just a land use plan or a zonal

regulation plan. It should focus on all aspects of the city's development, including environment, transportation and public health. Hence, the sub-committees are an important component of the MPC.

In addition to the sub-committees, the KMPC also has an Executive Committee and a Kolkata Urban Services for the Poor Sub-Committee.

The role of the Executive Committee is given as:

To co-ordinate, on behalf of the KMPC, the development activities within the KMPA

To review and monitor the work of all the 5 Sectoral Committees

To consider and finalize the sectoral plans and submit to KMPC for approval

To convene meetings of KMPC and provide necessary support to KMPC for decision-making.

According to **Lalitha Kamath**, the MPCs will have to provide sectoral planning. There is need for coordination across the sectors. For instance, water and health are closely related and inter-sectoral coordination is important.

She also said that the sectoral committees should be able to include additional experts wherever necessary. Each sector should have a data base. The MPC will require a technical cell to collect and collate the data on the basis of which the plans will be made.

Vinod Vyasulu was not too happy with the notion of sectoral sub-committees. He said, "I am not sure there should be sectoral committees, when there are elected members. This again is something to be decided locally. The setting up of sectoral sub-committees was a mistake of Kolkata MPC."

Vijaya Kumar, MLA, was cautious about setting up sub-committees. He said, "In the first two years, let a committee work. As and when the problems increase or we have a bad experience, we can think of another sub-committee. It is very premature to think of sub-committees now."

Operational Procedures

Professor **Gopal Naik** said that initially, members have to meet frequently, try to demarcate functions etc., until an appropriate operational procedure evolves. Usually, operational procedures are devised within the organization to meet its goals through a process of trial and error. The important point is that the organization is professionally managed. One can meet frequently without transacting any business; therefore professional management needs to be stressed.

Vinod Vyasulu said, “I would not like to see the MPC to be straitjacketed with procedures. It should be given a chance to experiment and evolve. After all, there is no precedent. We have to learn as we go.”

Civil Society and the MPC

Many of the respondents saw a role for the citizen in the planning of his city. They spoke about the importance of involving the citizen in the public hearings regarding the planning process and this should be an ongoing process. They also saw a role for citizens’ organizations such as RWAs and NGOs, which they felt are doing a good job in Bengaluru.

P.R. Ramesh said that an individual can and should participate in the public hearings called by the MPC regarding the plans. He said that the MPC is not a closed-door committee; it should be open to all to appear and have their say before it.

Raghunandan however said that the MPC should have an institutional interface and not a citizen interface. It can regulate violations to the plans done by institutions such as BDA but not individual violations. These presumably have to be pulled up by the ULBs. He said that the MPC is twice removed from the people; hence the lack of citizen interface.

Disgusted with the sceptre of corruption that looms large over them in Bengaluru and indeed in other parts of India as well, especially in its cities, where large amounts of money are likely to be spent, the respondents seem to rest their faith now in the citizen and his ability to root out corruption.

Relation and Equation of MPC with Urban and Rural Local Bodies

Many of the respondents voiced their concern over the nature of the relationship between the MPC and the ULBs and RLBs. It was made clear to me by all the respondents that the MPC will be solely a planning body for the Metropolitan Area. The Local Bodies will be the executive with the task of implementing the plans.

The finance for implementation will be with the local bodies. Raghunandan stressed that the investments to be made by the Central Ministries should be made known well in advance, as this was in the 74th Amendment. He warned against the MPC being a supra-finance body and Vijaya Kumar said angrily that the MPC “will not get a single pie”. Raghunandan further said that the institutional interface should be flat. There should not be room for any hierarchy. At the most, the MPC can regulate the Local Bodies for violations of plans.

Gopal Naik said that rather than a regulatory or a supervisory function, the MPC should have a monitoring function. It should come down heavily on those who violate the plans. **Anita Reddy** said that she was scared of words like ‘regulatory’ and ‘supervisory’ and preferred the term ‘monitoring’ to describe the relationship between the MPC and the Local Bodies.

Lalitha Kamath said that the plans made by the Local Bodies would hold and cannot be overridden by the MPC, “otherwise what is the point of decentralization”? At best, the MPC can be a negotiating body, an arbitrator when conflicts arise between the various Local Bodies regarding the plans in the Metropolitan Area.

Raghunandan drew attention to the fact that the members of the Local Bodies were directly elected whereas the members of the MPC were twice removed from the people.

The respondents stated that the MPC will require a technical wing because the task of planning is not an easy one. It requires large inputs of data and the technical wing will be the repository of this data. The respondents looked forward wistfully to the day when they could buy one ticket and avail of the services of the Metro, the bus system and other modes of transport to get around Bengaluru. This coordinated planning, they believed, would emanate from the MPC, an extremely important function and one that is sorely lacking in this city.

Readings

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Interviewees

ABIDe

1. Mr. Ashwin Mahesh
2. Ms. Anita Reddy

Bureaucrats

3. Mr. K Jairaj, Bescom, Karnataka
4. Mr. Thangaraju, UDD, Karnataka
5. Mr. Raghunandan RDPR Ministry.
6. Mr. Krishna Kumar, retired Advisor to Governor

Mayors

7. Mr. P.R. Ramesh
8. Ms. Mumtaz Begum

City MLAs

9. Mr. Vijaya Kumar
10. Mr. Ramalinga Reddy

Academicians

11. Prof.. Gopal Naik, IIM-B
12. Prof.. Supriya Roychowdhary, ISEC
13. Prof.. Rajasekhar, ISEC
14. Dr. Vinod Vyasulu, CBPS
15. Dr. Lalitha Kamath
16. Prof. Anil Kumar, ISEC
17. Mr. Vinay Baindur

Heads of NGOs and RWAs

18. Mr. Dwarakanath, NBCA
19. Mr. Mukunda, CAF.
20. Colonel Mathew, CAF

Ex-Gram Panchayat President

21. Mr. Jagannath, Bellandur GP.

Dr. Rajasekhar declined the interview after meeting him, on the grounds that he was not familiar with urban governance.

Acknowledgement

I thank Mr. D.N. Dwarakanath for helping me in formulating the interview schedule.