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Forms of Citizen Participation in Local Government: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Citizen participation means citizens involvement in policy or decision making process at government level. Good governance attributed that policy should be made openly and with collaboration of those people who are going to affect. This study is intended to find different forms of citizen participation which are being practiced within local government concept through systematic literature review. After applying certain filters 60 article were selected for systematic literature. Forms of citizen participation are divided into categories i.e. direct citizen participation and indirect citizen participation. Direct citizen participation includes citizen participation in decision making process, participatory planning, citizen appointments into commissions and committees, participation into elections, participation in public meeting and participatory budgeting. Indirect citizen participation includes participation through complaints, feedback and informing citizens.

Keywords: *Forms of Citizen Participation, Local Government, Indirect Citizen Participation & Direct Citizen Participation.*

Introduction

Community or people participation is not a simple concept. It is a complex process holding different definition/meanings for different people with different views (Cornwall, 2008; Gil, Cortés-Cediel, & Cantador, 2019; Moynihan, 2003; Theocharis, & Van Deth, 2018). There are different purposes and objectives of people participation which carries development of planning and implementation, to remove poverty, development of policy, protection of environment and protection of rights of people/group/community (Hayward, 2010; Gaventa & Valderamma, 1999; Simonofski, Asensio, Smedt, & Snoeck, 2017). The term public participation is being used by practitioners and scholars as stakeholders' or community involvement in public decisions especially in policy making; planning and implementation issues and they interchange the word citizens with public and stakeholders frequently (Michels, & Graaf, 2017; Schlossberg & Shuford, 2005; Rowe & Frewer, 2004; Laird, 1993; Paul, 1987; Cogan, Sharpe, & Hertzberg, 1986). The main purpose of these practitioners and scholars is to integrate meaningful people

or community participation with perceived cost and benefits (Moynihan, 2003). Citizen participation has been utilized for different purposes like self-advancement and building well known types of associations at community or group level (Simonsen, & Robbins, 2018; Paul, 1987).

In prior works people involvement or participation is measured through voter turn-out rate and election campaigns (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978) and more recently citizen participation has its roots in theory of citizen rights, empowerment and democratic governance (Fung & Wright, 2011; Wiedemann & Femers, 1993). Governments in under developed countries are urged to go beyond limited participation of people at projects at multiple levels due to pressure of donors to increase participation to insure performance of international development funds (Ackerman, 2004; Gaventa & Valderamma, 1999). Citizen participation has been used as way to educate citizens or people but not as a way to obtain inputs from them traditionally by government officials (Berner, 2001).

Research on citizen participation can be divided into two major groups which include those who are positive about responsibilities of the potential of active citizenship and those who don't consider citizen participation very feasible but both of these groups have studied various factors which restrain citizens to participate (Kasymova, 2014). Currently, there exist several theoretical frameworks which help to analyze the effectiveness of different participatory tools (Goetz & Gaventa, 2001; Folscher, 2007; Ebdon & Franklin, 2006; Arnstein, 1969).

Citizen participation and democracy are closely connected (Michels & Graaf, 2017). According to Barber (1984) citizen participation is a vital section of democracy and argued that sustainability of engagement is only possible in the existence of democratic environment or dialogue. Also there is close and direct relation of continuity citizen participation and education. In this regard education of citizens is the most important tool to improve citizen participation (Schachter, 1997; Verba, Schlozman, Brady, & Nie, 1993). Some research studies have argued that how to increase citizen participation and suggested for the proactive role of government institutes (Schachter, 1997; Pateman, 1970). While other researchers suggested that there is a need of citizen participation on purely voluntarily bases (Hart, 1984) and trust in political system of the state also affects citizen participation (Berman, 1997). Citizen participation is a key element in the democratic process and it is being keenly promoted in different countries. Therefore it is important to understand different forms of citizen participation which are being used in different countries around the globe.

Importance of the Citizen Participation

The Citizen participation has its roots in "Plato's Republic". This concept then transferred into Roman era as "special republication right" and then it is reshaped by French revolution leaders. This concept has fully emerged into political meaning in 20th century and now the in modern democracy it means the direct or wider involvement of citizens into governance affairs. Citizen participation is important in democratic government because;

1) Citizen participation at local level not only helps to improve the quality of life but it also helps to improve the performance and accountability of the government.
2) Through citizen participation government know the preferences of the citizens.
3) Citizen participation also plays its role in decision making process through collective wisdom of the society in development.
4) Citizen participation helps to improve accountability of the government through justice and equality in the society.

Therefore, it is important to engage citizens in decision making process to make decisions more transparent. Citizens are important partner in government decisions due to the following reasons;

1) Citizens know their community problems and issues. Government will have the new ideas and information by engaging citizens into decision making process.
2) The process of citizen participation also creates opportunities for government to educate people and to develop a sense of responsibility in citizens at local level.
3) The citizen participation process also promotes accountability and transparency in government affairs and it helps to shape trust on their local leadership.

Rationale of the Study

Democracy and citizen participation are closely related. Barber (1984), for example, considered participation as an important component of a strong democracy and stressed that the sustainability of engagement can only be ensured in the presence of strong democratic dialogue, strong democratic decision, and strong democratic action (common work, community action, and citizen service). In past, no effort has been made to study the systematic literature review on "citizen participation in local governments".

Objectives of the Study

1) To identify forms of citizen participation in local government.
2) To study indirect forms of citizen participation
3) To identify direct forms of citizen participation which are being used in different countries.

Research Question

1) What forms of citizen participation in local governments are prevailing in different countries?

Methodology

ISI web of science is used as a data base for this study. Two key terms "citizen participation" and "local government" are used to search articles from ISI web of science data base. The current study is then refined using web of science categories which includes public administration, political science, planning development, urban studies, sociology, management and social sciences interdisciplinary. The time span of this study is 1975 to 2018. After applying these parameters, ISI web of science produces 136 results as shown below. From 160 results, 19 articles were not available for download.

Table 1: Search Results

Key Terms	Results
"Citizen participation"	3061
"Citizen participation" and "Local Government"	212
After selection of specific categories	160
Articles not available for download	19
Articles not in English	5
Downloaded articles	136
Articles which describes form of citizen participation	60

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles which were not in English language were excluded from analysis. Total 5 articles were in other language instead of English. Those articles which clearly described what form of citizen participation is being practiced were included in final analysis. Those articles which don't describe certain form of citizen participation were excluded from analysis. In final analysis 60 articles were selected because they have clearly described the form of citizen participation which is being practiced. The following figure describes the selection process of articles for this study.

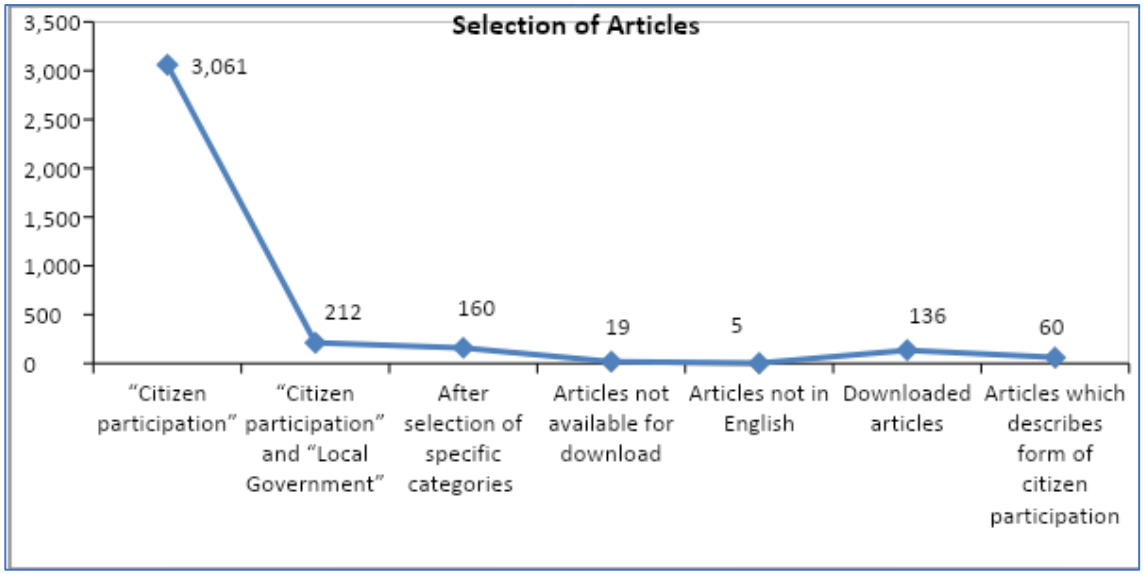

Figure 1: Selection of articles

Analysis

60 studies discussed the forms of citizen participation which are being practiced. The following table describes the number of publications from 1984 to 2018. The details of the publication years are given below.

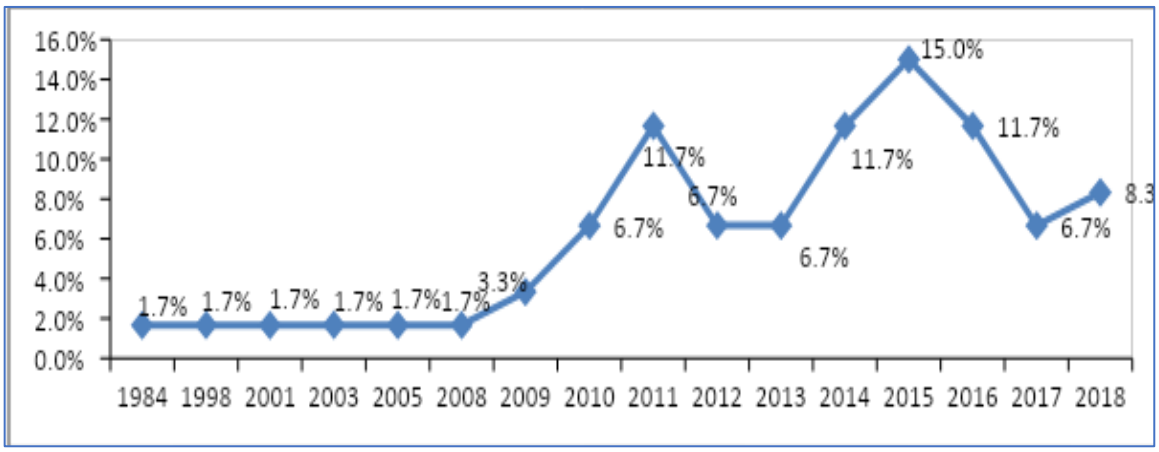

Figure 2: Publication Years

Forms of Citizen Participation

The literature describes two basic forms of citizen participation direct citizen participation & indirection citizen participation. The following table shows two basic forms of citizen participation. Direct citizen participation was discussed in 63.3% of the articles and indirect participation was discussed in 35% of the articles and 1.7% of the articles discussed barriers to citizen participation or reasons for citizen non-participation.

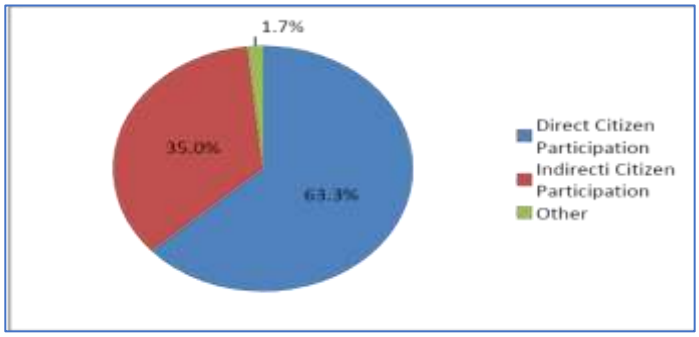

Figure 3: Forms of citizen participation

Forms of Direct Citizen Participation

Direct citizen participation means that citizens are being part of the decision making or policy making process and they can influence the decision. There are number of ways that citizens used to participate in government affairs at community level. Literature discussed direct citizen participation in the following forms;

1. Citizen participation by the appointment of citizens to committees or commissions
2. Citizen participation in budget process
3. Citizen participation in decision making process (developmental projects)
4. Participatory planning process
5. Participation in local elections
6. Citizen participation in public meetings

The following figure describes different forms of citizen participation discussed in literature.

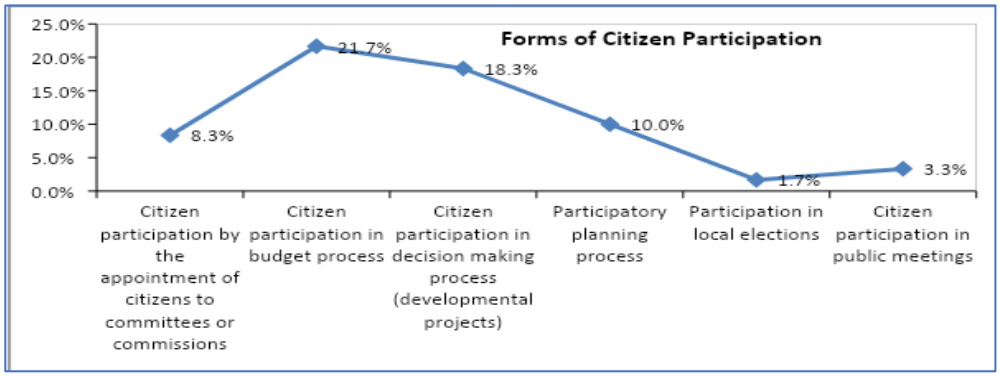

Figure 4: Forms of direct citizen participation

Appointment of Citizens to Committees or Commissions

Appointment of citizens into committees or commissions is one of the forms of direct citizen participation at community level (Dougherty & Easton, 2011; Hendriks, Bolitho, & Foulkes, 2013; Kwon & Jeon, 2017). 8.3% of the articles discussed citizen participation in the form citizens' appointment into committees or commissions. This ensures citizen involvement and creates a sense of responsibility in citizen. These committees formed of volunteer citizens who have developed the skills to manage public assets like sporting fields, public halls or they have expertise in public issues (Hendriks et al., 2013). Through these committees citizens are engaged in decision making at community level.

In Victoria, Australia, a number of delegated committees composed of citizens are formed to manage and perform administrative services at local level but they have limited power to influence the decision making process (Hendriks et al., 2013). In Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, 75% of the local municipalities have appointed volunteer citizens at local level in their government structure (Dougherty & Easton, 2011). Citizen participation in delegated committees also ensures transparency in different developmental projects carried by governmental officials (Kwon & Jeon, 2017). Citizen participation in delegated committees is being practiced in Torbat-Heydarieh, Iran (Mohammadi, Norazizan, & Nikkhah, 2018), Gujranwala, Pakistan (Rafique & Khoo, 2018), California (Kwon & Jeon, 2017), Victoria, Australia (Hendriks et al., 2013) and Southwestern Pennsylvania municipality (Dougherty & Easton, 2011).

Citizen Participation in Budget Process

Through participation in budgeting process, citizens have the opportunity to negotiate the distribution of the public resources in various factors (Rios, Benito, & Bastida, 2017). 21.7% of the articles discussed citizen participation as participatory budgeting. Participatory budget process not only increases transparency in financial matters but it also increased citizen participation in resource allocation (Rios et al., 2017). Within different United States e.g. Chicago, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; and the City of Boston, Massachusetts participating budgeting through social media is practiced at municipal level (Gordon, Osgood, & Boden, 2017).

Citizen's participation in budgeting process creates opportunities for citizens to unveil their areas of interest in front of government and in return government has better options to reshape the financial resources according to the needs of the people. In Congo, citizen participation is used to priorities the needs of the community in service delivery and transparency in financial matter was secured due to increased citizen participation in financial matters (Martin, 2015). Participatory budgeting process is being practiced at community level in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, USA (Liao, 2018), Florida (Williamson & Scicchitano, 2014), US & South Korea (Sojin Kim & Schachter, 2013), Lincoln, Nebraska (Herian, Hamm, Tomkins, & Zillig, 2012), Switzerland (Ladner & Fiechter, 2012), New Jersey (Zhang & Liao, 2011), Victoria, Australia (Kluvers & Pillay, 2009), Burlington and Topeka (Franklin & Ebdon, 2005) and Porto Alegre & Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Souza, 2001).

Citizen Participation in Decision Making Process (Developmental Projects)

Citizen participation in decision making process for the purses of developmental projects at the time of implementation is another important form of citizen participation which is being practiced around the globe. Citizen participation in decision making process creates a sense of responsibility in community and it ensures the transparency in developmental projects at local government level. It also helps to build trust on government at community level. Citizen participation in decision making process is being

practiced at community level in Bangladesh (Waheduzzaman, As-Saber, & Hamid, 2018), province of Barcelona, Spain (Salvador & Ramio, 2011) and thirty OECD and MERCOSUR local governments (Yetano, Royo, & Acerete, 2010).

Participatory Planning Process

Participation of citizens in planning ensures citizens priorities in their community at government level. Citizens are required to participate in annual planning process at local councils (Cheyne, 2015). This helps to increase communication between citizens and politicians at community level. Participatory planning process is being practiced in New Zealand (Cheyne, 2015), Kenya (Sheely, 2015), Netherlands (de Graaf, van Hulst, & Michels, 2015), Norway (Reitan, Gustafsson, & Blekesaune, 2015), UK (Lawton & Macaulay, 2014) and Santa Monica, California (Shearer, 1984).

Participation in Local Elections

Citizen participation in local elections is one of the direct and one of the basic forms of citizen participation (Mosley & Grogan, 2013). Through elections people elect political leadership. People involvement or participation is measured through voter turn-out rate and election campaigns (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978). Citizen participation in local elections is being practiced in all those countries where democratic practices are strong.

Citizen Participation in Public Meetings

Citizen participation in public meetings is another form of direct citizen participation. Citizens participate in different meetings held by local council to discuss the different issues of the community. Active participation in this type of meeting by citizens shows a sense of responsibility and belongings with community. These meetings establish a continuous interaction between local community and local government officials. This is being practiced in province of Barcelona (Salvador & Ramio, 2011) and thirty OECD and MERCOSUR local governments (Yetano et al., 2010).

Indirect forms of Citizen Participation

Indirect forms of citizen participation include those forms in which citizens are not directly involved in decision making process or there is no direct consultation with citizens before taking or implementing any decision. There are different forms of indirect citizen participation discussed in literature which include the followings;

1) Indirect citizen participation through complaints
2) Indirect citizen participation through feed back
3) Indirect citizen participation in form of informing citizens

The following figure shows three types of indirect citizen participation. 8.3% of the articles discussed indirect citizen participation in form of complaints, 18.3% in terms of feedback and only 8.3% of the articles discussed indirect citizen participation through informing citizens.

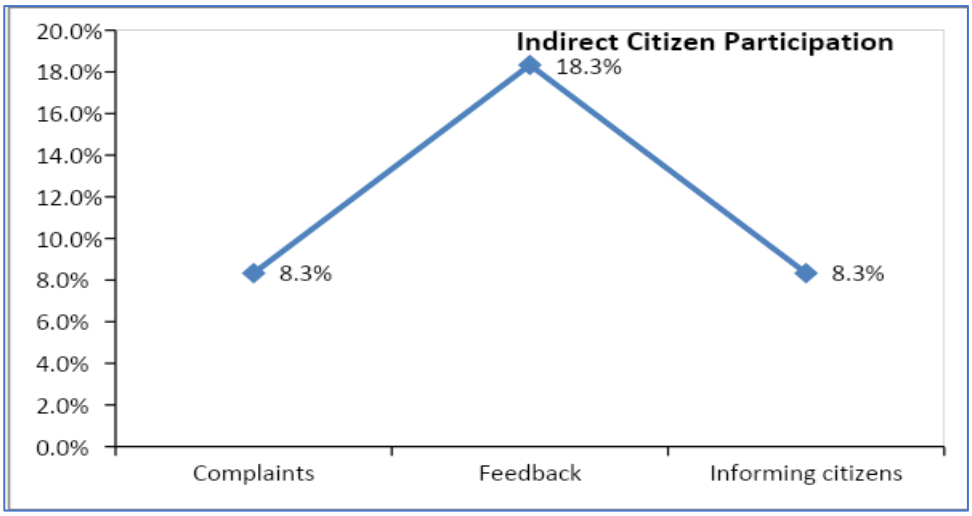

Figure 5: Forms of Indirect citizen participation

Indirect citizen participation through complaints

Indirect citizen participation through complaints include all those complaints which are logged through any online portal, telephone calls, or written complaints regarding any issue or problems. In Boston & San Francisco, citizens can register their complaints using online complaint portal 311 system (Clark & Guzman, 2017). In Peter Thijssen and Wouter Van Dooren, people can register their complaints and suggestions using phone call regarding community problem (Kurniawan & de Vries, 2015),. Indirect citizen participation through complaints is being practiced in Boston & San Francisco (Clark & Guzman, 2017), Deurne district in the city of Antwerp, Belgium (Thijssen & Van Dooren, 2016), Municipality of Enschede, Netherlands (Kurniawan & de Vries, 2015), Wales, UK (Kaehne & Taylor, 2016) and US (Desouza & Bhagwatwar, 2014).

Indirect Citizen Participation through Feedback

Through feedback citizen register their response against any activity which may include suggestions or improvement or their satisfaction level. Feedback enables government officials to know the response of the citizens. Feedback can be given through online portal, telephone call or written feedback against ongoing activity. This also shows the connectivity of citizens with current development in the community. This is being practiced in Guangdong Province, China (Yan & Ting, 2018), Tokyo, Japan (Noda, 2017), Federation Broekpolder in the Dutch municipality of Vlaardingen (Edelenbos, van Meerkerk, & Koppenjan, 2017), Belo Horizonte, a Brazilian municipality (Pozzebon, Cunha, & Coelho, 2016), Kyrgyzstan (Kasymova & Schachter, 2014), US (Li & Feeney, 2014), South Korea (Soonhee Kim & Lee, 2012), Sweden (Blomqvist & Bergman, 2010), Catalonia (Borge, Colombo, & Welp, 2009), Australia (Petriwskyj, Warburton, Everingham, & Cuthill, 2014) and Norway (Askim & Hanssen, 2008).

Indirect Citizen Participation in form of Informing Citizens

Informing citizens regarding decisions, policy making process or any developmental initiative taken by government officials is included in indirect citizen participation. This is the basic form of citizen participation in which citizens don't participate actively in decision making process but they act passively. Government officials inform community members regarding their progress and performance. This process

can shape different forms like, informing through social media or print media. This form of citizen participation is being practiced in Bangladesh (Waheduzzaman & As-Saber, 2015), UK (Coleman & Firmstone, 2014), Denver, Colorado; the city of Derby, Kansas; guilford County, North Carolina; Metro Nashville and Davidson County, tennessee; and the city of Vancouver, Washington (Woolum, 2011) and Romania (Pascaru & Butiu, 2010).

Reasons for Citizen Non-participation

Citizen participation in decision making process or indirect citizen participation is a voluntarily act and it shows citizens interest in the affairs of the government. Citizen participation ensures continuous interaction between political leadership and citizens at community level. Citizens know their actual problems and priorities. By engaging citizens, political leadership build strong connections at grass root level. All citizens don't actively participate in decision making process due to several reasons. Only 1.8% of the articles discussed the reasons of non-participation which are given below;

1) If citizens feel that their efforts would be useless, then they don't participate.
2) Due to lack of time, citizens don't participate.
3) Poor legislative base
4) Lack of knowledge of legislation
5) Citizens have no interest to participate
6) Threats or resistance from the authorities in case o participation
7) Lack of like-minded persons

Why Citizen Participation Failed?

If policy or decisions have already been taken then it is not possible to engage citizens actively (Coleman & Firmstone, 2014) because people believe that their participation will be useless. Therefore, it is important to engage citizens in policy or decision making process before taking initiative. In this scenario citizen will feel a sense of belongings with political leadership and they will try to actively participate.

Motives for Citizen Participation

There are number of ways which can help to motivate citizen participation or they act as a catalyst to increase citizen participation. First, it needs to understand that citizen participation is a process to educate public through informing and establishing continuous interaction with citizens. Second, citizen participation is a process to empower citizens and to make partners in the decision making process. Third, citizen participation is needed to be considered as consulting with public who know their problems and issues regarding mini publics or board of entity (Coleman & Firmstone, 2014).

Conclusion

Good governance attributed that policy should be made openly and with collaboration of those people who are going to affect (Folscher, Krafchik, & Shapiro, 2000). Citizen involvement in policy making or decision making process increases the transparency at community and government level and it helps to build strong relationship with local political leadership. Different forms of citizen participation are being practiced around the globe. The following figure 6 shows a brief outline of division of different forms of citizen participation.

Limitations & Future Directions

This study was only intended to explore different forms of citizen participation. Citizen participation enables citizens to register their voice at government level and in return political leadership able to know the priorities of the community. How citizen participation can influence and mold the decisions of political leadership, what are the intended benefits of citizen participation at community level and is there any relationship between leadership styles and extent of citizen participation, are further needed to explore.

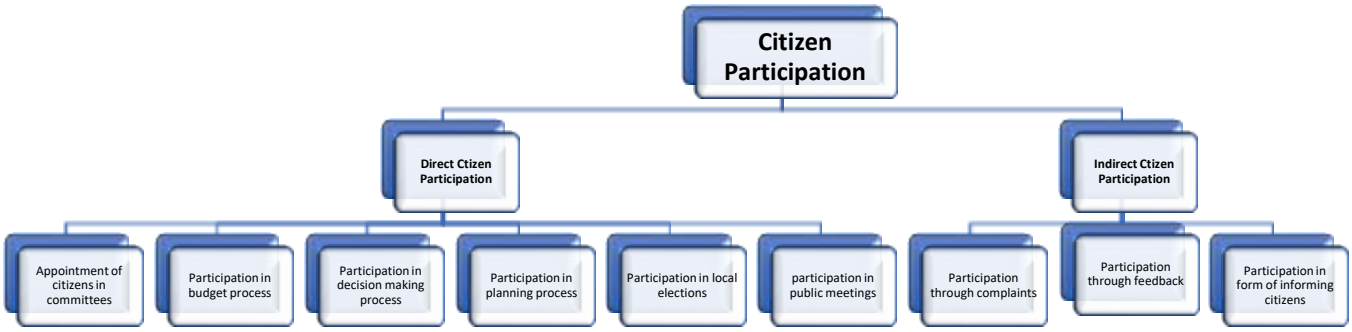

Figure 6: Citizen Participation

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