Participatory Governance Comprehensive Approach A Proposed Model based on Practices and Experience

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Abstract— In the last decade, the term "Participatory Governance" became popular across different sectors, including governments, businesses and civic organizations. Participatory Governance is not a novel concept; however, the novelty is in the growth of interest and the evolving behavior of organizations towards optimizing its implementation. The main aim of this concept is to ensure inclusion and the association of different stakeholders in the decision-making process in a multi-level perspective. Few scholars addressed the issue of citizen involvement and introduced participatory governance as the promising model of governance for the cities of the future. This paper aims to propose a comprehensive approach to Participatory Governance.

Keywords: Participatory Governance, Local Governance, Lille, Stakeholders, Citizen Participation, Urban Intelligence

I. INTRODUCTION

Participatory Governance and Citizen Participation in cities and urban areas is a major issue addressed by many scholars [1 - 5], Sherry Arnestein [5] provided a thorough model that helps in analyzing where does the citizen stands and so the government in terms of relationship. In practice, in late eighties in the city of Porto Alerge in Brazil when the socialist party ruled the state, the concept of Participatory Budget was first proposed in neighborhoods, which allowed citizens to decide what they want to do with public funds [6]. In the discourses in providing accurate definition of Participatory Governance, some scholars introduced definitions to the concept [7 - 8]. Bradford [9], sees participatory governance as a social innovation that aims to share the knowledge and experience from and across the different stakeholders. The UN economic council [10] have promoted the concept and embraced the principle of citizen engagement. In this paper, we will introduce a comprehensive approach to participatory governance that aims to present a framework to assist cities in implementing the concept in an efficient and inclusive manner based practices, qualitative and quantitative observations and city actors opinion.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology relied on (1) data collected from the city of Lille based on a partnership between the University of Lille and the municipality to improve the Participatory Governance Process in Lille, (2) Observations of Practices from other countries, (3) questionnaire with city experts and (4) the literature of the theoretical aspect of the Participatory Governance concept. In the city of Lille Participatory Governance, actions are implemented by the Participatory Democracy Department. These actions include Local Councils, Participatory Budget and Public Surveying. The Local Councils represent structures that aims to involve and enhance citizen and civil society involvement in city governance, the presence of some councils is not an obligation by the law. The Participatory Budget is a practice that was introduced in Lille in 2018 which allocates 1.5 Million Euros from cities budget for this purpose. The public survey is an action that is rarely practiced in the city but is supported by law. We have observed these three actions and collected the available data. The methodology started by observing the literature and the practices in other cities, then a preliminary approach was established, and then rectified along with the city experts to adapt the process best to the city goals.

III. LITERATURE AND DATA OBSERVATIONS

A. Local Governance

Local Governance is a concept that is constantly present the research in Public Administration and territorial development [11]. It is always associated with rules, policies and coordination across actors according to early scholars [12 - 14]. Major organizations as the UN-Habitat [15] considers local governance as a way of connecting individuals, public institutions and businesses to resolve the conflict of interest and achieve a common goal.

B. Participatory Governance

Participatory Governance implementation is becoming critical day after another according to a study by Münchener [16], more than 40% of the observed population would like to be involved through social media with their local governments. Participatory Governance is not only a single practice, it is considered as a group of procedures and tools to ensure the direct citizen participation [7]. Scholars as Silva and Khan and Han[17] in their smart city model, consider citizen involvement as the major ground from the smart city pillars. Other scholars [18] consider Participatory Governance is crucial element for the sustainability and existence of the cities of the future.

C. Practical Observations

Many cities around the world make different efforts in in order to involve their citizens in the decision-making process. We have observed a list of five cities along with six main practices that aims to involve citizens. These practices represent a direct way for citizens-city interaction. In Table 1.0, we can notice that all cities have online presence through a portal to supply information and updates for citizens. The observation was made for the municipal level or the equivalent based on the country's local governance system. The Participatory budget is missing in two cities as well as the open data practice. Other practices are not fulfilled by all of the five cities, Porto Alegre the city which was the first to introduce the participatory budget presents a good example in citizen involvement in Table I. it has fulfilled the six practices.

TABLE I.　　PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES IN FOUR CITIES WITH THE AIM TO INVOLVE CITIZENS

Feature City	Online Portal	Participatory Budget	Open Data Platform	Mobile App	Social Media	Public Space
Porto Alegre	x	x	x	x	x	x
Vienna	x		x	x	x	
Istanbul	x				x	x
Rome	x	x	x			
Lille	x	x			x	x

D. Lille Participatory Budget Survey

Cities to support citizens' implication in both local government and development use participatory budget. Citizens participate in the participatory budget process through establishing individual or collective projects as well as in the project selection process through citizens' vote. Lille municipal survey conducted after the 2018 participatory budget session ended. It was aimed to observe mainly four aspects:

- Communication.
- Project Deposit.
- Voting.
- Analysis.
- Other aspects.

We focused on four aspects, where at least each of them had 300 responses, in total there was 383 respondents to the survey. The result of the feedback provided by the participants was analyzed through labeling. We have focused on the comments that tackles the issues related to criteria and project selection. After analyzing each response, we have extracted the following labels, which are the most repetitive issues reported and related to project selection issue: "Transparency", "Clear", "Goals", "Criteria" and "Expectations. On one hand, some citizens expressed that they did not recognize what is the goal from the process; others stated that the process itself as whole was not clear. On the other hand, the process resulted in selection of 18 projects from 484 projects proposed. The selected projects were mainly in the environmental domain

accounting for 72% of the projects selected, four other domains were identified, and in total, their share was equal to 28% of the selected projects.

E. Participatory Governance Questionnaire

We have consulted five actors working for the municipality of four different cities: Lille, Bordeaux, Grenoble and Lisbon. Each actor has at least five years of experience in Local Governance at the city level. The questionnaire was answered through face-to-face interview, telephonic interview or direct responses through a link provided to the responder. They all confirmed the importance of the topic of capacity building.

We observed how they perceive participatory governance through providing them with three statements each represents a certain level of involvement of the stakeholders; the results are illustrated in table II. The results presented the importance of the three statements. The results in Table II illustrates significant agreement among the consulted actors about the three statements with less favorable opinion for the last statement from less than 50% of the actors.

TABLE II.　　ACTORS PERCEPTION ABOUT PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Statement	Perception				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Concerns informing people about new projects and news updates about the city	None	None	None	33.33%	66.66%
Concerns asking people for their opinion	None	None	33.33%	16.66%	50%
Discussion between the city and the stakeholders to make decisions	None	16.66%	16.66%	None	66.66%

In table III, we present the response of these actors about topics of capacity building to observe their opinion about the degree of importance of each. The scale used to observe the importance was (Strongly Not Important, Not Important, Neutral, Important, Highly Important).

TABLE III. ACTORS PERCEPTION ABOUT CAPACITY BUILDING

Topic	Perception				
	Strongly Not Important	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Highly Important
Participatory Governance as a Concept	33.33%	None	None	None	66.66%
Events that directly / indirectly impacts the civil society	None	None	None	83.33%	16.66%
Environmental and Urban Issues	None	None	None	83.33%	16.66%
Projects to be implemented in the future	None	None	None	33.33%	66.66%
Projects already implemented	None	None	None	83.33%	16.66%

The consulted actors also were consulted about the methodology to be used for the capacity building and the significance of the use of ICT tools (E-learning) in this matter. We proposed five methods, and scale of evaluation score from 1 to 5 where 1 is the lowest score and 5 is the highest. Table 4.0 illustrates the evaluation of each by the actors.

TABLE IV. ACTORS OPINION ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY TO BE USED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

Method	Opinion (1 lowest score to 5 best score)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Paper based (i.e flyers)	16.66%	16.66%	16.66%	16.66%	33.33%
Online Training	None	None	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%
Onsite Training	None	None	16.66%	None	83.33%

In Table IV, we have values from 1 to 5, where 5 is refers to best score, each actor has given a score out of five for each method. Most of the actors believe that the onside capacity building is the most effective.

F. The French National Debate

The French president launched in December 2018 launched a national consultation in response to Yellow vests movements. The consultation included four themes:

- Taxes and public expenditure,
- Organization of public services,
- Ecological transition,
- Democracy and citizenship.

The government dedicated a national-level platform for this purpose https://granddebat.fr/. The results of the consultation were published via an open-data platform www.data.gouv.fr. The platform includes 1,932,884 contributions [19]. Data were published in four sets of CSV files according to four themes of the consultation. Table V provides the details of the number of questions and responses for each theme.

TABLE V. NUMBER OF RESPONSES PER THEME

Theme	Number of Questions	Number of Responses
Taxation and public expenditure	8	186711
The organization of the state of public services	33	111953
The ecological transition	16	153809
Democracy and citizenship	37	116549
Total	94	569022

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature has confirmed the interest of the populations to be involved in the local decision-making processes, it also has demonstrated the importance of citizen involvement. We are going to discuss the results based on four perspectives (1) The Participatory Governance Questionnaire (2) The Practices of Participatory Governance (3) The Participatory Budget survey of Lille and (4) The French national debate. The expert opinion in Table 2.0 has demonstrated that the majority agrees that the concept of the Participatory Governance includes all of the three presented statements. These statements include a certain level of power delegated to the population. In Table 3.0 asking the expert opinion about the "Capacity Building" the majority have agreed that capacity-building activities should be carried out about the different domains concerned to participatory governance including the concept itself. The methodology to conduct capacity-building activity should adopt a hybrid approach that alternates between the use of digital technology as well as face-to-face interaction; this is confirmed by the results presented in Table 4.0. In the context of the Participatory Budget Survey carried out about the participatory budget of Lille in 2018, words about the clarity and transparency about the approach were mentioned more than hundred times, this conforms the results presented in table 2.0 of expert opinion about the importance if the "keeping the population informed". Both results from the experts' opinion as well as the survey carried out about the participatory budget support the practices presented in Table 1.0 by five different European cities that aim to inform, consult and involve. The initiative of the French president to respond the yellow vests movement was one of the largest consultation practices carried out, having more than half-million response about four different aspects presents a large importance and emphasis on having a consultation practice which is confirmed by the results presented in Table V.

A. *Proposal of Comprehensive Participatory Governance Model*

A comprehensive approach towards participatory governance must include all city stakeholders, these stakeholders must be first identified in order to address them in all phases and make sure that they are involved. The Model we propose contains three major levels of participation these include: (i) Information (ii) Consultation and (iii) Co-decision. Illustrated in the comprehensive participatory governance proposed model in Figure 1.0. The cities are free to choose until which level of involvement they wish to place themselves. Nevertheless, the identification of the stakeholders and the evaluation along with the capacity building during the whole lifecycle must be ensured.
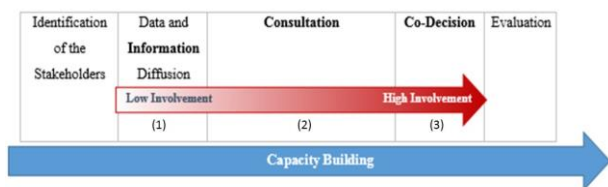

Fig. 1. Comprehensive Participatory Governance Process Model

The first level "Information" concerns a one-way channel towards pushing information and data to stakeholders, to ensure that they are informed of the issues related to the city. The second level, concerns conducting continuous consultation about the issues related to the city through asking for feedback and opinions where the city has no obligation to take this feedback in consideration. The highest level aims to give some power to the stakeholders through not only taking opinion but also giving the power of vote.

The identification involves identifying who is concerned; this includes examining legal texts, laws and policies. Furthermore, city administration should then examine other possible stakeholders through a through brainstorming process to ensure the inclusion of all. Major categories of stakeholders include The Public, Civil Society, Existent Councils, Officials, Local Government Employees and other external stakeholders. The capacity building is a lifelong action; it is essential and concerns all stakeholders. The capacity building should be about the concept of Participatory Governance itself and about the different issues concerning the city. The use of different capacity building methods is recommended; however, research results confirmed the significance of onsite and face-to-face interaction in this matter.

The evaluation step aims in determining the performance of the process, it observes and provides insights for decision makers in order to the appropriate decisions, it helps in identifying errors and deviation and determining whether goals are achieved or not. We recommend the use Multicriteria decision method (MCDM) [20 - 22]. It allows identifying different factors and indicators, and provide insights for each particular evaluated action. The evaluation is an exclusive action; since what is perceived as good performance in particular city could be perceived as poor one in the other. Therefore, it requires discussion with the city administration to observe the city goals, policies and city needs.

For each level, city administration must determine:
- Coordinating party / person, in charge of the action coordination.
- Documents Repository with ease access to documents related to the action.
- Synthesis of related actions.
- Physical and virtual spaces for meetings, getting informed, discuss etc….
- Continuous Updates through different channels are required for maximum reach.

These five elements to be determined present a standard for each process carried out within the proposed framework on order efficiently implement each activity.

V. CONCLUSION

Participatory Governance is a board concept used on different levels including state, regional, departmental, city and district levels. In terms of city, the stakeholders participate in different domains within the city, however this requires the political will and support. The implementation of strategies for participatory governance in the examined cities presented scattered efforts for achieving efficient involvement of city stakeholders and enhance social inclusion. The proposed model based on the literature, observations and discussions with different actors constitutes a comprehensive approach for the implementation of a comprehensive participatory governance action within a city; it aims to provide a clear roadmap for cities aiming to implement the concept. The framework can be adapted with different laws that may have limitation on citizen participation through the selection of a certain level of participation within the framework, thus it enables cities also to determine to which extent they are willing to involve the stakeholders through the proposed three levels of participation. The results presented confirms the significance of the capacity building during the whole life cycle of the process, it also confirms that the concept of Participatory Governance includes the three levels of Participation that the model proposed as well as the importance of its three other elements. We recommend further investigation about the implementation of capacity building practices within the context of Participatory Governance.

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