

## City Hall, an Arena for Citizen Participation

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### Abstract

In the last decades of the twentieth century, criticisms of top-down planning in developed countries, changed the attitude towards planning in ways that increase the role of citizens in decision-making process, decision taking, implementation and monitoring of urban plans. Today, techniques such as City Development Strategies (CDS) that focus on citizen participation are very popular. This change in attitude has been accepted in developing countries, such as Iran, with relatively long delay. City Hall is an unfamiliar and lost concept for citizens and city managers in Iran. The main goal of this paper is studying on necessity of creation of town hall as the area increases citizen participation. For this purpose, after the introduction of some important City Hall and their features and also their role in encouraging citizens to participate in the public areas, the functions of some Tehran municipal buildings will be reviewed. Finally, some strategies which can improve the quality of this important public area will be presented.

**Kew words:** Citizen, City, City Hall, Participation

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### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, the use of participatory methods in planning for the realization and success of projects has been an accepted issue. Major problem in achieving such participatory methods in Iran, is non-real participation of citizens. Realization of citizen participation faces many obstacles in terms of political, administrative, cultural, social and even

historical. In the meantime, creation of suitable areas plays an important role in increasing engagement of citizens and their relationship with managers and urban planners. City Hall is one of these areas. In this paper, after introduction of concept of participation and familiarity with the ways to achieve to it in urban management, two important City Halls in the world as places to attract people's participation will be introduced and some suggestions to create such spaces in the city of Tehran will be presented.

## **2. Citizen Participation**

### **2.1 Definition of participation**

Oxford English Dictionary has interpreted "The partnership" as an act or fact of having the company or having a share. Participation in this sense can be:

- Transitive; Focused on specific target or a part of social life
- Intransitive; with pre-defined purpose or monitoring a particular area of social life
- Moral or Immoral; Based on positive goals or wicked purposes
- Forced or Voluntary and free
- Manipulative or Spontaneous (Rehnama, 1998: 166)

Arnstein defined participation as a kind of redistribution of power that enable citizens, who have been currently set aside in the process of political and economic, to eventually company in the future (Oakley and Marsden, 1991:33). Sa'deddin Ibrahim state Maximization of voluntary organized participation between individuals in the public scene as civil society (Chalbi, 1996:288).

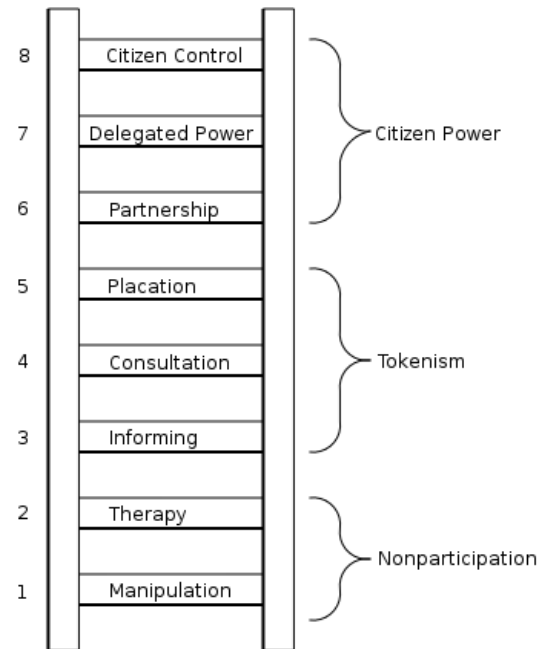
One type of partnership that is regarded sociologists is social participation which Indicate expansion of relations between groups in the form of voluntary associations, clubs, associations and groups and usually have local non-governmental trait. In other words, social participation implies to those voluntary activities that help members of a neighborhood community to participate in urban and rural areas affairs and have a direct or indirect affect in shaping social life.

### **2.2 Types of participation and "nonparticipation"**

A typology of eight levels of participation may help in analysis of this confused issue. For illustrative purposes the eight types are arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product. (See Figure 1) The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "nonparticipation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a

voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide.

Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power. Obviously, the eight-rung ladder is a simplification, but it helps to illustrate the point that so many have missed - that there are significant gradations of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969: 217).



## 2.3 Traditional methods to inform and consult

In this case can be pointed to the following:

### 2.3.1 Exhibition

Exhibition is used in order to present information visually as a proposal for the general public. Exhibition place is important. If it be formed in busy public places such as passenger terminals, shopping centers, urban nodes and city halls, can attract more people to participate.

### 2.3.2 Public meetings

They are used to inform and receive feedback from various sectors of society about the plans. Experience shows that people's participation in this manner is limited. They can be formed in impartial places, outside of municipal organization, In order to increase productivity of meetings. In addition, advertising can be carried out for extensive public participation.

### 2.3.3 Publish information and documents

This approach as part of the information practices is used by the local bodies. They can continuously be published in the form of newsletters, magazines, the journal, book, etc, depending on the amount of details.

### **2.3.4 Surveys**

This method which can be considered as a kind of data collection can be used to make decisions and analysis between variables and help Planners to be aware of priorities of the people and their opinions.

### **2.3.5 Media**

Media with millions of listeners and viewers are widely used for urban management. In addition to mass media at the national level, the mass media at the local level such as local radios and newspapers and particularly the local weeklies, can effectively encourage citizens to participate at the local level.

### **2.3.6 Ideas competition**

Competition of ideas as a way to attract people's participation is in principle the proposal of Patrick Geddes. In this way people's creative ideas about a particular issue or project set to contest and prize is awarded to the best idea. This approach is regularly used by Coventry City Council in the UK.

### **2.3.7 New Communication Technology**

Important features of this manner are access to the public around the country, getting live feedback from audience and participants, providing context for discussions among groups and promote participation of experts.

## **3. Others Experience**

Next, Wellington and London city hall will be briefly introduced.

### **3.1 Wellington Town Hall**

By the 1890s the lack of a proper town hall was being keenly felt, there being no combined facility for council administration and major public events. An area had been set aside for a building on land reclaimed on Jervois Quay by the Wellington City Council between 1886-1890. In 1900 the council finally decided to build a town



hall, at a cost of £50,000. It held competition and the winner was Joshua Charlesworth. The foundation stone was laid by the Duke of York (later King George V) on 18 June 1901. However, tenders were not called until the following year. Work began in May 1902 and was completed in November 1904, at a final cost in excess of £68,000. The building was very well received, in particular for the acoustics, which have received plaudits ever since. The building included a clock tower but there was no clock until one was donated



in 1922 by John Blundell, the son of the founder of the Evening Post. Unfortunately the tower was taken down in 1934, as a precaution following the 1931 Napier earthquake. The work in 1934 also saw the removal of most of the building's high level decoration, also the entrance portico. In 1943-44, as a consequence of the 1942 earthquake, the building was strengthened and Corinthian columns removed and replaced with plainer versions. By the 1970s the building was facing demolition. The new Michael Fowler Centre was built very close to the older building in anticipation of its removal. However a case was argued by the Wellington Regional Committee of the NZHPT for the building's retention on historic and cultural grounds. In 1989, the Town Hall was incorporated into a new civic square, built over Mercer Street that integrated a new office building and city into the complex of existing buildings. The Town Hall was substantially refurbished and strengthened, with the loss of the former Concert Chamber and toilets. The building reopened in 1992.

Town halls are central to the civic life of all communities, and the Wellington Town Hall is no exception. Now almost 100 years old, it has great historic value as the scene of civic receptions, banquets, balls, flower shows, jumble sales, boxing matches, exhibitions, college prize giving ceremonies, organ recitals, concerts by the National Orchestra, and performances by bands as famous as the Beatles. It provides an incredibly versatile space in its main auditorium, one that has been internationally acclaimed for its fine acoustic qualities for orchestral music. It is an architectural and cultural treasure of Wellington city, strengthened and adapted now for continuing use (Wellington City Council).

### 3.2 London City Hall

City Hall is the home of London's government where the Mayor, the London Assembly and their support staff are based. Together they make up the Greater London Authority (GLA), which is responsible for the capital's transport, policing, fire and emergency services, economic development, planning, culture and environment.



In 1999 the GLA Act ruled that London should have its own regional authority. As plans for creating the authority got underway, so too did the development of a new building to house it. A competition was held and 55 developers submitted their plans for the building's design and location. Of these, seven went on public display at the Oxo Tower in September 1998, and visitors were invited to say which they liked best and why. The two front runners were developed further, and on 26 February 1999 the government minister for London announced that the London Bridge City Scheme – now known as 'More London' – had been chosen. Designed as a building for Londoners, City Hall has several features demonstrating the fact that the GLA provides open and see-through government for London. These features include:

- A glass exterior allowing Londoners to look in and symbolising the fact that the GLA's work is done in the open for all to see
- 250 seats for the public and press in the Chamber, where many meetings and debates take place – some broadcast live over the internet
- Spectacular views over the Thames and Tower Bridge, reminding staff and visitors alike of London's status as a vibrant, world-class city.
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#### 4. Tehran

Tehran Municipality building is located in Behesht Street and along the Tehran city council building where perhaps many Tehran citizens have not seen it yet. Considering the extent of Tehran and also more presence of citizens in the regions of Tehran municipality, the region 15 of Tehran municipality was investigated.

Almost all municipal buildings in Tehran have not any special forum or gallery for the public use. In fact, there is no public space to attract the citizen participation. So to understand why citizens go to City Hall, this question was asked from themselves. Almost 150 people per hour will go to region 15 of Tehran municipality building. Citizens present reasons are specified in the table below:

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Detailed plan issues</b>	<b>Construction permit</b>	<b>Building Inspection</b>	<b>Building plan Control</b>	<b>Municipal Income</b>	<b>Car tax</b>	<b>End license</b>	<b>Business Tax</b>	<b>Renovation tax</b>
<b>percent</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>43.6</b>

The results show that the reason of citizen's presence in municipal buildings is fixing their personal problems. In this atmosphere, there is no context for citizen participation and efforts to improve the city function. In fact, municipal buildings are not public spaces.

In order to create suitable space in municipality buildings for citizen participation, the following suggestions are offered. In big cities like Tehran these measures can be started from the regions municipalities:

- Physical beauty of City Hall
- Distinctiveness of City Hall
- Create appropriate and pleasant access for all citizens to City Hall
- Making streets pedestrian around the city hall
- Using green space around the city hall
- Create space for citizen activities (like sport activities)
- Proper use of the mosque and citizens attendance
- Exhibitions, concerts, theater and cinema in the town hall campus
- Large advertising to attract citizens presence
- Surveys of citizens in City Hall on city projects
- Etc,

## **5. Conclusion**

One of the main reasons of failure in urban projects in Iran is lack of participation of citizens. In this regard, many factors exist which one of them is lack proper spaces for citizens presence. In fact, cities and citizens suffer from the lack of appropriate public spaces, Spaces to express their opinions freely and have interaction with each other and also with city managers. Many cities in the world, City Hall area for the presence and participation of citizens is considered. In many cities in the world, City Hall is considered as an area for the presence and participation of citizens. City Hall is something beyond municipality building. In fact, it is a place where citizens feel it belong, with land uses that are effective in attracting the people, Galleries, forums, concert halls, theaters, cinemas, green spaces and also mosques in our country.

This article was beginning to learn the concept of City Hall. It is hoped that by using the experiences of other cities in the world and integrating them with our indigenous cultures, suitable arenas be created.

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