

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING: A CASE STUDY OF SUBANG
JAYA**

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**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING:
A CASE STUDY OF SUBANG JAYA**

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

JKP	:	Jawatankuasa Penduduk
JPBD	:	Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa
MPSJ	:	Majlis Perbandaran Subang Jaya
OSC	:	One Stop Centre
TCPA	:	Town and Country Planning Act

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PENYERTAAN AWAM DALAM PERANCANGAN : KAJIAN KES SUBANG JAYA

ABSTRAK

Penyertaan awam dalam perancangan telah wujud sejak amalan perancangan moden diwujudkan di Malaysia. Namun demikian, pada ketika itu, penyertaan awam hanya dibenarkan setelah sesebuah draf rancangan pembangunan disediakan. Akta perancangan moden, iaitu Akta Perancangan Bandar dan Desa 1976 telah membawa dimensi baru dalam amalan perancangan bandar di Malaysia. Melalui pelbagai pembaharuan yang diperkenalkan sejak 1976 sehingga 2001, Akta tersebut telah mengalami penambahbaikan dalam amalan perancangan termasuk memperkenalkan pendekatan yang lebih sistematik dalam melibatkan golongan awam dengan cara yang lebih efektif. Namun begitu, di sebalik penambahbaikan yang diperkenalkan, banyak kajian dalam penyertaan awam menyatakan bahawa kadar penyertaan awam dalam perancangan masih lagi rendah. Berikutan itu, terdapat kecenderungan di kalangan penyelidik untuk mengkaji keberkesanan mekanisme penyertaan awam dan kebanyakannya mengenengahkan tentang masalah kekurangan usaha dan inisiatif yang dilakukan oleh pihak berkuasa perancangan dalam menganjurkan program penyertaan awam yang berkesan. Namun demikian, persoalan yang wajar dikupas adalah, wajarkah pihak berkuasa dipersalahkan ekoran daripada kurangnya sambutan daripada golongan awam? Sekiranya pihak berkuasa bersedia untuk memberi sepenuh komitmen untuk melibatkan golongan awam, adakah keadaan ini akan menyebabkan golongan awam lebih berminat untuk melibatkan diri dalam perancangan?

Menggunakan pendekatan “mixed-methods”, penyelidikan ini mendapati bahawa keakraban sosial dan perasaan positif terhadap persekitaran kejiranan memainkan peranan dalam mempengaruhi seseorang untuk melibatkan diri dalam proses perancangan tempatan. Kajian ini telah membuktikan bahawa terdapat perbezaan dalam ciri-ciri kapita sosial di kalangan penduduk yang aktif dan kurang aktif dalam perancangan.

Selain mengkaji corak dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penyertaan awam, penyelidikan ini juga cuba menghuraikan isu-isu yang timbul dalam proses penyertaan awam samada secara formal dan tidak formal. Di pihak kerajaan, antara isu yang timbul adalah dari segi keterhadan peluang untuk penyertaan awam secara efektif akibat daripada kualiti data yang rendah, ketidaksesuaian masa program penyertaan dan kekurangan bimbingan daripada pihak perancang kepada orang awam. Di pihak komuniti pula, walaupun secara amnya kadar penyertaan awam dilihat agak memberangsangkan, namun hasil penelitian mendapati bahawa terdapat sekelompok individu yang mendominasi proses penyertaan awam dan mempunyai agenda tersendiri yang mungkin tidak mencerminkan kehendak keseluruhan komuniti setempat.

Kesimpulan daripada kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa pembentukan strategi untuk meningkatkan keberkesanan proses penyertaan awam pada masa hadapan bukan sahaja harus terhad kepada memperbaiki mekanisme penyertaan awam sedia ada, namun penekanan juga harus diberikan untuk memperkasakan kapita sosial dalam masyarakat.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING : A CASE STUDY OF SUBANG JAYA

ABSTRACT

The practice of involving public in planning has been in place since the birth of modern town in planning in Malaysia. However at that time, public involvement was only restricted only after a draft plan is completed. The modern planning Act, ie the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 has given a new dimensions in urban planning practice in Malaysia. Throughout the many amendments that had been taking place since 1976 right up to 2001, the Act has improvised the ways of improving the urban planning practice as a whole which includes a more systematic approach on how to involve the public in urban planning process more effectively. However, despite these provisions, past studies on public participation in Malaysia highlight very low response from the public in planning process. In response, there is a growing interest among scholars in studying the effectiveness of the existing public participation mechanism. The previous studies mainly address the lack of effort and initiatives of the planning authorities in organizing effective participation programmes. However, the question arises from here is that, should the authorities be solely blamed for these low turn-up rates? If the government adopts full willingness to involve public, will that translate to higher respond from the public?

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study found that social connectedness among members of a community and positive feeling towards neighbourhood do have influence in making people to be more participative in planning. It is evident from this study that some elements of social capital differed significantly between active and less active residents.

Apart from analyzing the patterns and determinants of participation, this study explains the issues that arise when people do participate either in formal and informal ways. On the government part, some of the issues include lack of opportunities given to the public to participate effectively due to the poor quality of data, poor timing for the participation program and lack of guidance from the planners to the public. On the community part, even though the records of participation seem to be quite impressive, however upon further scrutiny, some of the participation processes are dominated by certain groups pursuing certain agenda that may not reflect the interests of the community members at large. This study concludes that to make participation works, future strategies should not be limited to improve the participation mechanism, but emphasis should be equally given on social capital building.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Principle 1 of Rio Declaration reads “Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development” (1992). The declaration, among other things, put emphasis on providing platforms to allow the general public to be included in decision-making process by encouraging public awareness and making information widely available. Under the umbrella of sustainable development, many strategies and themes have been introduced. The Local Agenda 21, good urban governance and the most recent one in Malaysia, “people first”, as well as “people-centric” – all these are emphasizing on the importance of creating opportunities for the lay people to get involved in governmental decision-making process. In planning context, the process of involving public is an integral part of the planning decision-making and policy-making process.

Many studies have been directed to study the rationale, implementation and effectiveness of public participation process in planning. This thesis does not only rehearse those research dimensions, but seek to link perspectives on participation by focusing on the concept of social capital. Examining through the lens of social capital, this study attempts to understand whether there are aspects of social capital that explain the participative attitude among the residents. Apart from studying the participants and the non-participants, this study examines the emerging issues when people do participate.

This chapter provides a general introduction of this study which includes a brief discussion on the concept of participation, the way it is being practised in Malaysia, the

problem statements that motivate the direction of the study, the main research questions explored in the study and the scope of study.

1.2 Public Participation in Planning

In general, public participation refers to the practice of consulting and involving members of the public in decision-making of organizations or institutions responsible for policy development. The concept of public participation is seen to be able to diminish the line that separating the urban managers and the public, thus promoting shared responsibilities between the government and those being governed, and also shifting the accountabilities of urban decisions to the public. At the outset, it is generally believed that participation activities help in promoting better relationships between local authorities and public in terms of enhancing the understanding between both parties.

In recent years, there has been a growing feeling of resentment portrayed by the public (Malay Mail, 2008) on decisions made by the local authorities especially decisions that are related to land development in urban areas (Sewell and Coppock, 1977). It is frequently discussed in the local newspapers on residents' complaints on governments' decisions regarding land developments and the most common issue discussed is the conversion of parks (Nadeswaran, 2007, Malay Mail, 2008, M and Menon, 2011) and public utility lands (Chan, 2011, Lim, 2011) into residential or commercial development. Many raised that some of the development projects were carried out without their knowledge and some questioned the local authorities credibility for their inability to gauge the impacts of the controversial developments towards the community (Sulaiman Mahbob, 2006, Singh, 2007, Goh, 2008c, Ramadas, 2011).

These disputes between the local authorities and residents hint the feeling of distrust of the general public on their representatives.

The disputes between the public and the local authorities may be reduced and avoided if only the public knows what is happening in the planning permission department. Public oppositions towards planning decisions is fuelled by the fact that the public is always kept in the dark about what is happening in their neighbourhoods (Connor, 1985). Connor reiterates that it is normal for people to resist changes when they do not understand the goals of the proposed changes to their living environment.

Local authorities in Malaysia, which is functioning as local planning authorities, have had long statutory responsibilities in involving the public especially in land use planning and this had been clearly spelled under the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (TCPA). Under the provision of TCPA, public participation is mandatory during the formulation of development plans and after the plans are approved (Goh, 1990). In general, there are two types of plan to regulate urban planning – the structure plans (not to be mistaken with structural plans) and local plan. While the former consist of broad bush policy, the latter contains detail plans on how to achieve the policies and goals stated in the structure plans (Goh, 2008b).

For local authorities with no local plans, the opportunities to participate are available at planning decision-making level. The TCPA have laid out a clear procedure on how to involve the public in the process of planning decision-making. For areas with no local plans, the local authorities must issue a written notice to all neighbouring property owners on the details of the developer's proposal. The local authorities must make the neighbouring land owners know of their rights to object to the proposal. The word neighbouring lands, according to the TCPA Section 20(8) refers to "lands located

within a distance of 200 meters from the boundary of the land” (The Town and Country Planning Department, 2010, p. 47). By emphasizing the term “owners of the neighbouring lands” (The Town and Country Planning Department, 2010, p.46) this practice may sidelines other possible stakeholders that may be affected by the proposed development such as tenants who live nearby, the passerbyes who may be affected by related activities associated with the proposal such as closure of roads, and perhaps the students of a school situated near the site. This provision also seems to be limiting the rights to participate only to those assumed to be injuriously affected by the development. It should be reminded here that sometimes a bad planning decision may have negative repercussions not only to those living nearby but may transcend to the wider segment of the community. Associating with this problem, there are studies attempt to study on the legitimacy of the stakeholders in planning issues (Wengert, 1971, Smith, 2003, Koontz, 2005, Sep).

From past studies, it was noted that most of these publicity exercises receive lukewarm response from the public (Nurazizi Mokhtar, 1983, Halimaton Saadiah and Gunasilan, 1984, Hamdan K., 1985, Khalid Mohd Amin, 1992, Zainuddin Muhammad, 1992, Harunnarashid Mohd Nor, 1994, Juliana Mohamad, 2004 , Kamariah Dola and Dolbani Mijan, 2006, Dasimah O. and Oliver L., 2009). Goh (1990) emphasized that one of the pre-requisites of is vital to ensure the success of public participation is that the public should be knowledgeable about planning process. From general observation and experience, it can be said that many people do not know the current urban planning practice. This scenario poses a question on how do we want to achieve an effective public participation when the public are oblivious about their rights to participate in planning. This can be associated with the lack of initiatives of the local authority in educating the public on how they can be involved. It has been observed that most participation exercises carried out in Malaysia were done in very minimal

manner just to satisfy the minimum requirements set by the law. This is contrary to the practices in more developed countries that have taken serious initiatives involving the public by establishing citizen juries, planning cells and through more innovative exercises such as organizing workshops to allow deliberations exercises to be carried out.

Thus far, the discussion had been limited to the weaknesses of the participation mechanism in the present planning system. The critiques thus far, have in a way direct the blame on the government for lacking in initiatives in reaching out to the widest spectrum of communities to participate. The questions this brings to mind is: if the whole participation system is rectified, if the government adopts full willingness to involve public, will the quality of participation improved? Do people really want to participate? Do people really care about what is going on the neighbourhood? Can the blame be solely placed on the local planning authority in the event of low turn up rate in a participation program?

Past studies have come out with many possible explanation on barriers of participation (Downs, 1972, Mazmanian and Nienaber, 1974, Sewell and Coppock, 1977, Berry et al., 1993) and one major barrier to quality participation lies in the public themselves which is to get people to participate (O'Riordan, 1977). A study done by the Department of Town and Country Planning in Malaysia (2006) as cited by Kamariah and Dolbani (2006), less than 12 percent of the local population participated in the publicity of various draft local plans and less than 8 percent participated in the publicity of draft structure plans. This implies that the population of Malaysia is made up of non-participants.

One of the factors associated with this phenomenon is the fact that people nowadays are leading more individualized and impersonal lifestyle and this has result them to be disassociated with their neighbourhood and neighbours (Berry et al., 1993). People in urban areas spend more time in their workplaces, thus making them to feel more connected to their professional commitment at workplaces. The same phenomenon is observed in Malaysia (Anwar Fazal, 2007), in which he feels that massive and rapid development that have been taking place in urban areas in Malaysia are causing the communities to be shattered. He further elaborates that one of the biggest challenges in Malaysia is to build a sense of community and cooperation in the midst of community destruction. The absence of social connectedness, which some describe as social capital¹, seems to be the a possible answer on why it so difficult to get people to be involved in matters that affect their living environment. While this brief explanation require further probe and confirmation, the similar findings from hundreds of empirical evidences (though may not necessarily directed to participation in urban planning) suggest that communities with substantial stock of social capital tend to positively influence the communities such as better schools, more rigorous economic development, lower crime and effective government (Putnam, 1995). The notion of social capital that stresses on social networks, interactions, trust and reciprocity are the basis that foster sturdy social connections among members in a community. With strong connections and dense networks of interactions, it develop the “I” into the “we”(Putnam, 1995) – the kind of attitude vital to ensure people to work collectively in influencing or perhaps, challenging local authority’s decision.

¹ Social Capital is described by Putnam (1995) as features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

1.3 Problem Statement

While there have been a great accumulation of studies on public participation at policy formulation level (macro planning) in Malaysia as mentioned in the previous section, however very little has been discovered about the process of involving public in the planning process at site planning decision level (micro planning). This represents a serious gap in the knowledge required in understanding public participation in the whole context of urban planning. It should be highlighted here that there are still many urban areas that are not covered by any local plan. According to the latest statistic released by the Federal Town and Country Planning Department at the time of writing, out of 30 draft local plans that have been executed under RMK 5 to RMK 8, only 11 local plans have been gazetted. This statistic suggests that for many localities, the inclusion of public in the planning process happen at project decision-making level which is through public hearings for immediate neighbours to make objections. It is at this level of public participation that receives lack attention from the scholars and experts in urban planning, at least in Malaysia.

Subang Jaya is chosen as the case study for this research. During the data collection stage of the study, Subang Jaya and USJ communities were yet to have their own local plan. The said local plan, called Draf Rancangan Tempatan MBSA, MPPJ and MPSJ 2003-2020 (previously known as Draf Rancangan Tempatan Daerah Petaling dan Sebahagian Daerah Klang), was only approved and gazetted by the State Planning Committee in May 2010. Thus, since the establishment of the township until mid 2010, the guiding documents in used were the Rancangan Struktur Negeri Selangor 2007, and an outdated Rancangan Tempatan Daerah Petaling (1996) which was adopted by the Majlis Perbandaran Petaling Jaya (MPPJ), the previous local authority of Subang Jaya before the boundary realignment exercise in 1997 that placed Subang Jaya and its neighbouring areas to be under the newly formed Majlis

Perbandaran Subang Jaya. This represent quite a unique case as the MPSJ- the present local authority, need to stay committed to the policies and decisions made by the previous local authority and the State government, and at the same time facing the pressure in meeting the demands of development and vocal residents.

The selection of Subang Jaya in this study is based on the interesting and successful history of participation in the community. As will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5, the communities of this suburb have an abundant stock of social capital and this fact is proven by the number of residents' alliances such as USJ.com.my, Nwatch, JKP, PPSJ which had been working hand-in-hand in confronting the local council in various planning issues. In many cases, these alliances manage to stop or hold many projects that had been discreetly approved by the local authority.

The fact that the study is conducted during the preparation of the Draft Local Plan for Subang Jaya gives the advantage to the researcher to study the pattern of participation in the whole planning context. This study is envisaged to be able to describe the pattern of participation both at development plan level (macro planning) and at site planning level (micro planning).

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

This study has the following objectives:

1. to determine the extent of participation in the study area;
2. to explore the relationships between social capital and participative attitude;
3. to explore the influence of participation in urban planning;

4. to suggest recommendations and strategies to improve the quality of participation in urban planning context.

The principle research question that this study seeks to address in order to achieve the study objectives is: How and why people respond to participation processes in different planning context? A series of sub-questions have guided the enquiry of this study:

- How do people participate, and to what extent?
- Who participates and who does not?
- What is the nature and magnitude of social capital that exist in these communities, and are there certain forms or aspects of social capital that predict the nature and extent of participation?
- Are the people aware of the things that going on in their neighbourhoods, and are they aware of the opportunities for them to participate whether in formal or in informal channels?
- When the participation exercises take place, how do the participants view and make meaning of the process?

1.5 Scope of the study

This study is principally concerned about how participation processes operate in a real urban context. Using Subang Jaya as the case study, this study explores on the different mechanism of participatory practices both at plan-making level and at planning permission level.

This thesis explores on how far people participate in participation processes. Bearing in mind about the fact that the uninvolved make up the majority of the population in any community, this study will not limit the scope of participation within the formal channels, but include other informal channels of participation such as signing in a petition, participating in demonstration and writing to the representatives about a local planning issue. By looking at both formal and informal channels, the study will not only study the participants but also the non-participants.

Many past studies in developed countries have highlighted some of the variables or factors in a community that explain why some communities have higher level of participation, be it in planning or in general community affairs. Amongst the factors that have been identified as factors that may influence one's preparedness in participating are length of residence (Hampton, 1970, Cohen, 1976), a sense of attachment to one's neighbourhood (Wandersman et al., 1987), community awareness, the degree of trust towards neighbours and government (Dennis, 1977, Peelle, 1988), and the degree of confidence that one's participation will have influence in changing the existing policy or decision (Downs, 1972, Mazmanian and Nienaber, 1974). However, these factors have not been well-researched and tested in the Malaysian context. Thus, this thesis is designed to improve the understanding of the factors from a variety of perspectives and points of participation within the case study communities.

Apart from analyzing the pattern and determinants of participation, this thesis examines the quality of participation in the publicity of the Draft Local Plan for Subang Jaya.

1.6 Research procedure

This thesis uses case study as the main strategy for studying the way the public is involved in the planning of Subang Jaya. For triangulation purposes, a mixed methodological approach was used involving the collection of quantitative data from survey on respondents and semi-structured interviews with key informants. Apart from these two main data sources, the study also utilized other qualitative methods such as participation observation and the community web forum.

The survey was designed to explore various aspects of community life that may have influence on one's attitude towards participation which includes sense of belonging, neighbourliness spirit, civic consciousness and their experiences in participating in planning. The survey is organized into two sections – the first to be answered by all respondents, while the second part is only to be answered by those who took part in the publicity of the Draft Local Plan for Subang Jaya.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the key informants in Subang Jaya who were involved in the public participation process of the Draft Local Plan. The key informants interviewed in this study include politician, community leaders, councillor, NGO, long-time resident and local authority officer. The interviews were done to provide understanding on the barriers of participation and the issues and problems related to public participation particularly regarding to the Draft Local Plan for Subang Jaya.

The results from the quantitative and qualitative investigations were then converged by “comparing and contrasting the different results” (Creswell and Clark, 2007, p. 64) during the interpretation. Findings from the study were then used as basis

to formulate recommendations on how to improve the quantity and quality of public participation practice.

1.7 Thesis organization

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the definition and concepts of public participation within planning context. It provides an overview of some previous studies that deal with participation and justification on the chosen specific area of this study, which is to examine the factors that contribute to participation and analyzing the process of participation.

Chapter Two reviews the literature from the fields of town planning, public administration and political science to identify the importance of public participation which is central to the representative democracy system. It discusses the critical questions related to participation such as understanding the who, why, when and what. It elaborates at length the concept of social capital and suggests on examining the factors of participation through the lens of social capital.

Chapter Three presents the research strategy and methods for collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. It discusses the overall research design, the main paradigm associated with the mixed-methods inquiry and present arguments for choosing the single case study as a research strategy. This chapter discusses at length the methods and analytical strategy used in this thesis.

Chapter Four discusses the urban planning system in Malaysia, the way public participation is practiced, the process of planning decision-making and the role of appointed representatives in the process.

Chapter Five offers a context for the case to be examined, presenting a detailed description of the Subang Jaya community, including a brief history of the township, its local authority and participation arenas that were made available to the community.

Chapter Six provides empirical evidences from the study. The main findings presented in this chapter were derived from the survey done to the population, but the discussion is corroborated with the evidences from the qualitative sources such from the interviews from key informants, discussion on the web forum, blog posts and newspaper reports. The main objective of this thesis is to understand the characteristics of the active, less active and not active residents by looking at their demographic and social capital variables, The main task of this chapter is to seek relationships between social capital which is characterized by strong relationship and positive emotions towards the community and the neighbourhood with interest to participate in planning.

Chapter Seven provides an insight on what happen when people do participate. It presents an analysis on the quality of the participation processes from the perspectives of the participants. The dilemmas and issues associated with public participation exercises are also examined and elaborated in the chapter.

In Chapter Eight, a summary of the main findings is offered. It recognizes the potential of Subang Jaya as a modeled township where the principles of democracy are seen being at work. Additionally, it proposes a series of recommendations to pursue better quality participation. This thesis closes with some suggested directions for future research.

2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a review of literature relevant to the study of public participation in urban planning. Literature from the fields of urban planning, urban management and public / citizen / community participation have been reviewed to identify some of the concepts used to understand public participation practices in the process of decision-making in urban areas. In the first section, the literature exploring the congruence between democracy and public participation is reviewed, and the differences between representative democracy and participatory democracy as well as their connotation on what constitutes public participation are elaborated. The discussion will further explore on defining the meanings of participation and exploring what is meant by public. The point of departure in this chapter is the discussion on social capital and its key concepts and how it relates to participation. The final section of the study deals with the problems of evaluation participation exercises.

2.2 The congruence between democracy and public participation

Participation is the essence of democracy. For many people, the word democracy has connotation with citizens' rights to vote and rights to get involved in governmental decision-making. There are two main strands of democratic theory, one is Madisonian representative democracy and the other one is Jeffersonian participatory or direct democracy (Woods, 2004). The essence and fundamentals of these two types of democratic theory or belief provides different perspectives on to what extent the general public should participate in governmental decision-making.

Pateman (1970) links participation to the 'classical' theorists of democracy, which was mostly drawn from the work of Rousseau, Mills and Bentham whom she calls theorists of participatory democracy. Theorists of participatory democracy believes that public participation is built around the central assertion that the individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another (Avramoski, 2002). For the believers of participatory democracy, the existence of representative institution is not sufficient for democracy and it does not promote for participatory society to exist. A democratic system should provide equal participation in making decisions. The function of participation in Pateman's theory should be an educative one as well it enables the participants or the lay citizens to gain practice in democratic skills and procedures.

Participatory requires public actions by citizens (Lauber and Knuth, 2000). In participatory democratic system, citizens do not only elect leaders, but also actively participate in policy making with their leaders. By participating, it would create chances for every member of a society to create a better community (Avramoski, 2002).

The concept of participatory democracy could be traced back to have started its root in early American cities in the forms of town assembly where all citizens in the community got together to decide on issues (Christensen and Robinson, 1980). Due to the expansion of these frontier villages, it was getting difficult in getting everybody to actively participate in decisions, thus people began to delegate their involvement to representatives.

Participatory democracy as outlined by Berry, Portney and Thomson (1993) nourishes the democratic spirits of individuals. By participating, citizens learn "to weigh interests not his own; to be guided, in case of conflicting claims, by another rule

than his private partialities; to apply, at every turn, principles and maxims which have for their reason of existence the general good”, (Mill, in Berry et. al., 1993, p. 5).

Participatory democracy is sometimes known as direct democracy or deliberative democracy (Woods, 2004). Direct and deliberative democracy, calls for a fuller use and development of opportunities for direct participation by citizens in issue identification, policy formulation and decision-making. Deliberative democracy works by the inclusion of the public in formal roles in governance (Woods, 2004). The fundamental key of direct democracy is “free public reasoning among equals” (Cohen, 1999, p.186). He further stresses that for a direct democracy process to be successful, it needs three principles: the principle of deliberative inclusions, the principle of the common good, and the principle of participation.

Michels calls deliberative democracy a different name – interactive policy-making. Sharing the same essence of deliberative democracy, interactive policy-making gives an active role to multiple parties to jointly come to a decision (Michels, 2003). He reiterates that interactive policy-making is in particular useful in circumstances with many stakeholders with conflicting interests, complex issues and many alternative solutions to the problem.

Under representative democracy, the act of participation is limited to voting. Citizens elect their leaders, and the leaders are supposedly to make decisions that are best represent the interest of their constituents. In making such decisions, the leaders use two major criteria: (1) what they think their constituents want them to do, and (2) what they (the representatives) think its best (Hampton, 1977). The proponents of representative democracy often assert that “individual citizens do not have the time,

knowledge, or interest to participate in civil society activities” (Overdeest, 2000). Thus the decisions regarding the local issues are best to be handled by those in power.

In Malaysia, all citizens share the experience of representative democracy. The Malaysian Constitution provides the framework in which in every electoral district, there are two candidates who are deemed qualified to represent the citizens in the Houses, that is, the State Legislative Council and the House of Representatives. The total membership of the State Legislative Assembly varies from state to state and this has to be determined and identified by the Election Commission authorities. The same goes for the membership of the House of Representatives. Robert Dahl (1998) in Woods (2004) outlines the requirements of formal representative democracy as including the following six components:

1. Elected officials;
2. Free, fair and frequent elections;
3. Freedom of expression;
4. Alternative sources of information;
5. Associational autonomy; and
6. Inclusive citizenship (Dahl, 1985).

According to O’Riordan (1977), the success of representative democracy is depending upon principles of responsiveness and accountability. However in the present changing times, representative democracy may not turn out to be such an appealing concept (O’Riordan, 1977). It is observed that in this changing times where information transmission has become so effortlessly easy, people are becoming more educated and vocal. They are more informed of their rights and start to questions on decisions made by the representatives. They no longer leave the decisions, especially

those that affect them directly, in the good hands of their leaders. Being more informed, the citizens demand for participation which ultimately demand for some sharing of power. Thus the question lies on how to move on from the imperfect system of representative democracy to an idealistic participatory democracy.

The system of representative democracy within social movements and community organizing stresses the important element of the interplay between the official representatives, and the neighbourhood or community organization, the non-governmental organizations, churches, business associations and other interest groups that have their own by-laws and elected representatives (Woods, 2004). Woods further states that the role of the neighbourhood and other types of organizations ensure that the elected or other public leaders have a vote or have a voice at the table in public decision-making. This is especially crucial in a community with diverse race and ethnicity, especially those that have been historically disadvantaged, to have their interests represented at the decision-making table.

The congruence between democracy and public participation can be clearly seen by the looking at the rationales or pressures placed by the public to be included in governmental decision-making process. Sewell and Coppock (1977) offer explanations for the pressure for an expanded role for the public in planning by categorizing it to two categories – philosophical and pragmatic considerations. Philosophical consideration is related primarily to the general belief that in any democratic society, every individual has the right to be informed and to express his views on matters which affect him personally. Pragmatic considerations cover chiefly the failure of plans or decisions to identify public preferences correctly, resulting some individuals to feel alienated from the decision made by the government.

Stoker (1997) articulately offers explanations on five rationales that provide a normative understanding of the purposes of public participation. The rationales are instrumental participation, communitarian participation, politics of the consumer, politics of presence and deliberative democracy.

Stoker's instrumental perspective on participation echoes what Sewell and Coppock (1977) emphasize in their philosophical considerations of the need for public participation, that every individual in a democratic society has every right to express and pursue their own self interest. The role of the government is to safeguard the freedom of the individual by providing the opportunities for the interested individuals to participate.

Stoker's second rationale on participation places emphasis not on individual self-interest but on the community as a whole and the duties and rights associated with securing collective well-being. The role of the governments, in this context, is to positively facilitate participation by the maximum number of individuals (Stoker, 1997).

The perspective of the politics of the consumer builds on public choice theory to emphasize the rights of consumers to express their preferences (Stoker, 1997). This perspective is shared by Prachett (1999) that believe the current preoccupation of involving public in decision-making is a result of consumer agenda of the 1980s and attempts by public service to emulate private sector management techniques.

Stoker's fourth rationale of public participation, the politics of presence, builds on the realization of the existence of some minority groups that is continuously being sidelined by the existing political processes. This perspective emphasizes that it is not

adequate to be provided with opportunities to be heard, rather the interests of the excluded should be given priority consideration.

All the four perspectives introduced by Stoker place emphasis on rights of individuals / groups in a democratic society. However, his fifth perspective, the deliberative democracy, attempts to challenge the focus on interests, instead it is placed on the creation of institutional contexts and practices which promote open dialogue and encourage the emergence of shared solutions through the uncovering of new forms of knowledge and understandings (Gutman and Thompson, 1996). In this perspective, active involvement of a wide range of participants, often referred as stakeholders, is fundamental (Campbell and Marshall, 2000).

Strong democracy is another term used by some authors which have the same connotation as participatory democracy. Strong democracy, according to Barber (1984) is “self-government by citizens rather than representative government in the name of citizens” (Barber, 2004, p. 151). In a strong democracy system, active citizens govern themselves directly, not necessarily at every level, but frequently enough in policy-making. He also elaborates that a strong democracy should promote strong citizenship and strong society. The broadening of participatory opportunities can strengthen society by ensuring that all governmental actions are embedded in the society, as opposed to imposed on the society (Thomas, 1995).

Participation of public in governmental decision-making is important to protect individuals from the infringements of government and to allow citizens to scrutinize government decisions (Tickner, 2001). The goal of democratic citizen participation shall enhance the potential affected citizen to get involved directly in the decision-making process and not to become victims of decisions made by the authorities (Renn

et al., 1995) One of the important criteria for evaluating democratic participation mechanism is the accessibility to decision-makers and the ability to influence them (Fiorino, 1990).

Hampton (1977) asserts that it is difficult, and perhaps impossible to draw a line between participatory democracy and representative democracy as both of them lie on a continuum with both types of democracy are at both ends. What we have is a system which in its complexity is a mixture of both. The introduction of public participation techniques into the planning process implies a movement along the continuum from representative to participatory democracy. Hampton likens this opinion as an exercise which has participatory elements within a representative democracy system.

The importance of public participation has been recognized not only in countries adopting democratic system, but it has also been receiving a considerable importance in the socialist countries such as China and Russia. In China, public participation exercises started to take root in the late 1980s in small scale development projects that were initiated and implemented by the international development agencies (Klimova, 2010)². According to Klimova (2010), public participation in environmental planning was first institutionalized in the Environmental Impact Assessment law in the late 1990s. The seriousness of the Chinese government to encourage a more democratic decision-making process is when the Ministry of Land and Resources promulgated provisions in 2004 that make hearings as compulsory in the exercises that involve the formulation of rules and regulatory documents relating to land use, compensation for

² One example that illustrates this is the effort financed by the World Bank in incorporating the disabled people's opinions in an urban transport project in Liaoning as will be discussed in Section 2.6.2 in this Chapter.

land takings and development projects (Horsley, 2009). According to Horsley (2009), these exercises led to the revised 2008 Urban and Rural Planning Law which mandates the publicity of the urban and rural land use plans for not less than 30 days to enable the public to voice out their opinions through participatory mechanisms such as hearings and expert meeting.

In Russia, the opportunities for the public to participate is outlined in Article 28 of the Town Planning Code of the Russian Federation which requires all draft master plans of settlements and urban districts to be exhibited and publicized to the general public for public scrutiny and inspection (Dmitriev, 2010). Despite this provision, a research done by Razumeyko (2009) on public participation in St Petersburg however reveals that in reality, the practice of participation in Russia can only be considered as “public relations” rather than public participation as the ordinary people were not active participants in the decision-making process. In the St Petersburg’s case, as observed by Razumeyko (2009), the citizens were only allowed to make proposals within the goals and objectives that have been pre-determined by the developer.

The discussion in this section points that the concept of participation may be viewed differently from the representative democracy and participatory democracy. In addition, while public participation is a norm in a democratic country, public participation is seen as a remedy to ameliorate the democratic deficit in a socialist country. All these different perspectives of looking at public participation lead to the different interpretations of its meaning and practices.

2.3 Public participation defined

As discussed in the previous section, the concept of participation may be significantly different from the perspective of representative democracy from that of participatory democracy. This in turn has given rise to diversity of practices. Though there is an abundant literature on public participation, whether in the planning field or urban management, it seems like most authors have different perspectives on what participation is all about. The understanding of the range of perspectives of participation is vital as they open up to different objectives, expectations and outcomes.

The existing definitions of participation ranges from “public consultation” to the more specific views that define participation as process of involving public in public policies or decisions. Some public bodies refers “consultation” (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2010, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, 2011) as the catch all term that encompasses various forms of communication and involvement, while some argue that consultation as the weakest form of participation (Smith, 1998, Njoh, 2003). In some cases, the public may participate by simply attending public hearings or briefings and being the passive recipients of information from the governing bodies (Berry et al., 1993, Moynihan, 2003). In some cases, public opinion may be sought through questionnaires or focus groups discussions, but the final decision still lies in the hand of the decision-makers. A more meaningful participation are those that allow public representatives in the process of decision-making such as through public representation on advisory committee. Bass (1995) develops a typology of public participation that illustrates the many types and levels of participation.

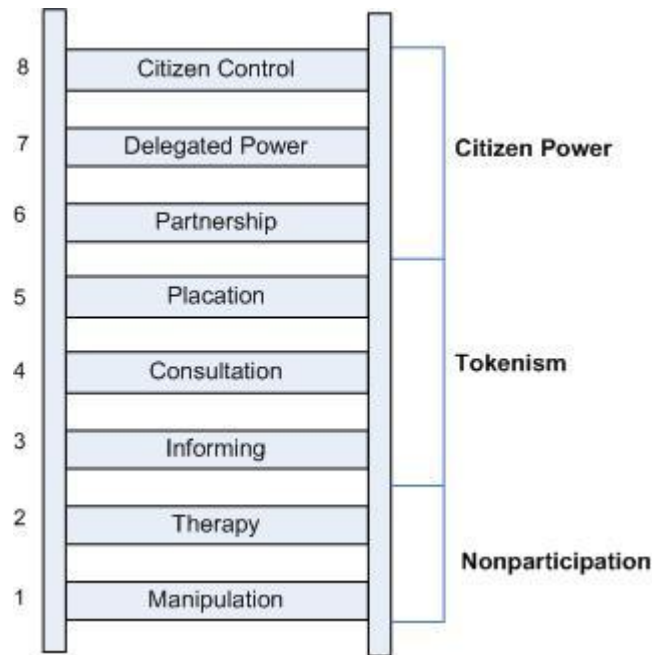
Table 2.1: Typology of participation in policy-making

1. Participants listening (e.g. receiving information from a government PR campaign or open debate).
2. Participants listening and giving information (e.g. through public inquiries, media activities, hotlines)
3. Participants being consulted (e.g. through working groups and meetings held to discuss policy).
4. Participation in analysis and agenda setting (e.g. through multistakeholder groups, roundtables and commissions)
5. Participants in reaching consensus on the main strategy elements (e.g. through national roundtables, parliamentary/select committees, and conflict mediation).
6. Participants involved in decision-making and the policy, strategy or its components.

At each level, participation may be narrow (few actors); or broad (covering all major groups as well as government).

Source: Bass et al., 1995, p.iv.

Arnstein (1969) considers that true participation involves a high level of empowerment of the public and a direct input into the decision-making process. Her ladder of participation differentiates the ranges of participation quite articulately. The ladders starts with the lowest rung in which she equates participation as a mean of manipulating people into thinking that they are actually being involved to the highest rung of which power are devolved to the people. Her ladder of participation, conceptualizes the stages of progression from “pseudo-participation”, or what Arnstein describes as “non-participation type of participation, to the highest rung of citizen control as the highest or the most successful form of participation (Figure 2.1)



Source: Arnstein (1969)

Figure 2.1: Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

The Department of Provincial and Local Government of South Africa (2005) defines public participation as an open and accountable process that allows individuals and groups within selected communities to exchange views and influence decision-making. Steven Schatzow (1977) carefully explains that public participation is distinguished from public influence. According to him, while participation refers to the direct involvement of the public in decision-making through a series of formal and informal mechanisms, it however does not necessarily mean that public influence is exerted as public views and opinions may be ignored by decision-makers. Influence refers to the effect of the public upon decision-making, and may operate even when public does not actually participate in decision-making.

Verba (1967) uses the term 'democratic participation' to refer to acts that are intended to influence the behaviour of those empowered to make decisions. By stressing on "intention to influence decision-makers", Verba reiterates that the definition