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www.elsevier.com/locate/cities

doi:10.1016/j.cities.2006.11.003

Cities, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 133–147, 2007

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0264-2751/\$ - see front matter

Governance in urban environmental management: Comparing accountability and performance in multi-stakeholder arrangements in South India

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Received 7 July 2005; received in revised form 16 October 2006; accepted 12 November 2006
Available online 23 February 2007

Current debates on urban governance suggest that multi-stakeholder arrangements between providers and users of environmental services – especially those in which there are direct links between providers and users in decision-making – lead to more accountability and better performance in service provision. The article analyses the situation in two municipalities around Chennai, India, with regard to a major type of environmental service under construction. It compares a successful and non-successful case of underground sewerage system investment, analysing the factors in multi-stakeholder arrangements that led to different results. The study is based on strategic interviews with governmental and civil society organisations involved, and on-site observations on the level of service. The study looks at inclusion of citizens and other stakeholders, decision-making patterns and accountability, and assesses outcomes in terms of equitable distribution of services. It concludes that multi-stakeholder arrangements are limited to middle-class neighbourhoods, where a high level of RWA organisation promotes accountability. Trusted political leadership is a pre-requisite for success, and political interference from opposing parties at the higher state level, are important factors explaining the differences in the outcomes found.

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Keywords: Urban environment, governance, accountability, urban basic services, Chennai, India

Introduction

City expansion has created urban agglomerations with multiple jurisdictions². Although people and

companies can move fairly easily across such borders, it raises several issues for the ways city corporations and their surrounding municipalities can provide public services and infrastructure to citizens.

Cities can be seen as the junctions of flows – of goods, people, finance, and information (Harris, 2003, p. 2540). More liberal trade policies, advances in information and communication technology and global financial markets make it easy for companies to establish themselves wherever they like. This means that cities have to compete with each other in attracting investment (Sassen, 2000; Harris, 2003). As a result urban economies are changing in their relations with the regions from which they

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² Cities are defined as those areas that are classified as urban within the country concerned. The definition of urban varies between countries and across time, referring to settlements with a minimum of 2500 to 25,000 and a concentration of non-agricultural employment and production. City is a legal entity associated with specific administrative or local government structures (World Bank, 1999).

draw resources.³ Cities forming part of an international network have a much greater focus on services to manufacturing, cultural industries, information and communications technology (ICT), education, medical facilities, finance, and trade and tourism.

A major issue facing policymakers is how urban agglomerations in developing countries can meet the demands of the international networks of which they are becoming a part as well as improve the quality of life of their citizens in a situation of mixed jurisdictions. A great deal still needs to be done. In developing countries, almost one-fourth of the urban population lives in absolute poverty, and another quarter lives in relative poverty⁴. Many urban residents have little access to basic shelter, infrastructure or services provided by governments or through the market⁵ (Global Urban Observatory website). The urban poor experience the negative effects of pollution of water, land, and air in cities disproportionately (Hardoy et al., 2001; UNCHS, 2001; Jain, 2003). In contrast, increasing incomes among middle- and high-income groups in the same cities are leading to traffic congestion, and skyrocketing land and housing prices.

This situation poses challenges to everyone living in cities – local governments, citizens and the private sector. Such challenges are being taken up in various ways. Urban residents themselves are organising and making demands on local government through civil society organisations (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001). They are developing new socio-cultural identities in the process and new political stature as citizens (Houtzager et al., 2003; Kabeer, 2002; Cornwall, 2002; Fung and Wright, 2003). The expanding number of civil society organisations (CSOs) is putting forward citizens' demands more forcefully than before.⁶

Continuous change in urban areas requires new types of planning approaches. In the last fifteen years two major shifts have taken place in many countries, opening up new methods for urban planning and management. There has been a process of decentralisation of government mandates to local levels, and public administrations have started working with a range of non-government organisations to provide services (Pierre, 1998). Such instruments are grouped under the broad heading of multi-stake-

holder arrangements (MSAs), public-private partnerships (PPPs), or urban forums (Harris, 2003, 2542). This leads to a complex situation of non-standardised, multi-scale forms of governance with a variety of stakeholders involved. Current debates on urban governance suggest that such multi-stakeholder arrangements – especially those with direct democratic decision-making – lead to more accountability and better performance in public goods provision (Rakodi, 2003; Crook and Manor, 1998).

Indian urban agglomerations form interesting cases to examine these issues. The Nagarpalika Act has provided the legal context for decentralisation to local government, and brought representation closer to urban citizens. It provides for a larger mandate for local government by indicating a number of areas where local government should have a say, and provides for elected representation at the electoral ward level in cities,⁷ so that greater participation of citizens in local government initiatives is possible. This paper analyses changes in the ways municipalities in the agglomeration of Chennai (Tamil Nadu) are constructing a major type of environmental service.⁸ It compares a successful and non-successful case of underground sewerage systems, analysing factors in MSAs leading to differential results.⁹

Section "Participatory governance and multi-stakeholder arrangements" briefly reviews the discussions on participatory urban governance and the instrument of multi-stakeholder arrangements as part of that process. Section "Multi-stakeholder arrangements in urban service provision in peri-urban Chennai" 'maps' the organisations involved in service provision in the peri-urban municipalities of Chennai. Section "Processes of partnering" analyses two contrasting cases in these municipalities: a case of a successful multi-stakeholder arrangement for providing underground sewerage systems, and one which ran into trouble. The cases are used to bring out factors influencing the effectiveness of such arrangements.

Participatory governance and multi-stakeholder arrangements

This paper looks at multi-stakeholder arrangements as networks of different types of organisations within

³ Major changes include: (1) continual incremental change in cities, (2) privatisation of urban public sector enterprises and services, (3) deindustrialisation, (4) greater outsourcing of business services, (5) greater mobility of people and goods, (6) ICT transforming cultural services into tradable activities, and (7) increasing resilience to outside shocks (cf. Harris, 2003, p. 2540).

⁴ Relative poverty in this case means between 1 and 2 dollars per day (World Bank, 1999).

⁵ However, the figures vary by region and by income-levels of the cities concerned.

⁶ These demands are put forward by middle-class citizens' organisations as well as by organisations representing low-income households (Biekart, 2000; Blair, 2000).

⁷ The Nagarpalika Act – an Amendment to the Constitution – indicates 18 activities which can be mandated to local government by state governments. State governments have done so to varying degrees. Some have also allocated finances to local government from state budgets, others have not.

⁸ Chennai is one of the cities in the UNCHS Sustainable Cities Programme.

⁹ This paper has benefited from contributions to the literature review paper on public-private partnerships, on which Dr. Madhushree Sekher has worked with Isa Baud, and from her comments on this paper.

a polycentric administrative system.¹⁰ It is concerned with a number of questions. Firstly, such multi-stakeholder arrangements (MSAs) need to be defined, their rationale explained, and their patterns mapped. As part of their rationale, their institutional context needs to be discussed, in order to find out what 'space' is provided them. Secondly, issues concerning the participatory character of the processes involved, including accountability to users, and factors blocking participation are discussed. Finally, the question of outcomes is discussed.

Defining multi-stakeholder arrangements

The discussion on participatory urban governance assumes that government works together with other types of organisations – civil society organisations as well as the private sector – in different forms of multi-stakeholder arrangements as an instrument for reaching public policy goals.¹¹ Mathur defines partnerships as new organisational arrangements that embody a commitment for joint action towards collective public policy goals (Mathur et al., 2003), in which resources are allocated according to normative criteria embedded within the partnership. The assumed advantage is that partnerships produce additional 'social' benefits (social capital), which could not have been generated by one type of organisation on its own.

The term 'partnerships' used in the literature is usually associated with the particular arrangement by which government works together with the large-scale private for-profit sector. The broader term multi-stakeholder arrangement is used here to indicate that: (a) several organisations are involved, and (b) cooperation is not limited to the private for-profit sector, but includes local communities. For the following discussion, we draw on the literature on 'partnerships'.

Numerous definitions of partnerships in urban governance exist (Devas, 2001; Pierre, 1998; Baud et al., 2001; Baud and Post, 2002). Here we draw out the main elements. Pierre and Peters (2000) define partnerships as including at least two principal actors,¹² one of whom is public, with a continuing relationship

and interaction, each contributing resources, and with shared responsibility for outcomes.

For an earlier study on solid waste management (SWM), partnerships were defined as follows (Baud and Post, 2002):

1. It involves two or more actors.¹³
2. It refers to a long-term relationship between actors regarding public goods provision.
3. The relationship benefits all actors (without assuming equal benefits).
4. It is expressed in concrete activities, in which actors invest materially or immaterially.
5. The bargaining process can include tension and conflict as well as co-operation.
6. The partnership concerns the provision of public goods.

Two further points should be made. Although partnerships provide benefits to each of the actors involved, this does not imply equality among them, as issues of power among them are at stake. Although partnerships show continuity, they also have an inherent tendency to evolve, adapt and dissolve in response to people's practice and changing circumstances. This means that some partners may become 'more equal than others', and an assessment of outcomes is necessary for a balanced appreciation of such arrangements.

Rationale for multi-stakeholder arrangements

The theoretical justification for collaboration between organisations is derived from shifting ideas about how best to operate public services. Thinking in this regard has gone through three phases; from public sector delivery, to 'the new public management' (internal efficiency and partnerships with the private sector), to participatory urban governance, which acknowledges the role of citizens in urban development (Newell and Bellaur, 2002).

Although local government is considered the prime mover for urban development, it needs support from other urban actors to manage fast-growing cities (Devas, 2004). The 'new management' approach, according to Rakodi (2001, p. 216), leads to a "blurring of differences between state, market and civil society"...and "devolution of responsibilities for infrastructure and service provision to a wide range of organisations (private, NGO and public) necessitating an emphasis on developing and managing inter-organisational networks of various types". The assumption was that inter-organisational networks – urban platforms of various types – might provide a better opportunity for various citizen

¹⁰ Although we use the term multi-stakeholder arrangements (MSAs), the more usual term in the literature has been partnerships. Among urban planners and economists, the term partnership often has the narrower definition of public-private sector partnerships, with large private enterprises being contracted in various ways to provide services.

¹¹ This idea emerged in the 1990s, as a spin-off from the Rio Conference on environment and development in 1992 and Habitat II (1996) about the need to create sustainable communities and to ensure that urban development is more sustainable. The 1992 Agenda 21 document included a chapter that outlined the ways in which local governments could work together with other urban actors, and reflected a more integrated approach to reach an increased volume and standard of public goods and services.

¹² i.e. each partner is capable of bargaining on his or her own behalf.

¹³ However, we do not want to make the limitation of having at least one actor from the public sector, as a number of partnerships exist between the private sector and communities regarding basic services, where the public sector is not directly involved.

groups to promote their issues and requirements (Stren, 1993; Werna, 1995; Stoker, 2000).¹⁴

The debate first focused on issues of market dominance in which it was suggested that private companies were more effective organisations to provide public goods and services. The state should become an enabler, providing the regulatory framework allowing markets to function effectively.¹⁵ Although there was agreement that government should remove constraints on urban productivity, there were different emphases on the actors to be involved. The World Bank stressed the role of the (large-scale) private sector, and privatisation of public provision as a major strategy. UNDP included a wider variety of actors; the small-scale sector, NGOs, CBOs, and women's organisations (UNDP, 1991, p. 2).

Governance concerns forms of cooperation between state and the private sector – including both civil society as well as the private for-profit sector (Pierre, 1998, p. 3; Johnson and Wilson, 2000). Coaffee and Healey (2003) define it broadly as 'the modes and practices of the mobilisation and organisation of collective action' (taken from Cars et al., 2002). The concept indicates a complex situation in urban governance, where multi-stakeholder arrangements between government and other actors are recognised as a major instrument (Pierre, 1998; Schübeler, 1996; Batley et al., 1996; Baud et al., 2001; Baud and Post, 2002). Organisations participating in multi-stakeholder arrangements have both common and conflicting views and interests. Each organisation puts in resources – money, time, expertise, and manpower. They negotiate on what activities are to be carried out in the public interest. Solutions can be acceptable to all parties, or they can be forced through by one of them. Increasing importance is being given to citizens and their social networks (social capital), and civil society organisations as important players (Coaffee and Healey,

2003; Baud, 2004; Houtzager et al., 2003; Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001). The assumption is that they represent citizen interests more directly than political parties or other organisations indirectly representing citizens.

In terms of processes, community participation and accountability between stakeholders are major concerns (Rakodi, 2003; Cornwall, 2002; Johnson and Wilson, 2000). This can involve direct accountability between providers and users of services, or more indirect forms of accountability through governmental control (World Bank, 2003). Orstrom (1996) goes further by suggesting that civil society organisations be co-producers of services, involved in strategic planning of government agencies as well as in monitoring of processes and outcomes. Ackerman has pointed out that participatory processes are strengthened when there is a clear legal framework within which they can work, preventing participation from being at the whim of government (Ackerman, 2004).

In terms of outcomes, the assumption is that service provision will be more accessible and more equitable in coverage for groups of citizens excluded previously. Such groups consist mainly of the poor and illegal residents in the city, who are officially excluded from services provided by local government because they live in areas not officially recognized by local government (cf. UNCHS Global Good Governance Campaign – UNCHS website; Jain, 2003).¹⁶

Institutional framework for MSAs

Debates on the quality of government in the nineties focused on the necessity for governments to shift from direct provision of basic services to becoming an enabling institution for other types of organisations to provide such services (e.g. Orstrom, 1996). This implies that the legal mandate allocated to the organisations with which government works and for government itself need to be revised to reflect this situation (Ackerman, 2004). Where government does not take direct responsibility but sets itself at one step removed from direct provision, it needs to have new ways of monitoring and controlling the quality of building, operation and maintenance of the services provided through the private (profit or non-profit) sector. This implies that government remains an important institution in service provision, but that its functions change to

¹⁴ Thus, issues of decentralisation and supra-national levels of government ran parallel to this first discussion justifying partnerships. Ideas behind decentralisation included the pragmatic one that problems are most visible at the local level, the political assumption that it would strengthen local democracy, and that it would stimulate the local economy as well as make the local government more effective. Assumptions were also made about the positive effects of strengthening local government. They include the assumption that government has a broad mandate locally, is in direct contact with citizens, and therefore more responsive to their needs and demands, and is stable over a long period of time. However, concerns were raised about possible dangers of decentralisation, as it can increase the strength of the local elite to capture government initiatives, increases regional inequalities, promote local/regional autonomy movements, and increases the overhead on the use of public funding.

¹⁵ The enabling approach for promoting urban development in general has come from a much earlier discussion on public sector housing provision, in which Turner (1976) strongly promoted the idea of urban residents being given more room by government to organise housing provision for themselves.

¹⁶ Because state provision has often excluded the poor from provision of services, particularly in low-income countries, there has always been a concern for and interest in the collective action and self-help of (primarily low-income) urban residents in providing themselves with the basic amenities of life. This debate has focused on land and housing (Turner, 1976; Mitlin, 1997; UNCHS, 2001), as well as on urban environmental issues and services (Baud and Post, 2002; Miranda and Hordijk, 1998; Hordijk, 2000; Furedy, 1992).

standard-setting, monitoring and control (cf. [Batley et al., 1996](#)), for which it requires new legal mandates.

The ways in which accountability is organized in the institutional framework can also vary. A recent [World Bank report \(2003\)](#) distinguishes two major ways: direct accountability between front-line providers and users of services, and the indirect way by which users go through government agencies which monitor and control the quality of services of front-line providers. The Report indicates that the strength of national government and civil society, and the extent of competition between (private) providers should determine the type of arrangement made to maintain accountability and quality of service outcomes for users ([World Bank, 2003](#), p. 14).

Types of multi-stakeholder arrangements

Common types of arrangements in service delivery are;

- Those between government and private sector companies.
- Those between communities and the private sector.
- Those between community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs and local government.

Different actors in partnership arrangements vary in their mandates and capabilities. Since 1992, local governments in India have broader mandates for activities in the areas of sanitation, SWM, infrastructure, land tenure and development (for other areas, see [Jain, 2003](#)). Local government also mandates elected representatives to work with the local administration, in ward and zone committees, and city-wide councils. Government can also become a 'public entrepreneur' in attracting outside funding from state, central or international sources. New fiscal decentralisation gives local governments greater flexibility in this respect ([Kundu, 2003](#)). Finally, local government can promote collective goals for groups of excluded citizens.

Local governments work with the private sector in different forms. These include: (1) working with small-scale companies in providing public services adapted to local conditions and affordable for low-income households; (2) commissioning large-scale project developers, with possible community consultations; (3) setting up a special urban development agency, in which municipal representatives work with the private sector; and (4) providing basic services through foreign companies.

Each arrangement has its own advantages and disadvantages. Type 1 can in principle be locally accountable to government and citizens alike ([Orstrom, 1996](#); [Baud, 2000](#)). Its costs also remain affordable. Types 2 and 4 are often much more expensive, but are also attractive to local policymakers and politicians, as they provide organisational

arrangements with transfers of new technology, and provide cities with a level of 'modernity' appreciated by government and affluent residents ([Baud et al., 2004](#)).

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) for providing services can also include a wider variety of actors, non-profit organizations (NGOs), direct user committees (CBOs), and providers of services ([World Bank, 2003](#); [Sekher, 2001](#)). At the electoral ward level there are many types of CBOs. A selection includes women's networks, youth groups, chit funds, and festival groups ([Lee, 1998](#); [Van Eerd, 2003](#)).¹⁷ Arrangements combining NGOs and CBOs offer several advantages.¹⁸ NGOs can improve access to funding ([Mitlin, 1997](#); [Arrossi et al., 1994](#)). NGOs can provide technical assistance to communities in managing basic services ([Hardoy et al., 2001](#)). Finally, NGOs can promote participation of excluded groups ([Moser and McIlwaine, 1999](#)).

NGOs also help local communities to build strategic coalitions. These increase their access to resources from different government levels – the 'claim making processes on the state' ([Lee, 1998](#); [Mitlin, 1997](#)). CBO/NGOs can also create federations across national borders in order to compare experiences, and to support each other's activities locally. This makes local combinations more effective in negotiations with government and private service providers ([Mitlin, 1999](#)). Federations are also gradually being accepted as serious partners in international discussions.¹⁹

We need a better understanding of the conditions for such coalitions to 'upscale' effectively. In India, NGOs organising activities on urban environmental issues remain local in operation, with limited benefits to the communities with whom they work ([Van Eerd, 2003](#)). Analysing conditions which prevent 'up-scaling' should be part of a future research agenda. In the end, while the "regular producer" of public goods and services is most frequently a government agent, whether there are collaborative partnerships depends on the nature of services and on the incentives encouraging the active participation of

¹⁷ However, their members are limited in their potential contributions of labor, time, and money, by their need to obtain a living-income, and usually the poorest households are excluded, because they cannot invest in such activities without jeopardizing their livelihoods ([Lee, 1998](#); [Baud, 2000](#)).

¹⁸ The last 15 years many researchers have studied the activities of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) working with local communities. In this period, governments withdrew support for social provisions as a result of structural adjustment programmes, and NGO/CBO combinations became a partial substitute ([Edwards,](#)

¹⁹ For example, a major NGO from Bombay – SPARC – and the international coalition to which it belongs have negotiated with the World Bank to change its tendering procedures. This has made it possible NGOs to become contractors in housing projects (cf.

others in provision, financing, maintenance and use (Orstrom, 1996).

Conditions for MSAs

Several conditions influence the extent to which multi-stakeholder arrangements can be successful in delivering services to poor households. Authors emphasize different factors, focussing on social, political, managerial, financial and technical issues. Those concerned with the character of local communities indicate the need for recognizing common interests and trust in the community (Baud, 2000; World Bank, 2003, p. 80). Strong leaders, who are willing to take some risk and to forgo some credit are important. Such leaders need a certain autonomy to act effectively on behalf of their constituency.

A recent World Bank Report (World Bank, 2003) emphasizes five points in accountability while managing services: delegation of tasks, finance, performance, information about performance, and enforceability (World Bank, 2003, p. 47). Clear agreement on goals, activities and envisaged outcomes with information available to all partners is considered essential. Besides, multi-actor arrangements need to be made accountable to poor households by ensuring sanctions are enforced. Currently, the incentives for politicians seem to run the other way, with strong incentives to cater to special groups, who are kept dependent on politicians by never providing the service without strings attached (de Wit, 1993; Baud et al., 2004). The question is how such incentives can be changed, and how poor households can enforce sanctions effectively.

Multi-stakeholder arrangements also have to fit the local context. Local policymakers/politicians have to be willing to become partners with service providers, frontline professionals, and users. In solid waste management in India, we found that local government is more willing to work with middle-class resident welfare associations (RWAs) than low-income neighborhood organizations, and prefers the large-scale private sector to small-scale enterprises. The illegal status of some poor areas prevents local government from working officially with their residents (illegal slums). The result is that partnerships providing services to middle- and high-income neighborhoods are more commonly found than partnerships directed to poor neighborhoods (Baud et al., 2004).

The legal and regulatory framework is important in promoting or hindering the formation of partnerships. In India, Jain (2003) mentions that – “The maze of archaic legislation... hardly inspires people or investor confidence... it places limits on municipal resource raising”. A regulatory authority should also set benchmarks for service quality, regulate costing and fees, and monitor the activities of partners (Ackerman, 2004). Financing for partnerships can come from government, private sector and end users of services. As it is, poor households often pay far

more for their services than high-income households (World Bank, 2003). Therefore, the assumption should not be made that the poor cannot pay for services, although the question of affordability remains.

Finally, corruption in its many forms needs to be recognized. In multi-stakeholder arrangements it affects public spending, through loss of revenue, evasion of taxes, kickbacks in building infrastructure, and loss of quality of services provided. For the poor, corruption mainly takes the form of having to pay bribes to get access to services (World Bank, 2003, p. 196).

Outcomes of multi-stakeholder arrangements

The final question concerns the outcomes of multi-stakeholder arrangements. The outcome of partnerships in material terms (quality and availability of urban services) is the final criterion on which urban inhabitants assess ‘partnerships’ in service provision (Baud and Post, 2002; Devas, 2004). However, it also covers issues of equitable and wider coverage. Specific criteria can be considered. Are services provided at lower unit costs? Are services available and affordable to the poor? Is there better access to services for poor households (especially illegal citizens in urban areas)? Despite its importance, there is little known regarding this issue.

Multi-stakeholder arrangements in urban service provision in peri-urban Chennai

In this section, we examine how local initiatives to improve urban basic services are emerging since the new legislation was introduced in 1992 in India, focusing on the Chennai agglomeration. The metropolitan area of Chennai consists of the Corporation area, eight municipalities and several town panchayats surrounding it.²⁰ The first has its own level of government – the Corporation.²¹ The Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) is responsible for planning and coordination of development in the entire metropolitan area (4.2 million population in 2001). In the municipalities, state-appointed Commissioners and an elected council form the local government. Councillors represent their electoral wards,²² with the Chairman of the Council being elected directly rather than from among council members.²³ This set-up makes it possible to de-

²⁰ Town panchayats are areas larger than village panchayats, and smaller than municipalities. This designation is currently being phased out.

²¹ The Corporation also has elected ward councillors, who work within 10 zones of Chennai. Each zone covers some fifteen odd

²² Wards are geographical areas designated within the municipal-

²³ This is a change from the first two elections held for councils in

velop direct negotiations with citizen organisations to make improvements in their area. In Chennai, we find a looser set of arrangements than those assumed to exist within partnerships; therefore, the term 'arrangements' is used advisedly.

Three main questions are taken up for discussion. The first concerns which actors actually participate in multi-stakeholder arrangements (and which are excluded), and the varying powers and resources they bring to the arrangement (Baud, 2004). The second concerns the decision-making processes and implementation; particularly interesting are the checks and balances, and the obstacles such arrangements run up against. The third question concerns the outcomes; do these arrangements improve urban services, and for whom?

The results of this study are based on fieldwork in two peri-urban municipalities of Chennai. Prelimin-

ary fieldwork in half the municipalities around Chennai was done to determine where such multi-stakeholder arrangements (MSAs) existed. Preference was given to the fringe rather than the Corporation area, as the lack of basic services is more visible there. The two municipalities Pallavaram and Alandur were selected because there MSAs were in progress concerning the set-up of an underground sewerage system. The fieldwork consisted of strategic discussions with local officials, councillors and civil society organisations of various types, using semi-structured questionnaires, carried out in 2003. Each municipality has 40–50 electoral wards; a 10% sample of the different groups representing citizens (ward councillors, resident welfare associations and/or community-based organisations) was selected for discussions (see Figure 1).

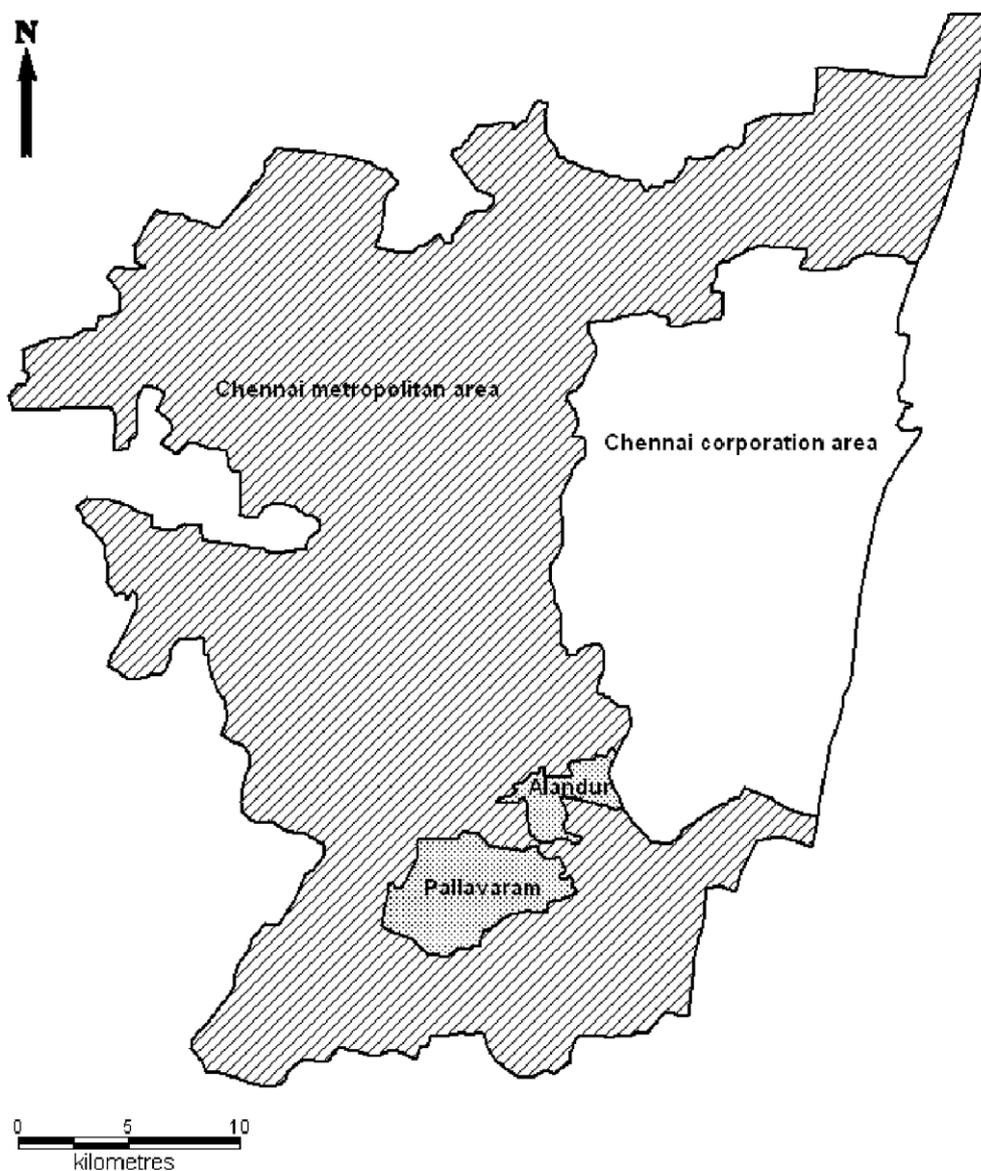


Figure 1 Chennai agglomeration area, indicating Alandur and Pallavaram.

The next section describes existing services in peri-urban areas, providing the context for discussing contrasting multi-stakeholder arrangements in Pallavaram and Alandur to build underground sewerage systems. Although the MSAs contrast, the municipalities are very similar in other respects. The contrasts provide insights into the processes of partnering and bring out factors influencing the outcomes of such arrangements.

Actors and citizen organisation in urban basic services in peri-urban Chennai

The two municipalities lie to the south and south-west of Chennai, an area characterised by rapidly expanding residential areas. In the past 10 years, construction of apartment buildings and houses has transformed this area from small residential pockets to a thriving suburban area.²⁴ This area has sufficient underground water sources to make it an attractive area to choose in comparison to the Corporation area. Expansion has created competition for land in the area, and lakes and water reservoirs have been converted to land for housing.²⁵ Underground sewerage systems are being put in place. Both municipalities had a population of some 150,000 in 2001, and are divided into 42 electoral wards on 20 sq. km. each.

Although they have similar characteristics, the two municipalities differ in the ways citizens organize collective action. In high-income areas in both municipalities, we found numerous residents' welfare associations (RWAs) carrying out activities in their own areas. These focus on obtaining space for children's parks, a composting initiative, and improving a local temple. In Pallavaram, several RWAs have formed federations across neighbourhoods to make wider claims on the municipality on concerns affecting a larger portion of the population.²⁶ RWAs negotiate with Commissioners as well as with the Council chairman (i.e. with executive officers as well as political representatives). In Pallavaram, the RWA federation was mainly allied with the Commissioner, because the head of the federation was a retired commissioner.²⁷ *Table 1* indicates the number of RWAs and federations of RWAs found in the two municipalities.

²⁴ Local sources say the rate of building is slowing down somewhat, as costs for materials have risen sharply in late 2003.

²⁵ Major conflicts have emerged in this area, with four out of five lakes in the south being converted to housing land.

²⁶ One example was a railroad crossing, which was often blocked for train traffic, and prevented residents from access to their neighbourhoods.

²⁷ However, the importance of the Commissioner as partner can vary widely, according to their own interest in the area, as well as their geographical mobility within the civil service (De Zwart, 1994).

Table 1 Wards, RWAs and federations in municipalities in peri-urban Chennai

	Pallavaram	Alandur
RWAs (registered) ^a	70	41
Federations	21	2
Number of wards	42	42

Sources: municipal registers consulted 2004.

^aResident welfare associations.

Electoral representation in municipalities

Citizens elect municipal councils, which consist of ward councillors and a directly elected Chairman. In both municipalities ward councillors put forward requests only for their own ward. The Chairman puts forwards demands for the whole municipal area. Council meetings are held monthly, and the agenda is prepared by the Chairman and the Commissioner. For the council to be effective, the Chairman and the Commissioner (representing the executive side) have to work together well.

The councillors' background varies; a reservation policy for women and backward castes in the councils exists (30%).²⁸ Some councillors in Pallavaram had been active socially in RWAs, or had grown up locally. The councillors interviewed did not have very high levels of education; most had primary school and a few had some secondary education. Some councillors started as independent candidates, but often became members of a political party to make their bid as a political representative more effective. The Chairmen of both councils were affiliated to a political party.

Multi-stakeholder arrangements in service infrastructure investment

The way service provision is organized in municipalities differs from that in the Corporation area. The Corporation has direct responsibility for a number of services. For municipalities, financing and provision is linked to the state government, through the Department of Municipal Administration and through specific Boards and para-statal companies.²⁹

Municipalities are responsible for coordinating basic services, such as solid waste management (SWM), street lighting, and water and sanitation systems. The extent to which they are building multi-stakeholder arrangements differs per municipality. Generally in Tamil Nadu, SWM is being privatised on the model provided by the Chennai Corporation. Municipalities do coordinate activities for water provision and underground sewerage systems, but make use of state-level organisations for actual water

²⁸ In both municipalities, there were 42 wards, with 28 men councillors and 14 women councillors.

²⁹ This means that there is no coordination between areas of the

supply and investments to set up sewerage systems. They draw on water supplies through the TN Water and Drainage Board.³⁰ In the drought situation of 2004, this organisation had difficulty providing the statutory amounts of water to municipalities. In the two municipalities studied, provision was less than 10% of the official amount needed (house connections). For residents with no house connections, municipalities outsource water from private companies (not the statutory amount).³¹

Currently, the two municipalities studied are building underground sewerage systems. Building water and sewerage systems requires large sums for investment, which municipalities do not have in their current budgets. Therefore, they turn to state-level government funding sources. These include the Tamil Nadu Urban Development Fund (TNUDF), Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services Ltd. (TNUIFSL) which manages the Fund for TNUDF, and Tamilnadu Urban Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation (TU-FIDCO). TNUDF provides loans or grants to municipalities to invest in infrastructure improvements.³² The TNUDF is an important source for municipalities of money, legal and commercial knowledge, and technical assistance in carrying out MSAs in building infrastructure.³³ It provides technical expertise to develop the project proposal, coordinates the application for funding, carries out the tender for companies interested in building the system, and does the monitoring for the municipality. This arrangement means that municipalities have at least one state-level and usually one private company as partner in infrastructure investment.

A variety of state-level organisations/departments provide the *administrative* permissions for designing and implementing service facilities. They include the Department of Municipal Administration and Water Supply, Commissioner of Municipal Administration, the TN State Pollution Control Board, the TN Slum Clearance Board, and the system of financial allocations through the State Finance Commissions.³⁴

Final stakeholders in the arrangement for new sewerage systems are homeowners paying property taxes (– the type of resident which is eligible to re-

ceive the new service). The TNUDF has made it mandatory for such residents to invest in the new system by a deposit of 5000 Rs. per household (107 US\$). This means that slum dwellers are not eligible, as they do not pay property taxes, and households eligible but not willing to invest are also excluded.

A wide range of actors is involved; local and state-level government, a private company for implementation and consultancy, a foreign donor through the state-level funding organisation, and municipal residents. *Figure 2* indicates the stakeholders involved in the MSA, and indicates their various contributions.

Processes of partnering in peri-urban service provision

In this section, the two contrasting partnering processes found in Alandur and Pallavaram are discussed (see *Table 2*). In Pallavaram, an underground drainage system was approved by the Council, based on financial contributions by the households receiving individual connections, and financing through the municipality itself.³⁵ About one-fourth of the households eligible for the scheme (23,700 property tax payers) have paid the required deposit. However, people were generally reluctant, because they expected the process to take so long that the government would change, which could hold up the process. The major part of the funding is being supplied through the TNUDF, under the Mega-cities programme, and by TNFIDCO in the form of both loans and grants. A private Indian company selected by TNUDF is technical consultant to the scheme. The plan includes a piped system and a sewerage treatment plant (STP). At the start, total costs were estimated at 37 crore Rs, which has now gone up to 40 crore Rs. (resp. 8,009,000 US\$ and 8,658,800 US\$). Until now (2003) about 2.3 crore Rs (495,900 US\$) have been collected from citizens.

Obtaining clearances to implement the system has been held up at several stages. The process for locating the sewerage treatment plant started in 2001. Clearance was given by the state-level Public Works Department in 2001, but the State Pollution Control Board blocked it because it would pollute a nearby lake, which is a bird sanctuary. As a result, the process has stopped until a new location is chosen and the permission process has been repeated.³⁶ Residents have repeatedly protested through their municipal council to the Commissioner about the delays in obtaining clearances. This led to the Dept. of Municipal Administration and Water Supply (MAWS) giving an administrative sanction in 2003 for project

³⁰ This state-level organisation provides water throughout Tamil Nadu.

³¹ No figures on water supply are available at the moment. However, drinking water supply through house pipes is once in 8 or 10 days in Pallavaram and the residents' demand at least once in four days water supply. In some areas of Alandur, water supply is relatively better. Water supply through house pipes generally occurs once in two or three days in all other areas.

³² It is funded by the World Bank, but managed locally.

³³ Smaller amounts of money can be accessed through the MLA or MP Funds, which are controlled by the political representatives concerned. MLA is a member of the State Legislative Assembly, an MP is a member of parliament.

³⁴ The TN Finance Commission is set up every 5 years, and disbanded after their advice is given.

³⁵ Households paid 5000 Rs. as advance deposit for the collective system, and another 5–10,000 Rs. for their personal connection.

³⁶ Currently, the state government Department of Municipal Administration and Water Supply is thinking of providing a common effluent treatment plant for three municipalities in the

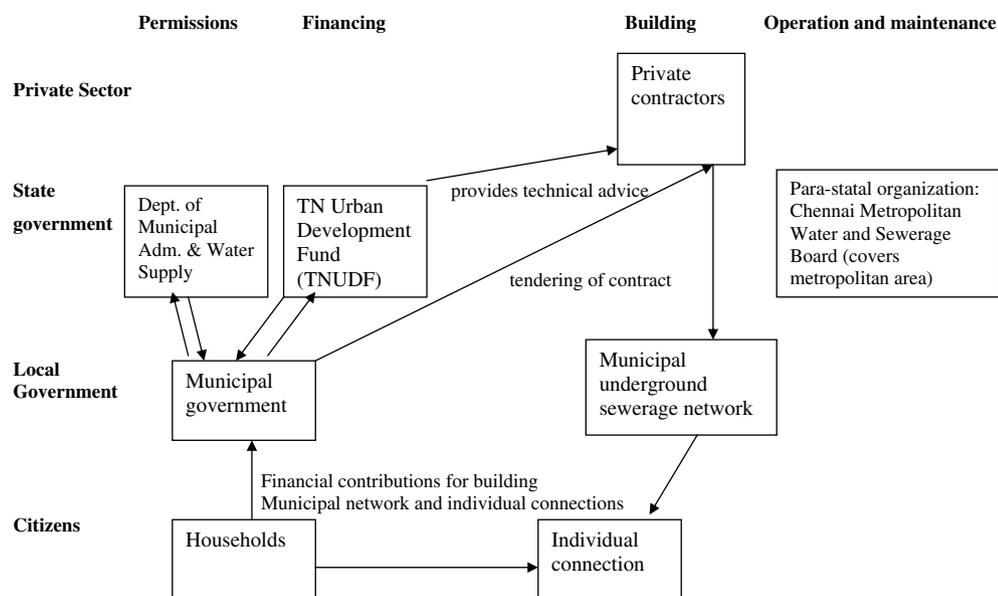


Figure 2 Institutional framework for sewerage system investment in Chennai agglomeration.

commencement. Since then, some 150 residents have organized a joint citizens' forum to directly monitor the process as a more effective way of speeding up the process than activities by RWAs. In short, the resources each stakeholder puts in consist of money, time, and political pressure by residents and external donor organisations; the local government manages the project. The role of the private sector is currently limited to technical consultancy, although it will also implement the project.

The outcomes remain to be seen. Only households paying property taxes and paying a deposit are eligible for house connections, with the effect that middle-class households are the main beneficiaries. The costs to citizens who will obtain house connections are currently around 10,000 Rs., consisting of 5000 Rs. up front and 5000 Rs. for the line from the road to the house (214 US\$). However, many residents refuse to pay deposits, because they have little trust in the process.

Slum residents receive sewerage facilities through a separate program. They will be provided public toilets (not in their homes), maintained by local committees, for which they pay user costs. For such toilet blocks, funds allotted by the Central Government for slum development and Municipal funds are used.

In contrast, in Alandur, a project for building an underground sewerage system and treatment plant has gone more smoothly. The Council chairman proposed the project in 1998 with the Commissioner's support. The demand came from residents (mainly middle-class) because the existing septic tank system was polluting the groundwater. The costs of the proposed system were 34 crore Rs. (7,359,000 US\$), and a TNUDF loan conditional on contributions by households was given. The Council Chairman requested such contributions from residents (5000

Rs. or 107 US\$ per household), and within four months 10,000 households had paid.³⁷

This willingness to pay was related strongly to the confidence of residents in the Chairman of the council, who was then in his second term of office. Two RWA federations also activated residents to make their contributions, and formed an intermediary monitoring organisation for the project.

Project funding came from different sources, with a grant of 3 crores Rs. (649,000 US\$) from the state government and a loan from the TNUDF. Residents were originally supposed to bring together 5 crores Rs. (1,082,000 US\$), but in the end provided 8 crores (1,731,600 US\$).³⁸ The private company has invested 8 crores Rs. (1,731,600 US\$) in the sewerage treatment plant, which they will run on a build-operate-transfer basis. The TNUDF provided technical assistance to recruit a consultant to appraise project feasibility, and after obtaining technical and administrative sanctions from different departments of state government and para-statal boards, the work was tendered to private companies.³⁹ Three companies participated in the bid, which was granted to a company from a neighbouring state. A method of integrated contracting was designed for the project, with the company carrying out the total project.

³⁷ In 2003, this has gone up to 22,000 out of a total of 26,000 eligible households.

³⁸ More people contributed, and the project earned an additional 2

³⁹ The process of obtaining sanctions and clearances was continually monitored by the Chairman, which kept it from becoming bogged down. In the recent period in which the local Chairman was from the opposite party as the one in power at the state level, there were attempts to keep the project from proceeding.

Table 2 Multi-stakeholder arrangements and partnering process: underground drainage and sewerage systems in Alandur and Pallavaram (UGDS)

Research questions and factors for analyzing partnering process	Sanitation provision successful: Alandur case	Sanitation provision not successful: Pallavaram case
1. Which organizations are involved and what are their responsibilities?		
1a. Local government administration /politicians	The elected chairman of the council (second term) was very active in leading the process. The (administrative) Commissioner supported the cause. He has to take the initiative to represent the issues to the state and metropolitan institutions needed to give permissions (TWAD, CMWSSB, TNPCB, CMDA) ^a	Council chairman (first term) and Commissioner are doing these activities as a regular pan of their work, but not actively. The Municipality selected a site for common effluent treatment plant (CTP), which was not accepted by state-level Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB). Municipality now thinking of providing a CTP for several municipalities together (Alandur, Pallavaram and Tambaram).
1b. State government/politicians	TNPCB, CMWSSB, and TWAD Boards provided technical sanction. State Govt. (Dept. of public works and local administration) gave administrative sanction. State level political leaders tried to block the process, because local leaders are from opposition party. However, local leader's popularity prevented this from being effective.	Dept. of public works and local administration gave clearance in 2001 to use lake Keelkattalai for installing common effluent treatment plant. State Govt. gave administrative sanction in 2002. The Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) queried the use of the lake, but later approved it.
1c. Third organizations: donor	Tamil Nadu Urban Development Fund (TNUDF) provided funding for building the system, and technical advice for tendering the contract to private builder.	TNUDF provided funding for building the system, and technical advice for tendering the contract to private builder..
1d. Third organization: private sector companies	IVCRL (private firm from Hyderabad) received the contract for building.	Wilbur Smith Associates is the consultant for building the scheme.
1e. Resident welfare associations (RWAs) or NGOs	The two federations of the RWAs were very active in mobilizing residents to pay initial deposit for investment. ^b Only tax-paying property owners were eligible for this underground sewerage system (excludes tenants and residents in slums).	The RWAs were very keen to get the UGDS and after repeated applications, the Govt. gave administrative sanction in 2003. Then residents organized a 'citizens' forum' where individuals are members (not RWAs). There are 150 members to urge government to speed up the UGDS process. They send delegations to Govt. officials and feel that RWAs are not always effective.
2. What resources do organizations contribute to the process?		
2a. Local government	Coordinates the whole process	Coordinates the whole process
2b. State government	Total costs of project estimated at Rs. 34 crores (=5 million US\$). State govt. grant of Rs. 3 crores (=649,000 US\$)	It is a Rs. 40 crore (8,658,800 US\$) project of which 10% has to be residents' contribution.
2c. Third organizations: donor	TNUDF – TUFIDCO There is a loan of 16 crore Rs. (3,463,000 US\$), and a grant of 1 crore Rs. (216,000 US\$)	Original estimate for total project Rs. 37 crores (=almost 8 million US\$) TNUDF – TUFIDCO (loan and grant): information not obtainable
2d. Third organization: private sector companies	Laying of underground system (IVRCL) – Hyderabad.	Not yet fixed

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

Research questions and factors for analyzing partnering process	Sanitation provision successful: Alandur case	Sanitation provision not successful: Pallavaram case
2e. RWAs or NGOs/private citizens	Two federations of RWAs put in time for monitoring process Households put in 5000 Rs. per household (= 107 US\$); together 8 crores Rs. (1,731,600 US\$) (requirement was only 5 crore Rs. or 1,082,000 US\$)	Citizen's forum (including RWAs) for monitoring Households put in 5000 Rs. per household (= 107 US\$); total needs to be 4 crore Rs. (865,800 US\$).
3. Outputs/outcomes		
3a. Installation of system for how many households?	Total number of (eligible) Property Tax paying households is 25000. About 22,000 have paid the deposit. About 7000 were given connections in the first phase. 3000	Total Number of (eligible) Property Tax paying households is 23700. About 6000 have paid the deposit. None have been given connections yet. 17700
3b. Households still needing to participate in the system?		
3c. Which households are excluded? (illegal settlements, those who don't pay, or other groups (poor areas)?)	Individual sewage lines are being laid down in the whole Municipal area and the houses can get the connection when they pay the deposit. Houses in slums are provided with public conveniences where they pay Rs. 1 (0.02 US\$) to use toilets. This money is used for maintenance of toilets. Residents of these slums are given maintenance work on contract.	The same modalities exist in this municipality. Once the site for the common effluent treatment plant is agreed on, tenders will be sent out for executing the work. At that time measures will be taken to cover the whole municipal area.
3d. Costs of using the system to households? To government?	Apart from the initial deposit of Rs. 5000 (107 US\$), each household has to spend a amount of Rs. 5000–10000 to get the connection installed in to their house.	Deposit for each household Rs. 5000 (=107US\$) Amount collected so far is Rs. 2.3 crores (=495,900 US\$).
3e. Outcome in perceiving quality of life? Do residents feel their situation has improved?	The residents are satisfied with UGDS, which is their long-term demand as the septic tank system spoiled their ground water.	The residents those who paid the deposit are very unsatisfied that the UGDS has not yet been implemented. Those not paying the deposit are resisting payment until the work has started.

^aTWAD (Tamilnadu Water Supply and Drainage Board), CMWSSB (Chennai Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Boars), TNPCB (Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board), CMDA (Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority), TNUDF (Tamilnadu Urban Development Fund), TUFIDCO (Tamilnadu Urban Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation).

^bAlternative scheme for slum toilets was carried out by NGO Karunalaya. It constructed low cost toilets. This was a separate scheme. This was an old scheme introduced to replace dry latrines with flush toilets with a subsidized loan to poor households.

Implementation started in 2000, for a period of five years. Implementation is ahead of schedule, with the construction of the STP already completed. The piping system was divided into two phases, with 7000 connections being provided in the first phase. Half of the length of the piped system was completed in 2003, and the first 2500 houses could receive house connections. The process then became bogged down over the pipes needed for the house connections, which the private contractor said were unavailable. Finding alternative technical solutions again required permission from government departments, so some households invested individually in house connections as a speedier solution (another 10,000 Rs. or 214 US\$).

Although implementation is proceeding on schedule, the process is vulnerable to the addition of lengthy procedures as described above. Monitoring by RWAs and elected councillors are essential in maintaining momentum, targeting respectively residents and government departments.

In terms of outputs (in 2004) about two-thirds of the households to be covered in the first phase still need personal connections, and the municipality has issued tax notices to the connected households. This brings up the question of operation and maintenance costs for the system. Residents are asked to pay three times the Corporation rate in Chennai, and protest that the money collected will be far more than needed.⁴⁰ This discussion is still ongoing, and will influence the sustainability of the new system.

Another outcome is that only households assessed for property taxes are included in the new system. In particular low-income households living in slum areas have no access to this scheme. They are eligible for communal toilet blocks with sewerage system, which is a different type of facility. They also pay user fees when using the facility. In Alandur, an NGO has constructed communal low-cost toilets in slum areas, unrelated to this MSA. It means that there are inequalities built into the differential sewerage systems provided for slum areas and homeowner areas.

Table 2 shows a summary of the actors, the process of partnering and its constituent parts, and the outcomes so far.

Conclusions

There are clear similarities in the way the sewerage system project was set up in both Alandur and Pallavaram; municipalities taking the lead, and drawing in state-level funding and technical assistance. The financial and technical contributions to the underground sewerage systems from funding agencies

and residents were also very similar. Multi-stakeholder arrangements cross local municipal boundaries in promoting urban infrastructure investment. Third partner organisations are involved in providing finance or implementation. State-level organisations set conditions for local provision; in a positive sense, one could call this the 'enabling environment'.

The main difference between Alandur and Pallavaram was the willingness of residents to invest in the system a priori, which depended on the degree of trust in their municipal political representative – the Council chairman. The elected Chairman of the Alandur council was more active in getting actors together, and maintaining process momentum once it was underway, i.e. his accountability to residents was quite high.

A second difference was the resources residents, civil society organisations, and local representatives put into monitoring the process. RWAs were more effective in Alandur, whereas in Pallavaram alternative forms of organisation were developed because existing RWAs were not effective. The result was a striking difference in the speed of obtaining permissions and starting implementation. In Pallavaram, the lack of coordination between government bodies led to permission by one being refuted by the other. This applied when the location for the sewerage treatment plant was approved by one department, and refused by another. Both municipalities suffered from the struggle between local and state-level politics which influences local processes. When the Chairman of the local council belongs to the party holding state power, it speeds up the process. When the government changes after an election, it slows down or blocks the process.

A third difference is between the facilities provided to homeowners and residents in slum areas. Slum areas are provided with communal facilities and homeowners with house-based facilities. This means that inequalities are not reduced by the MSAs studied in these two municipalities.

Coming back to the questions raised at the outset on accountability and performance, the following conclusions can be drawn. We found that multi-stakeholder arrangements do occur when investments in service systems are made. Participation by civil society organisations is more limited than that of government and the financing agency. They are not allowed a say in design or technical implementation, but are limited to financial contributions and monitoring the process. The financier and consultant to the municipality have a say in the design; the influence of the private contractor is not known. Interestingly, domestic large-scale private companies are preferred partners. This is in contrast to many other urban localities, where foreign companies are often contracted (cf. Awortwi, 2004).⁴¹

⁴⁰ The Corporation rate is 50 Rs. per month, whereas the second municipality wants 150 Rs. monthly. Because of the local comparison, residents consider the price too high.

⁴¹ This is also the case for SWM in Chennai Corporation area.

The situation with multiple actors and different kinds of contributions makes MSAs in India complex networks, across different scale-levels of government (cf. Baud, 2004; Scott, 2002).

Each participating organisation contributes money, time, and political capital to the partnering process. The outcomes are designed to have benefits for all participants, so that there is a clear rationale for them to participate. The arrangement in India allows investment in public services, for which municipalities do not have the funds. It also gives citizens a greater stake in and responsibility for maintaining the public system, preserving their investments. The partnering process is said to improve accountability to users of public services (World Bank, 2003). In the municipalities near Chennai, accountability of local government to the residents involved in the arrangements was clearly improved. Accountability by state-level government bodies sanctioning the implementation process remained low, and made the process unpredictable in timing, coordination and outcome. Particularly the feedback loops by which changes in the process had to be renegotiated with government departments and ensuing delays in permissions slowed processes significantly.

Outside funding organisations have a positive influence, by making civil society participation mandatory for a loan. This anchors participation firmly in the arrangement. In India, this seems sufficient at the local level, although not at the state level. This supports Ackerman's observation that legal frameworks are important anchoring processes for participation (Ackerman, 2004). These conclusions suggest that different forms of accountability exist side-by-side within complex arrangements. We need to move beyond the dichotomy of direct or indirect accountability (World Bank, 2003). The ways different scale-levels of accountability affect each other need to be taken into account within complex networks. However, in building a service system, accountability to the final users remains limited, with a form of 'indirect accountability' through government rather than directly from provider to user.

In terms of performance, it is too soon to say that multi-stakeholder arrangements have more positive outcomes than straight government provision. Current arrangements are mainly limited to home owners, excluding slum areas. The complexity of the networks and the partnering processes, make outcomes unpredictable. However, when they work, they provide incentives for citizen investment, as stakeholders in monitoring the long-term sustainability of public services.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support for fieldwork provided by Amsterdam International Institute for Development (AIID) for this study. It

is part of a comparative study between Ghana and India on multi-stakeholder arrangements in urban development; Post carried out the study in Accra, Ghana. The support of the Centre de Sciences Humaines for conference participation on peri-urban transformation is also gratefully acknowledged; especially the efforts of Veronique Dupont.

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