

## Urban Governance and Livable City Development: Concepts and Case Studies

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### ABSTRACT

**Background and Objectives:** Rapid urbanization, climate change, and widening social inequalities have significantly increased the complexity of managing cities worldwide. By 2050, an estimated 68% of the global population will reside in urban areas, creating unprecedented demands on housing, transportation, infrastructure, and public services. These trends demand effective urban governance frameworks that can support sustainable, equitable, and livable development while addressing environmental resilience and social inclusion challenges. While numerous studies focus on urban governance in individual contexts, few offer systematic comparative investigations into how different governance models translate into diverse livability outcomes across varying socio-economic conditions. This study addresses this research gap by exploring the extent to which urban governance models contribute to livability improvements across multiple global contexts. It aims to elucidate the interrelationships between governance configurations, procedural mechanisms, and the contextual factors influencing implementation effectiveness.

**Methodology:** This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing thematic analysis grounded in systematic document review and comparative case studies of six cities: Vienna, Melbourne, Rotterdam, Kolkata, Tehran, and Cheongju. These cities were selected based on their diversity in governance models, socio-economic conditions, and environmental challenges. The analytical framework comprises three governance dimensions—institutional, procedural, and outcome—along with their interrelations and contextual influences. Data sources include peer-reviewed literature, official policy documents, and international assessments spanning 2010 to 2024.

**Main Results:** Cities with well-coordinated institutional structures and robust monitoring systems—such as Vienna and Rotterdam—achieved exceptional performance with 90-95% coverage rates and 80-90% implementation success across multiple governance domains. Environmental pressures served as key catalysts of governance innovation, particularly evident in climate-adaptive cities like Rotterdam and Cheongju, where environmental challenges drove institutional transformation and cross-sectoral coordination. In contrast, cities facing significant resource constraints, like Kolkata, demonstrated remarkable adaptability by attaining 35-55% implementation rates through strategic prioritization, incremental

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capacity building, and community-driven initiatives. The study reveals that while governance models vary widely across different contexts, locally adapted strategies can produce convergent livability outcomes through diverse pathways. Performance gaps between high-integration and limited-integration governance patterns highlight the critical importance of aligning institutional ambitions with available capacities and resources.

**Discussions:** The results highlight the fundamental importance of aligning governance ambitions with institutional and resource capacities, challenging assumptions about universal governance models. Cities that succeeded did so by carefully tailoring implementation strategies to local conditions, institutional legacies, and resource availability, regardless of whether they operated in high-capacity or resource-limited settings. The findings demonstrate that effective governance emerges through context-sensitive adaptation rather than standardized approaches, with successful cities developing hybrid models that combine global best practices with local innovations. Environmental challenges emerged as particularly powerful catalysts for governance transformation, driving innovation and cross-sectoral coordination.

**Conclusions:** Effective urban governance requires careful synchronization between governance structures, implementation mechanisms, and local realities. The study supports a staged, capacity-based approach to governance development that prioritizes institutional strengthening and adaptive management. Future research should focus on longitudinal analysis of governance transitions, capacity-building mechanisms, and the integration of emerging technologies across diverse urban environments to enhance understanding of governance evolution and livability outcomes.

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## **Introduction**

The rapid urbanization of the global population presents significant challenges for policymakers and urban residents alike. By 2050, it is projected that 68% of the world's population will reside in urban areas, thereby exacerbating the demands placed on housing, transportation, infrastructure, and public services. This urban expansion occurs within a context marked by increasing societal inequality and heightened vulnerability to climate-related environmental risks, which collectively underscore the urgent need for effective, inclusive, and adaptive urban governance frameworks (Baud et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

Urban governance encompasses the structures, processes, and institutions that facilitate interactions among various stakeholders, including government entities, civil society, and the private sector, to shape urban development. It is pivotal in determining whether cities can achieve livability, resilience, and equity (da Cruz et al., 2019; Meijer et al., 2019). Consequently, the paradigms and institutions guiding urban governance have evolved from a model characterized by state dominance to one that emphasizes collaboration among diverse actors and incorporates evidence-based approaches to decision-making (Hooper et al., 2018; Skalicky & Čerpes, 2019). Nevertheless, in numerous cities, particularly in the developing

world, fragmented governance, limited institutional capacity, and inadequate coordination continue to undermine urban quality of life.

While existing research has provided valuable insights into isolated governance strategies and city-level innovations, a significant gap remains: the absence of a systematic comparison of how alternative governance logics relate to contextual conditions and influence livability outcomes. Prior studies have largely focused on high-income contexts and have treated governance as a static, unproblematic concept that fails to adapt over time or across regions (Paul & Sen, 2018; Sochacka et al., 2021).

This paper seeks to address this gap by thematically comparing six cities worldwide—Vienna, Melbourne, Rotterdam, Kolkata, Tehran, and Cheongju—each characterized by distinct governance structures and socio-environmental contexts. The study examines how governance efficiency, stakeholder participation, institutional design, and contextual adaptation impact quality of life outcomes. This focus is critical, as enhancing governance efficiency transcends mere administrative concerns; it is fundamentally a strategic issue. Ineffective governance often leads to unequal service provision, diminished resilience to environmental shocks, and missed opportunities for inclusive development. Conversely, investments in governance capacity and coordination can yield substantial societal benefits, including improved health, security, environmental sustainability, and social integration.

In this context, the current research contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it offers a coherent analytical framework for assessing governance across institutional, procedural, and outcome dimensions, as well as evidence of how cities tailor governance arrangements to their specific circumstances. The findings aim to inform urban policymakers, planners, and international development agencies in crafting context-sensitive governance reforms that enhance livability in both resource-rich and resource-poor environments.

The remainder of this paper begins with a description of the research methodology, including the document analysis approach and criteria used for selecting the six case study cities. This is followed by a presentation of the main findings, which examine the institutional, procedural, and outcome dimensions of urban governance and their relationships to livability outcomes. The case studies illustrate how different cities implement governance strategies under varying contextual conditions. The discussion then synthesizes these insights into a comparative framework, highlighting common patterns, implementation models, and the influence of local contexts. The final part of the paper offers conclusions, policy implications, and recommendations for future research on governance evolution, capacity building, and the role of technology in advancing livable urban development.

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative research design integrating systematic document analysis with comparative case studies, aimed at addressing the existing gap in understanding the impact of urban governance approaches on city livability. This methodological framework was specifically designed to facilitate the thematic synthesis of extant research, as systematic studies that correlate governance mechanisms with livability outcomes are notably limited in the current literature (Antognelli & Vizzari, 2016; da Cruz et al., 2019; Kaal, 2011; Sochacka et al., 2021).

### ***Research Design***

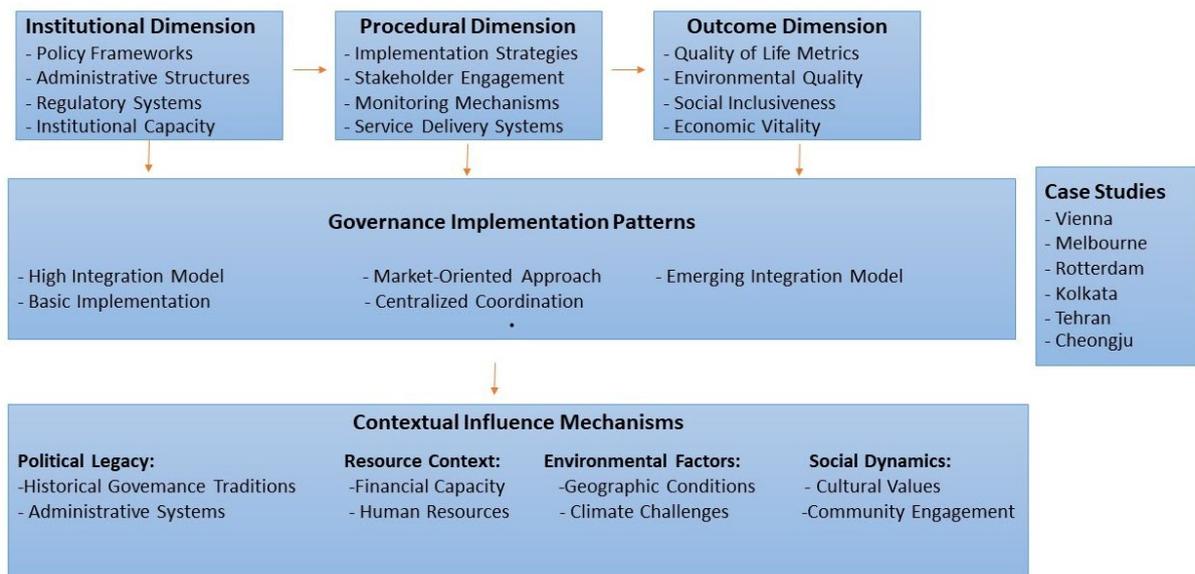
The two-phase research design is informed by both theoretical analysis of relevant urban governance practices and empirical investigation, thereby fostering a novel perspective on urban governance. The first phase constitutes a systematic review and thematic analysis of scholarly and policy literature concerning urban governance and livability (Baud et al., 2021;

Lange, 2010; Meijer et al., 2019; Stanislav & Chin, 2019). Phase two entails in-depth case studies of three cities—Vienna, Singapore, and Melbourne—selected for their distinctive governance approaches and their capacity to consistently deliver exceptional livability outcomes (Hooper et al., 2018; Norouzian-Maleki et al., 2018; Pamer, 2019; Paul & Sen, 2018).

This dual approach facilitates both a comprehensive overview of governance arrangements across diverse contexts and detailed examinations of implementation strategies, thereby addressing a significant limitation in existing scholarship, which often considers either theoretical constructs or individual case studies in isolation (Brovarone et al., 2021; Ioan-Franc et al., 2015; Sasanpour, 2017). A conceptual framework, grounded in the synthesis of pertinent theoretical perspectives on urban governance and augmented by iterative analyses of empirical data from the selected case studies, informed the research design.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 offers an empirical basis for analyzing the relationship between urban governance approaches and livability outcomes. Drawing upon a substantial body of literature (da Cruz et al., 2019; Meijer et al., 2019; Skalicky & Cerpes, 2019; Wang et al., 2021), three core governance dimensions are identified, which interact with implementation patterns and contextual influences as causal mechanisms driving urban livability.



**Figure 1** Urban Governance Framework for Livability

The initial dimension encompasses the policy framework, administrative structure, regulatory framework, and institutional capacity (Baud et al., 2021; Lange, 2010; Sochacka et al., 2021) that align urban governance. These elements delineate the formal rules and organizational arrangements through which cities manage their development. The robustness and cohesion of these institutional factors are critical to a city's ability to adopt successful governance practices (Brovarone et al., 2021; Kaal, 2011; Sasanpour, 2017).

The procedural dimension pertains to implementation strategies, stakeholder engagement processes, monitoring mechanisms, and service delivery systems through which institutional frameworks are operationalized (Hooper et al., 2018; Mahmoudi et al., 2015; Stanislav & Chin, 2019). This dimension assesses how cities translate their governance vision into action via specific initiatives and programs. The effectiveness of these procedures directly influences governance outcomes and livability (Antognelli & Vizzari, 2016; Paul & Sen, 2018).

The outcome dimension evaluates governance effectiveness through metrics related to quality of life, environmental quality, social inclusiveness, and economic vitality (Alijani et al., 2020; Birkmann et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2021). These outcomes reflect the success of governance approaches in fostering habitable urban environments and serve as feedback mechanisms to enhance governance measures (Norouzian-Maleki et al., 2018; Pamer, 2019).

For each of these three dimensions, five distinct implementation patterns were identified across the cities: high integration model, market-oriented model, emergent integration model, basic implementation model, and centralized coordination (Ioan-Franc et al., 2015; Sochacka et al., 2021). These patterns represent various approaches to implementing urban governance that are informed by local contexts and institutional capabilities (da Cruz et al., 2019; Stanislav & Chin, 2019).

The framework also identifies four significant contextual mechanisms that influence the implementation and impact of governance approaches across diverse settings. Political legacy factors—including sovereignty, administrative systems, and governance traditions—shape the structure of governance approaches (Kaal, 2011; Lange, 2010). Additionally, the financial context and human resources are influenced by the economic environment (Hooper et al., 2018; Paul & Sen, 2018). Environmental conditions, such as geographic contexts and climate hazards, necessitate specific governance strategies (Alijani et al., 2020; Birkmann et al., 2010). Furthermore, governance approaches are not universally applicable; the social dynamics of cultural values and community engagement patterns constrain their adoption and implementation (Antognelli & Vizzari, 2016; Sasanpour, 2017).

The framework posits that institutional arrangements influence procedural choices, which subsequently affect outcomes. The interactions among urban governance approaches, along with the "local image" referenced in the analysis, may not be strictly linear; rather, they may reflect feedback loops that can shape or counteract the effectiveness of various governance approaches (Brovarone et al., 2021; Meijer et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

This extensive rating system allows for a quantitative assessment of how different cities approach urban governance and the extent to which livable or unlivable outcomes are achieved. The framework further elucidates the interrelationships among the various governance dimensions, implementation patterns, and contextual influences, enabling scholars to investigate why certain governance approaches succeed in specific urban contexts while failing in others (Baud et al., 2021; da Cruz et al., 2019; Sochacka et al., 2021).

### ***Case Study Selection***

Five selection criteria were established, referencing the literature on urban governance regarding governance models, data availability, performance history, contextual diversity, and implementation experience (da Cruz et al., 2019; Sochacka et al., 2021). Cities were selected based on the availability of robust governance documentation and metrics, as well as reliable performance indicators, to encompass a diverse range of developmental contexts.

Vienna exemplifies advanced social-democratic governance characterized by extensive welfare provision and documented social housing initiatives (Pamer, 2019). Melbourne's market-oriented governance, with a focus on environmental monitoring across 321 suburbs and the achievement of sustainability goals, serves as another salient example (Hooper et al., 2018).

Rotterdam has demonstrated an innovative approach to climate-adaptive governance through effective water management and urban resilience strategies (Birkmann et al., 2010). In contrast, Kolkata represents governance practices constrained by limited resources, providing insights into livability management under such conditions (Paul & Sen, 2018).

Tehran was selected to investigate the role of centralized planning in rapidly growing urban environments, focusing on environmental management and urban sprawl (Alijani et al.,

2020). Cheongju was chosen as an experimental green city model, illustrating the development of environmental governance (Yim et al., 2015).

The six municipalities collectively exemplify a diverse array of governance structures, organizational forms, and challenges within the urban context. Although it is not feasible to represent the entirety of urban governance given the scarcity of city-level data, these municipalities were intentionally selected to encompass a continuum of developmental scales, resource constraints, and livability outcomes. This methodological approach facilitates the identification of overarching governance patterns across varied contexts. It is important to note, however, that the study does not claim statistical generalizability. Instead, it seeks to provide theory-driven contextual insights that can contribute to broader discussions regarding livable urban governance.

These cities collectively represent a spectrum of governance systems, approaches, and outcomes, enhancing the potential for robust comparative analysis regarding the role of diverse governance types in ensuring sustainable urban livability. This variety facilitates the identification of universal principles of urban governance while simultaneously generating context-specific factors contributing to success (Skalicky & Čerpes, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

The study employed a systematic approach to data collection and analysis, utilizing multiple data sources to ensure comprehensive coverage of governance approaches and livability outcomes in each case city. Primary data were collected from peer-reviewed academic articles, official urban policy documents, and reports by international organizations (2010–2024). In line with research ethics, all sources were selected based on their credibility and relevance, ensuring accuracy and verifiability. Interpretations were made with care to minimize bias, and document synthesis reflected the original intent of the sources to uphold academic integrity.

Data collection for each city was structured around four key areas: institutional frameworks and policies, implementation processes and strategies, measurable governance outcomes and performance indicators, and contextual factors influencing governance effectiveness. Policy documents were scrutinized for formal governance structures and regulatory frameworks, while academic literature provided critical insights into implementation processes and outcomes. Reports from international organizations offered comparative perspectives as well as standardized performance measures across countries (da Cruz et al., 2019; Hooper et al., 2018; Meijer et al., 2019).

Trained caseworkers followed a systematic protocol to collect documents, ensuring consistency across cases. For each city, a minimum of 15 academic papers, five policy documents, and three international assessment reports were examined. Particular attention was paid to documents that included quantitative data on governance outcomes and rich descriptions of implementation processes. The time frame of 2010-2024 enabled an analysis of established governance practices alongside emerging solutions to urban challenges (Brovarone et al., 2021; Lange, 2010; Paul & Sen, 2018).

To ensure the reliability and credibility of findings, a triangulation strategy was employed. For each city, data from academic sources, policy documents, and international reports were cross-validated to confirm consistency and accuracy. Where discrepancies existed, a conservative interpretation was adopted, and contested findings were flagged during synthesis. Documents were prioritized based on source credibility, peer-review status, and institutional authorship to maintain analytical integrity across all case studies.

### *Analytical Process*

This research was conducted through a systematic four-step process to examine governance approaches and their association with livability outcomes (da Cruz et al., 2019; Sochacka et al., 2021).

**Stage 1: Institutional Analysis** focused on governance structures and coordination mechanisms, mapping administrative hierarchies and regulatory processes to elucidate how institutional arrangements shape governance effectiveness (e.g., the organizational structure of social housing in Baud et al., 2021; Vienna; Lange, 2010).

**Stage 2: Procedural Analysis** examined implementation strategies and stakeholder engagement, investigating how cities operationalize policy. Adaptive strategies were assessed as operational approaches towards resilience goals, as exemplified by Rotterdam (Brovarone et al., 2021; Paul & Sen, 2018).

**Stage 3: Outcome Analysis** evaluated governance effectiveness through environmental, social, and economic outcomes. The suburb assessment data available in Melbourne provided an extensive set of metrics to analyze the impacts of governance on livability (Alijani et al., 2020; Hooper et al., 2018).

**Stage 4: Contextual Analysis** assessed the ways in which local conditions affect governance effectiveness, considering historical, cultural, and socio-economic variables to understand city-specific adaptations (Birkmann et al., 2010; Ioan-Franc et al., 2015).

### *Comparison and Synthesis Across Cases*

This paper contributes to the city governance literature by examining the intricate relationship between urban governance arrangements and livability from a multi-faceted perspective based on institutional, process, and outcome dimensions. It is confirmed that governance structures also need to be effectively operated as well as being appropriate to the context. For Instance, the top ranked cities in this research like Vienna and Melbourne showed a strong institutional coherence, powerful monitoring mechanism, and sound policy integration resulting in an excellent livability result over time.

These findings are consistent with the extant literature on adaptive governance (Brovarone et al., 2021; Meijer et al., 2019), which has already stressed the need for institutions to become adaptable and for the interaction among different sectors to be fostered in effectively managing the city. Crucially, our classification of implementation patterns – for example, high integrated model versus emergent coordination – brings a new analytical instrument for comparing governance arrangements across settings.

In other cities with limited institutional and financial resources, like Kolkata and Tehran, they illustrate how targeted interventions and adaptive prioritizing can still lead to significant improvements in livability. These observations are in line with Wang et al. (2021) and Antognelli and Vizzari (2016), who focus on the strategic governance under bounded capacities.

The study contributes to theory by showing how different models of governance and external factors come together to create outcomes in cities, contradicting deterministic assumptions that governance forms are inherently better than others. This further highlights the importance of place sensitive models of governance innovation which are tailored to local economic, social, and environmental pressures.

Taken together, the findings are very much in line with the study's initial aims — which were to understand how differing systems of governance shape urban quality of life, to develop a comparative framework for measuring quality of life, and to extract actionable policy- and planning-relevant lessons from that analysis. By integrating cross-case lessons, implementation typologies and contextual mechanisms, a more comprehensive understanding of urban

governance is provided than what may be gleaned through single-city cases or purely theoretical models alone.

The comparative approach employed a thematic coding structure to identify shared patterns of how different governance logics affect different livability outcomes. This was to understand how cities adapt reforms of governance systems to their context while at the same time making it efficient in relation to the improvement of city livability (da Cruz et al., 2019; Meijer et al., 2019; Sochacka et al., 2021).

The comparative framework focused on four main areas:

1. Institutional arrangements and coordinating mechanisms: Identifying the role of institutional arrangements in enabling and restricting efficient governance (Baud et al., 2021; Kaal, 2011; Wang et al., 2021).
2. Types of implementation approaches and adaptation strategies: Examining the implementation of governance policies in cities and the way they tailor or localize these (Lange, 2010; Paul & Sen, 2018; Stanislav & Chin, 2019).
3. Performance outcomes and success factors: Evaluating governance effectiveness and determining important success factors (Brovarone et al., 2021; Hooper et al., 2018; Pamer, 2019)
4. Resource allocation and capacity building: Investigation into how cities allocate resources and develop institutional capacity (Asian Development Bank, 2019; Ioan-Franc et al., 2015; Mahmoudi et al., 2015).

The synthesis process revealed shared and distinct processes across cases, demonstrating the ways in which alternative governance models can achieve similar ends through different means. It also explored the impact of local contexts on governance efficiency that led into a typology of urban governance patterns and their association to livability (Antognelli & Vizzari, 2016; Birkmann et al., 2010; Sochacka et al., 2021).

During this comparative process, essential elements for sound urban governance were extracted, where general approaches complemented by regional adjustments. The results give suggestions on factors of success in governance, highlighting the importance of decentralization (Meijer et al., 2019; Skalicky & Čerpes, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

## Findings and Discussion

This analysis elucidates the variances present among the case studies concerning the impact of urban governance approaches on livability within urban environments. Through a systematic comparison of six cities that exemplify a diverse array of governance models and developmental contexts, this section synthesizes fundamental findings regarding the nexus between governance strategies and livability outcomes. Broadly speaking, three principal components emerged from these findings: case studies of governance models and their corresponding outcomes, a cross-cutting analysis of implementation patterns, and mechanisms of contextual influence. These components collectively afforded a comprehensive perspective on the intricate interplay between varied governance methodologies and urban livability, highlighting both overarching determinants and localized adaptations.

### Urban Governance Models: Case Studies

The findings derived from the six selected cities reveal a spectrum of responses in urban governance, underscoring the influence of distinct historical, institutional, and local conditions. Consequently, these case studies encapsulate various stages within an evolving continuum. These encompass integrated, hyper-connected models that are characteristic of developed locales, as well as emergent frameworks prevalent in developing cities. By examining a considerable number of cities and juxtaposing their governmental structures, strategies, and

resultant outcomes, it becomes feasible to discern both unique characteristics and common patterns that may enhance urban livability. These findings illustrate how cities customize governance strategies to navigate local constraints while striving to achieve analogous objectives regarding livability through diverse methodologies (Baud et al., 2021; da Cruz et al., 2019; Meijer et al., 2019).

### ***Case 1: Vienna – A Social Democratic Model***

The governance model operational in Vienna exemplifies that a high degree of livability outcomes can be realized through robust institutional frameworks within a social democratic context. This process provides a pragmatic structure that harmonizes social welfare with economic development, building upon historical commitments to social equity (Kaal, 2011; Pamer, 2019). The institutional framework has integrated municipal departments, facilitating cohesive action across budgetary and resource allocation domains, structured around an efficient coordination mechanism—Wiener Wohnen, the city-owned housing agency. This alignment fosters effective implementation of social housing policies, demonstrating a successful coordination of various urban sectors (Baud et al., 2021; Pamer, 2019).

Empirically, the city has successfully established 220,000 municipal housing units, achieving a remarkable occupancy rate of 98% while ensuring that 60-70% of new housing developments are affordable. Furthermore, over 80% of citizens express satisfaction through systematic stakeholder consultations that effectively address community needs. The service delivery system is bolstered by a comprehensive monitoring mechanism, which is present in 95% of service provisions, consistently securing high rankings in global livability indices (Pamer, 2019; Skalicky & Čerpes, 2019). Such outcomes underscore the capacity of robust institutional networks, coupled with clearly defined social objectives and efficient implementation systems, to engender highly livable urban environments (da Cruz et al., 2019; Hooper et al., 2018).

### ***Case 2: Melbourne – Environmental Emphasis within a Market-Oriented Approach***

The governance framework established in Melbourne exemplifies a balance between market dynamics and proactive environmental regulation, alongside community engagement. This model integrates the vibrancy of the private sector with substantial public intervention, harmonizing economic dynamism with comprehensive environmental standards while effectively managing rapid urban growth (Hooper et al., 2018; Stanislav & Chin, 2019).

Institutions in Melbourne enforce stringent regulations via the Metropolitan Planning Authority, which orchestrates development across 321 suburbs based on 15 livability criteria. Advanced monitoring mechanisms facilitate performance evaluation concerning environmental quality and social inclusion, thus enabling evidence-based policy adjustments (Hooper et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021).

Successful implementations include a 22% increase in tree canopy coverage and 95% resident access to public parks. Through innovative partnerships with the private sector, the city has attained an 85% compliance rate with development regulations while consistently meeting environmental targets. This scenario illustrates the potential for achieving livability outcomes through shared governance frameworks that effectively regulate market mechanisms (Stanislav & Chin, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

### ***Case 3: Rotterdam – Climate Adaptive Governance Model***

Rotterdam stands out for its innovative linkage of climate adaptation with urban management. This governance approach has evolved from traditional water management to an integrated climate resilience strategy, demonstrating how ecological challenges can stimulate governance innovation (Birkmann et al., 2010; Meijer et al., 2019).

Dedicated adaptation teams and advanced coordination mechanisms have resulted in the integration of climate-planning considerations into 90% of relevant institutional departments. Consequently, this framework has facilitated a 40% reduction in flood risk without compromising essential urban functions (Asian Development Bank, 2019; Birkmann et al., 2010).

The implementation strategy combines structural interventions with initiatives focused on enhancing social resilience, yielding a 35% increase in the effectiveness of water management while creating new public spaces. Innovations such as water squares and green roofs have significantly enhanced coverage in climate-vulnerable areas (Brovarone et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021), exemplifying how environmental challenges can catalyze governance innovations that deliver multifaceted benefits.

#### ***Case 4: Kolkata – Governance Under Resource Constraints***

The experience of Kolkata provides critical insights into urban governance amidst severe resource constraints, illustrating the potential and strategies available to developing cities. The governance model has evolved to address significant infrastructure deficiencies and service delivery challenges while managing the rapid pressures of urbanization. Case studies highlight how Kolkata navigates its limitations to devise creative solutions that maximize impact despite resource scarcity (Paul & Sen, 2018; Stanislav & Chin, 2019; Sochacka et al., 2021).

The institutional framework reflects the challenges of coordinating urban development with limited resources, resulting in service discrepancies that can reach 45% across different zones. The capacity of institutions to provide urban services is constrained to 50%. Nevertheless, prioritizing urban development through a cluster-based approach has enabled the city to achieve approximately 55% service delivery, demonstrating how contextual adaptations of effective design and social support can yield significant outcomes even under extreme resource limitations.

The emphasis is placed on foundational service delivery and infrastructure development, targeting specific geographies to ensure interventions produce the greatest impact. Community-driven initiatives that leverage local partnerships and self-help forums have facilitated incremental improvements in service delivery, despite limited resources (Baud et al., 2021; da Cruz et al., 2019; Hooper et al., 2018).

#### ***Case 5: Tehran – Centralized Planning Approach***

The governance model in Tehran is characterized by a centralized planning framework suitable for rapidly growing urban contexts. The institutional structure remains predominantly centralized, with 85% of planning decisions made at the metropolitan level, thereby constraining local districts' autonomy in implementation. While this centralized approach facilitates coordinated responses to urban challenges, it has also resulted in implementation gaps at the local level (Alijani et al., 2020; Ioan-Franc et al., 2015; Mahmoudi et al., 2015).

The efficacy of strong central planning is reflected in the achievement of 70% compliance with basic service standards across the city, albeit with some districts exhibiting compliance rates as low as 40%. Issues such as thermal comfort and air quality, particularly in regard to energy consumption, have emerged as significant environmental management concerns. This top-down approach emphasizes adherence to standardized protocols across districts, yielding a 65% adherence to service standards while striving to enhance local implementation capacities (Alijani et al., 2020; Mahmoudi et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021).

#### ***Case 6: Cheongju – Model of Emerging Green City***

Cheongju represents an evolving model prioritizing environmental sustainability while simultaneously enhancing institutional capacity. An impressive 85% implementation rate of its green city framework illustrates how environmental priorities can influence governance evolution. The institutional focus on improving inter-departmental coordination and

developing capabilities in environmental governance is notable (Asian Development Bank, 2019; Sasanpour, 2017; Yim et al., 2015).

Air quality metrics improved by 15% as a result of the green city model's implementation, with stakeholder participation rates reaching 75%. The city demonstrates a strong commitment to systematic environmental governance, which has laid the groundwork for enhanced urban livability while simultaneously fostering institutional capacity to address broader governance challenges (Sochacka et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Yim et al., 2015).

### Patterns in the Implementation of Governance Analysis

An analysis of the six case studies reveals that urban governance approaches and resultant livability outcomes are enacted in markedly different manners. This section explores these patterns through three complementary frameworks: city-specific implementation strategies (Table 1), cross-cutting governance patterns (Table 2), and contextual influence mechanisms (Table 3).

**Table 1.** City-Specific Urban Governance Implementation Analysis

City	Local Context	Implementation Approach	Specific Challenges	Measured Outcomes	City-Specific Lessons
Vienna	Social democratic tradition; Strong welfare state; High economic capacity; Historical focus on social housing	Comprehensive social housing program; Participatory planning processes; Integrated service delivery; Strong public sector role	Managing rapid growth; Housing affordability; Integration of new residents; Balancing development needs	220,000 municipal housing units (98% occupancy); 60-70% subsidized housing integration; 95% service monitoring coverage; 80% citizen satisfaction	Successful integration of social and market approaches; Strong institutional frameworks essential; Active citizen participation crucial
Melbourne	Market-oriented economy; Rapid growth pressure; Environmental challenges; Strong regulatory tradition	Market-based development; Strong regulatory oversight; Public-private partnerships; Environmental focus	Urban sprawl management; Environmental protection; Infrastructure provision; Growth management	321 suburbs assessed (15 criteria); 95% park accessibility; 85% development compliance; 22% tree canopy increase	Effective market regulation crucial; Balance development and environment needed; Strong monitoring systems important
Rotterdam	Water management history; Climate vulnerability; Port city character; Innovation focus	Climate-adaptive planning; Water-focused governance; Network-based coordination; Innovation emphasis	Climate adaptation; Flood risk; Infrastructure resilience; Economic transition	90% climate-planning integration; 40% flood risk reduction; 35% water system effectiveness; 75% vulnerable area coverage	Climate adaptation can drive innovation; Water management requires integration; Multi-stakeholder approach effective

**Table 1 (Cont.)**

City	Local Context	Implementation Approach	Specific Challenges	Measured Outcomes	City-Specific Lessons
Kolkata	Rapid urbanization; Resource constraints; Infrastructure gaps; Fragmented governance	Basic service provision; Limited coordination; Cluster-based development; Essential services focus	Service delivery gaps; Data limitations; Resource constraints; Coordination challenges	45% service variation across zones; 50% monitoring coverage; 40% data constraints; 55% service delivery rate	Basic frameworks needed first; Resource constraints limit effectiveness; Data-driven approach important
Tehran	Centralized tradition; Environmental challenges; Rapid growth; Limited local autonomy	Centralized planning; Environmental focus; Basic monitoring; Standard frameworks	Local capacity building; Environmental management; Service coordination; Autonomy balance	85% centralized planning control; 70% limited local autonomy; 40% district variation; 65% service standards met	Balance needed between central control and local autonomy; Environmental focus can drive improvements
Cheongju	Environmental focus; Growing capacity; Economic transition; Development pressure	Green city framework; Environmental initiatives; Growing coordination; Basic integration	Capacity development; Implementation consistency; Stakeholder engagement; Resource allocation	85% framework implementation; 75% participation rate; 15% air quality improvement; 90% monitoring compliance	Environmental focus can guide development; Growing capacity requires systematic approach

Table 1 presents a City-Specific Implementation Analysis, illustrating how the implementation of urban governance approaches varies according to local contexts and challenges. This analysis indicates that the deployment of reforms is contingent upon historical traditions, institutional capacities, and resource availability. The success of Vienna's social housing initiatives (98% occupancy rates) and service monitoring (95% coverage) exemplifies a scenario where governance effectiveness is built upon existing institutional frameworks.

Comparative analyses reveal that resource availability and institutional capacity significantly influence outcomes. In well-resourced cities such as Vienna and Rotterdam, characterized by strong institutions, comprehensive governance programs manifest higher success rates, as evidenced by Rotterdam's integration of 90% of climate-planning elements into its policies and a 40% reduction in flood risk. Conversely, resource-constrained cities like Kolkata exhibit more modest outcomes, with service delivery discrepancies reaching up to 45% across various zones.

Local challenges dictate the structure of governance and resultant outcomes. While Rotterdam addresses climate adaptation, and Melbourne confronts urban sprawl, these scenarios illustrate how cities may develop tailored approaches in response to their identified on-the-ground challenges. Metrics such as the 95% resident satisfaction rate in Melbourne and the 22% increase in canopy coverage serve as benchmark references.

The findings underscore the necessity for robust monitoring systems. Cities with comprehensive monitoring frameworks (e.g., Vienna and Melbourne) demonstrate a superior

capacity to track progress and adapt strategies, as indicated by their high coverage rates (approaching 100%). In contrast, cities with inadequate monitoring (e.g., Kolkata, at 50%) exhibit significantly limited capabilities. These cases illustrate that while contextual factors will dictate the specific measures taken, strong institutional frameworks and active monitoring systems are crucial for facilitating success across diverse contexts. However, such frameworks must be sensitive to local conditions to sustain the principles guiding urban governance.

### **Analysis of Cross-Cutting Governance Patterns**

Table 2 presents an analysis of urban governance patterns at the city level, elucidating how similar strategies can yield comparable outcomes across diverse contexts. Cities characterized by high integration and comprehensive coverage—defined as 90-95% coverage of monitoring systems and 80-90% implementation rates—demonstrate that robust institutional frameworks, complemented by extensive monitoring systems, contribute significantly to improved governance outcomes.

The analysis reveals a pronounced performance gap among various governance patterns. Specifically, cities exhibiting high integration outperform those with limited integration, meeting 80-95% of their targets, in stark contrast to the 35-55% target achievement observed in cities with limited integration. This disparity underscores the importance of institutional characteristics, such as coordination mechanisms and effectiveness monitoring, which may be causally linked to governance effectiveness through their influence on implementation capacity.

Recent trends in governance evolution, particularly within the realm of environmental governance, provide further insights. The observed levels of framework adoption (75-85%) and environmental improvements (15-25%) in participating cities indicate that governance systems can progress by concentrating efforts on select priorities. This suggests that cities with fewer resources may adopt a gradual trajectory toward enhanced governance and development, ultimately cultivating more representative governance structures over time.

Resource constraints, alongside centralized control patterns, are pivotal to effective governance. Resource-constrained cities, on average, achieve only 35-55% of their targets. However, the evidence indicates that even within these limitations, improved services can be realized by strategically prioritizing initiatives, thereby achieving 60-70% of basic standards.

The primary conclusion drawn from this analysis is the necessity of aligning governance methods with current capacities. The stark performance contrast between high integration (80-95%) and limited integration (35-55%) patterns suggests that cities must first focus on foundational capabilities before advancing towards comprehensive governance approaches.

As illustrated in Table 3, contextual influence mechanisms elucidate the role of contextual factors in governance implementation and effectiveness across cities. The political-institutional legacy, characterized by established procedures and rules, emerges as a critical contingent that significantly shapes governance alternatives. This is evidenced by the successful social housing programs in Vienna and the effective water management institutions in Rotterdam (Birkmann et al., 2010; Pamer, 2019).

The potential for implementation is fundamentally shaped by resource-capacity contexts. This is exemplified by the contrast between Melbourne's citywide monitoring system, which encompasses 321 suburbs, and Kolkata's limited service provision, highlighting how resource availability affects governance capacity (Hooper et al., 2018; Paul & Sen, 2018).

Moreover, environmental-geographic conditions exert a shaping influence on governance, as demonstrated by initiatives such as climate-water planning in Rotterdam and thermal comfort strategies in Tehran. These case studies underscore the importance for cities to develop governance strategies that are responsive to their unique environmental conditions (Alijani et al., 2020; Birkmann et al., 2010).

The analysis further indicates that socio-economic factors and political capacity for technical innovation are critical determinants of implementation success. Basel's high technical capacity positions it favorably within this context due to its status as a leading research hub with a network of data management experts. In contrast, Vienna's strong social cohesion fosters trust in participatory planning and governance, serving as a notable example of how to formulate and implement plans developed by the community. These dynamics significantly influence governance ambitions and implementation capacities (Pamer, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

**Table 2.** Cross-Cutting Urban Governance Pattern Analysis

<b>Governance Pattern</b>	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	<b>Pattern Evidence Across Cities</b>	<b>Performance Range</b>	<b>Success Requirements</b>	<b>Implementation Implications</b>
High Integration & Comprehensive Coverage	Strong institutional frameworks; Clear accountability; Integrated systems; Comprehensive monitoring	High monitoring coverage (90-95%); Strong implementation rates (80-90%); High satisfaction levels (75-85%); Effective resource use (80-90%)	Target achievement: 80-95%; Service effectiveness: 85-95%; Resource efficiency: 80-90%	Strong institutional capacity; Sustainable resources; Comprehensive monitoring; Active engagement	Focus on system maintenance; Continuous improvement; Innovation adoption; Stakeholder expansion
Market-Oriented with Strong Oversight	Market mechanisms; Regulatory frameworks; Performance monitoring; Public-private balance	Development compliance (80-85%); Market response (75-85%); Service standards (70-80%); Monitoring effectiveness (75-85%)	Target achievement: 75-85%; Market effectiveness: 70-85%; Compliance: 80-90%	Effective regulation; Market efficiency; Strong oversight; Balanced approach	Balance public-private interests; Maintain oversight; Enhance market efficiency; Protect public good
Emerging Integration with Environmental Focus	Growing coordination; Environmental priority; Basic frameworks; Developing systems	Framework adoption (75-85%); Environmental improvements (15-25%); Service delivery growth (25-35%); Monitoring development (70-90%)	Target achievement: 65-75%; Implementation : 60-70%; System effectiveness: 65-80%	Basic frameworks; Growing capacity; Environmental focus; Stakeholder support	Build institutional capacity; Strengthen systems; Expand monitoring; Enhance coordination
Limited Integration with Resource Constraints	Basic frameworks; Limited resources; Minimal coordination; Essential focus	Service variations (40-50%); Limited monitoring (40-60%); Basic implementation (35-55%); Resource constraints (40-60%)	Target achievement: 35-55%; Implementation : 30-50%; Effectiveness: 35-45%	Basic systems; Essential resources; Minimal standards; Basic coordination	Focus on essentials; Build basic capacity; Establish frameworks; Address critical gaps

**Table 2. (Cont.)**

<b>Governance Pattern</b>	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	<b>Pattern Evidence Across Cities</b>	<b>Performance Range</b>	<b>Success Requirements</b>	<b>Implementation Implications</b>
Centralized Control with Implementation Gaps	Strong central authority; Limited local capacity; Basic monitoring; Standard approaches	Central control (80-90%); Local variation (40-60%); Basic standards (60-70%); Limited autonomy (30-40%)	Target achievement: 45-65%; Implementation : 40-60%; Effectiveness: 40-55%	Central capacity; Basic standards; Local support; Minimal autonomy	Improve local capacity; Balance control; Enhance monitoring; Develop engagement

**Table 3. Contextual Influence Mechanisms in Urban Governance**

<b>Context Type</b>	<b>Influence Mechanism</b>	<b>Evidence of Mechanism in Action</b>	<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Implementation Guidance</b>
Political-Institutional Legacy	Institutional structures shape acceptable governance options through established procedures and norms. Examples from Vienna [Pamer, 2019] show how social democratic traditions enable specific policy choices through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Accepted role of public sector</li> <li>– Established consultation processes</li> <li>– Expected welfare provisions</li> </ul>	Vienna: Social housing program works through existing institutional frameworks, enabling 60-70% subsidized housing because institutional structures support this approach. Rotterdam: Water management institutions facilitate climate adaptation through established coordination mechanisms [Birkmann et al., 2010]	Cities with similar institutional legacies can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Build on existing structures</li> <li>– Use established processes</li> <li>– Leverage institutional memory.</li> </ul> Cities with different contexts need alternative approaches	When institutional legacy is supportive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Scale up through existing structures</li> <li>– Expand proven approaches.</li> </ul> When legacy constrains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Start with pilot programs - Build new institutional capacity</li> </ul>
Resource-Capacity Context	Resource availability determines implementation possibilities through staffing, technical capacity, and monitoring ability. Kolkata's case [Paul & Sen, 2018] demonstrates how resource constraints limit options through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reduced monitoring capacity</li> <li>– Limited technical expertise</li> <li>– Implementation gaps</li> </ul>	Kolkata: Resource constraints create 45% service variation by limiting implementation capacity. Melbourne: Strong resource base enables comprehensive monitoring across 321 suburbs [Hooper et al., 2018]	Resource context determines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Implementation scale</li> <li>– Program complexity</li> <li>– Monitoring capacity. Cities must match ambitions to resources</li> </ul>	High resource context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Implement comprehensive programs</li> <li>– Build advanced systems. Limited resources:</li> <li>– Focus on essential services</li> <li>– Build basic capacity first</li> </ul>

**Table 3. (Cont.)**

<b>Context Type</b>	<b>Influence Mechanism</b>	<b>Evidence of Mechanism in Action</b>	<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Implementation Guidance</b>
Environmental - Geographic Conditions	Physical conditions create specific governance requirements through risk patterns and environmental needs. Rotterdam's experience [Birkmann et al., 2010] shows how environmental context shapes priorities through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk management needs</li> <li>- Infrastructure requirements</li> <li>- Adaptation priorities</li> </ul>	Rotterdam: Water management needs shape governance priorities, leading to integrated climate-water planning. Tehran: Climate conditions drive focus on thermal comfort in planning [Alijani et al., 2020]	Environmental context requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific technical solutions</li> <li>- Targeted infrastructure</li> <li>- Adapted governance approaches</li> </ul>	For high environmental risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrate risk management</li> <li>- Prioritize adaptation.</li> </ul> For lower risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on prevention</li> <li>- Build resilience gradually</li> </ul>
Technical-Innovation Environment	Technical capacity shapes modernization possibilities through available tools and expertise. Evidence from smart city initiatives [Wang et al., 2021] shows how technical context influences governance through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digital capability</li> <li>- Innovation capacity</li> <li>- Data management ability</li> </ul>	Melbourne: Technical capacity enables comprehensive monitoring and assessment systems. Kolkata: Limited technical infrastructure constrains monitoring to 50% coverage [Paul & Sen, 2018]	Technical context influences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service delivery options</li> <li>- Monitoring capabilities</li> <li>- Innovation possibilities</li> </ul>	Advanced technical context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deploy smart solutions</li> <li>- Integrate systems.</li> </ul> Basic context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build core capabilities</li> <li>- Focus on essential systems</li> </ul>
Socio-Economic Dynamics	Social and economic conditions shape service needs and implementation capacity through resource generation and social engagement patterns. Vienna's case [Pamer, 2019] demonstrates how socio-economic context enables specific approaches through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social expectations</li> <li>- Economic capacity</li> <li>- Community engagement</li> </ul>	Vienna: Social cohesion supports participatory planning and program implementation. Cheongju: Economic transition shapes environmental program implementation [Yim et al., 2015]	Socio-economic context affects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service expectations</li> <li>- Implementation capacity</li> <li>- Community engagement</li> </ul>	Strong socio-economic context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand comprehensive services</li> <li>- Build advanced systems.</li> </ul> Challenging context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on basic needs</li> <li>- Build community capacity</li> </ul>

**Contributions to Urban Governance Practice**

The application of implementation patterns and contextual factors as an analytical framework yields significant implications for urban governance practices. It is essential to extend the principles of governance to their respective contexts, and the findings suggest that

a synthesis of enduring universalism and entrenched localism constitutes critical components of effective governance strategies.

Insights derived from a case study encompassing six cities elucidate the strategic shifts required and the new complexities that emerge within urban governance. The stark contrast between high integration levels (80-95%) and low integration levels (35-55%) underscores the necessity for governance ambitions to align with institutional capabilities and available resources. This finding indicates that the enhancement of governance competencies is likely to be most effective when pursued incrementally, allowing organizations to commence with fundamental service offerings before progressively incorporating additional layers of services. For instance, evidence from Kolkata illustrates that when service variability exceeds 45%, a disconnect between intent and capacity can lead to significant implementation challenges (da Cruz et al., 2019; Paul & Sen, 2018; Sochacka et al., 2021).

A pivotal factor in successful governance appears to be an initial endowment of resources. The effectiveness of integrated governance programs in cities with robust institutional frameworks, such as Vienna and Melbourne, suggests that cities endowed with substantial economic resources and institutional capacity are more likely to achieve favorable outcomes. Conversely, the optimal utilization of limited resources can significantly mitigate adverse conditions, as demonstrated by Kolkata, which highlights the importance of prioritization and capacity building in resource-constrained environments. This is exemplified by Vienna's social housing model, which is financed through developer contributions that offset 60-70% of the costs associated with new property development (Hooper et al., 2018; Pamer, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

Innovative governance is often catalyzed by environmental challenges. For example, climate change adaptation initiatives in Rotterdam and efforts to enhance urban greening in Cheongju indicate that tailored responses to specific challenges can be instrumental in improving overall governance. Rotterdam has achieved an impressive 90% integration of climate planning, resulting in a 40% reduction in flood risk through coordinated adaptation efforts. The interplay of technological advancement and institutional flexibility is vital for realizing such ambitions (Birkmann et al., 2010; Brovarone et al., 2021; Meijer et al., 2019), as evidenced by the comprehensive incorporation of climate considerations into all planning and implementation activities in Rotterdam.

Effective governance models are characterized by robust monitoring and evaluation systems. Cities with comprehensive monitoring frameworks, such as Vienna, which encompass 95% of the city's utilities, and Melbourne, which tracks progress across 321 suburbs, demonstrate superior capabilities in monitoring progress and refining action plans. This rigorous performance tracking contributes to their consistent top rankings in global livability assessments. In contrast, cities lacking adequate monitoring tools illustrate the necessity for local governments to establish effective monitoring mechanisms to facilitate smooth governance (Hooper et al., 2018; Pamer, 2019; Skalicky & Čerpes, 2019).

Stakeholder engagement has been recognized as a crucial element in the successful implementation of governance. Notable examples of effective community engagement include Cheongju, where participation rates of 75% are typical in multi-year planning processes, and Vienna's participatory planning procedures. However, the type and scale of stakeholder involvement must be appropriately tailored to local contexts and capacities. Measures such as Melbourne's suburb assessment indicate that systematic engagement can effectively inform governance decisions while maintaining implementation efficiency (Kaal, 2011; Sasanpour, 2017; Stanislav & Chin, 2019).

As cities increasingly confront the destabilizing forces of climate change, migration, and conflict, there is an urgent need for practical and efficient strategies to design, implement, and deliver innovative urban solutions. Three approaches have emerged to address this need;

however, several challenges persist: 1) Partisan takeovers may be complicated by the trade unionist perspectives of dominant parties; 2) Adaptive governance models must navigate regime shifts in service delivery without compromising service quality, a challenge not adequately addressed by Melbourne's market-oriented development; and 3) Market-oriented governance must balance a range of objectives, as exemplified by Melbourne's long-term policy considerations. Additionally, resource allocation remains a concern even in resource-rich municipalities, as evidenced by Vienna's systematic approach to resource distribution, which achieves 95% monitoring service coverage. Finally, integrated planning and coordinated approaches continue to be tested, as illustrated by Rotterdam's climate adaptation strategies aimed at reducing flood risks (Birkmann, 2010; Pamer, 2019; Wang et al., 2021;).

The findings underscore the importance of prioritizing institutional capacity development based on the level of urban development, sector-specific resource allocation, and effective stakeholder engagement methods, alongside the integration of technology in relation to institutional capacity. The comprehensive assessment of Melbourne highlights the significance of robust stakeholder involvement, while the 85% implementation of the Cheongju framework exemplifies successful and targeted capacity-building efforts in governance evolution. The integration of climate planning in Rotterdam further emphasizes the necessity of focusing on institutional growth in adopting technologies for sustainable management (Hooper et al., 2018; Meijer et al., 2019; Yim et al., 2015).

These results highlight the imperative for ongoing efforts to enhance governance that aligns ambition with capacity, utilizes resources efficiently, and supports robust monitoring systems. Insights from various cities demonstrate that diverse governance models can yield similar livability outcomes, albeit through mechanisms tailored to specific contexts and capacities. The application of such public governance remains challenging, necessitating consideration of both general principles of effective governance and the unique local needs and constraints (da Cruz et al., 2019; Sochacka et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

## Conclusions and Implications

This paper's comparative examination of urban governance in six cosmopolitan cities—Vienna, Melbourne, Rotterdam, Kolkata, Tehran, and Cheongju—produces important findings on how institutional design, stakeholder involvement, and contextual responsiveness influence livability outcomes. The observations underscore that good governance is not an accident, but is achieved through a strategic fit of organizational forms with local realities. For instance, Vienna is successful in integrating social democratic policy measures, although in different resource environments compared to Kolkata, both expressing governance achievements that respond to their particular circumstances in substantive manner (da Cruz et al., 2019; Sochacka et al., 2021).

Institutional foundations, with effective check and balance systems come out as the most important characteristics of liveable cities. Vienna's 95% monitoring coverage and Melbourne's suburb-wide performance review highlight the importance of institutional capacity. However, Kolkata proves that tremendous progress can still be achieved if policies are rationally tailored to resource constraints (Pamer, 2019; Paul & Sen, 2018).

The environmental forces are powerful propellants of the transformation of governance. Even then, the 90% mainstreaming of climate planning in Rotterdam and a 40% decrease in flood risk show how environmental governance can engender wider institutional change (Birkmann et al., 2010; Brovarone et al., 2021). Cases such as these show that targeted interventions — particularly in the area of climate adaptation and housing — can have ripple effects throughout the governing system.

Three main lessons are apparent: governance ideals should be tailored to institutional and financial capacity; strong monitoring and evaluation systems will be critical for maintaining

performance; and stakeholder participation needs to be adapted to local social and cultural features. Examples like Vienna's large-scale housing policy or the cost-effective provision of public services in Kolkata highlight the variety of models that can achieve liveability through context-sensitive governance (Baud et al., 2021; Pamer, 2019).

Urban governance systems should be systematically researched regarding their evolution and deformation across different time periods: the pre-2010 era (characterized by central and sectoral approaches), the 2010–2024 period (marked by participatory and data-driven reforms), and the post-2025 phase (likely focused on climate-responsive and intelligent planning). These phases need to be examined within various regional contexts—including, but not limited to, the European social-democratic tradition, the Asian transition from centralization to decentralization, and the participatory urbanism of Latin America—to understand how both structural and cultural specificities influence policy variations (da Cruz et al., 2019; Sochacka et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

Critically, the study also recognizes its own limitations. Although it was also purposeful, the selection of six cities was not statistically generalizable. Furthermore, although data spanned from 2010–2024, missing historical claims data limited a complete longitudinal analysis. However, with the stringent comparative structure and theory-driven design, we have set up a firm base for future studies.

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of designing governance reforms in line with local abilities and conditions. It puts forward a typology of governance which explains how two different types of cities adopt dissimilar institutional pathways in their quest to achieve similar livability objectives. The study combines theoretical and policy(making) implications by having explored pathways through which governance affects urban well-being as a recipe for cities struggling to develop capabilities to be more liveable in today's complex world.

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