

The position of good urban governance: A case study of Islamshahr, Iran

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Abstract

Today, there is a growing need for a more effective method of managing urban affairs. In more recent years, governments around the world can no longer make decisions and policies or plan management practices without the participation of all interest groups in society. In this paper, the components of good governance such as participation, responsibility, accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, and rule of law have been analyzed. The results show that the scores of governance components are lower than the total average, while the role of participative and democratic institutions, social groups, and citizen organizations has been neglected during the urban plans.

Keywords: *government, urban governance, participation, Islamshahr*

Introduction

Today, governance has become one of the keywords of spatial sciences such as geography. Governance is the process that includes the linking actors in the public and private field and emphasizes the legitimacy of the public realm and the participation of people in the development process in the context of social networks. Rhodes (1996) has defined governance as a self-organizing network connecting the relevant public and private actors. Calls for governance are therefore not merely demanding different ways of taking decisions (Jusoh et al., 2009). They are also likely to represent substantial demands for greater access to power and resources by those currently excluded. However, there is another side to this. Governance may also be regarded as a response to the changing circumstances of power relations in a move to secure more reflexive modes of public

decision-making that can circumvent both market failure and the problems of 'rational-bureaucratic' state action (Evans et al., 2005). Also, Convergence, holism, and comprehensiveness of all dimensions, actors and processes affecting urban life and development can be considered as a dominant feature of urban management efforts and theoretical developments. The above developments can be defined in the briefest way as moving away from the traditional pattern of urban governance towards the modern one (Parhizgar and Kazemian, 2005)

Identification and analysis of good governance are more important in the context of the cities as the sites of intense human interaction and social system evolution. This issue becomes even more important when we find there is a need for the bilateral relationship and comprehensive cooperation to mobilize and employ the new resources

at the local community level that cannot be obtained along with the top-down exercise of power, rather through a governance model that emphasizes the bottom-up development cycle of resources (Sarraf, 2008).

In relevant research, issues such as the role of access to resources in residents empowerment (Fagotto and Fung, 2006), the relationship between urban governance and organizational arrangements of local governments (Woong Kim and Bell, 1985), the transition of government to governance (Barakpour, 2002), lack of attention to people in planning and decision making, including in the Tehran Metro Project (Esmaealzadeh and Sarraf, 2006) have been underlined. Also, Rahnama et al (2010), indicated that Mashhad as a religious city has the worst situation in terms of good governance.

It should be added that strengthening the public arena and regulating the relationship between the government and the people, considering the participative and democratic procedures in the planning process have been emphasized in the mentioned research. In fact, by analyzing the components of good governance, we can understand the role and position of people in urban decisions and the degree of responsibility and transparency of city managers, and the rule of law.

The socio-political transformation and physical expansion of Tehran during the last few decades has led to the formation of Tehran metropolitan regions and consequently the formation of disorganized settlements on the periphery regions. Given the role of cities as the bedding of human interactions and social system development, it becomes more important to identify patterns of governance on an urban scale. Therefore, in this study, the approach of urban governance in Islamshahr

from the surrounding areas of Tehran is examined.

The urban governance

The term governance is derived from the Greek word “Kybernan” and “Kybernetes”, which means to steer, to guide, or to hold things together (Akbari, 2006). It was only in the 1960s that the participation principle was introduced in the UK as an essential ingredient in urban governance. Then, in the 1970s, the Skeffington commission was appointed to work on participation development in urban societies. At the same time, McLaughlin was one of the first people that raised the concept of “Governance”. In his view, local and municipal governments had reached an impasse because their relationship with civil society organizations, public and social sectors had been cut. This disconnect between people and their inefficiency followed new expectations. In fact, people were expected to actively participate in governance, and voluntary groups and the private sector wanted to contribute to these matters (Barakpour et al., 2007). Until the 1980s, the basic premise was that the government had enough authority, ability, and capacity to manage, formulate, and implement policies and achieve the desired development goals. The interpretation of this definition, in an urban context, is a state-centric approach to development, meaning that public sector organizations could carry out urban planning and management (Barakpour and Asadi, 2009). With the advent of complex problems such as poverty or environmental imbalances that governments were no longer able to fix, the growing need and expectations of citizens and their declining confidence in government (Mossberger, 2007), the poor performance of local governments and

inefficient provision of needed services, and ineffective traditional approach to urban planning led to the emergence of supporting managerial approach in planning against the blueprint maps with executive administrative approach against the urban demands in the mid-1980s. The emergence of widespread social movements and calls for increasing political participation led to democratization in authoritarian regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These transformations, consequently, resulted in a transition from the formal structures and governments as the basis of decision-making to the role of civil society in realizing democratic rights and duties (Barakpour and Asadi, 2009). For example, the South African revolution led by Nelson Mandela, the decisive victory of the 'No' campaign in Chile's 1988 plebiscite captured broad attention. Of course, most of these transitions took many years to reach maturity and subsequent institutionalization. In some countries—including Brazil, Chile, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa and Spain—many years of pressure from opposition movements were needed to end authoritarian rule (Lowenthal and Bitar, 2015).

In the late 1980s and after the implementation of structural adjustment programmes particularly in African countries, the World Bank also focused on good governance as a key issue for the development of these countries (World Bank, 1989). The United Nations then adopted the slogan "global action for good urban governance" at the second conference on human settlements in Istanbul in 1996 (Taghvaei and Tajdar, 2009).

This transformation is seen as a new paradigm against the urban government in

which participative democracy is strongly emphasized and governments act more as negotiators and facilitators than governors. In fact, new theories about the declining role of government and the revision of its tasks and functions, and the increasing role of NGOs in social life management can be understood as the necessity of a transition from government to governance. (Mahdizadeh, 2001). This shift from government to governance refers to a change in the relationship of citizens to the rulers (Aminian and Seyed Naghavi, 2018) and is based on the cooperation of the government and civil society (Hajinejad et al., 2016). Also, the transition to a model of good governance requires a strong legal basis (Piri, 2016).

The United Nations Development Program (1997) has identified nine characteristics for good governance: participation, consensus orientation, efficiency and effectiveness, responsiveness, strategic vision, rule of law, transparency, accountability, and equity. So, in nutshell, the concept of urban governance is based on the cooperation of the government and civil society (Hajinejad et al., 2016). In summary, governance is seen as a process that involves the connection of public and private actors and emphasizes the legitimacy of the public sphere and the social participation of the people in the development process (Tavakoli Nia and Shams Pouya, 2016).

The study area

In the political divisions of Iran, Islamshahr is one of the surrounding cities of Tehran province. Islamshahr is located in the southwest of Tehran province and geographical position of 35° 33' 57" North latitude from the equator and 51° 15' 0" east longitude from Greenwich (Fig. 1) (Parnoon, 2010).

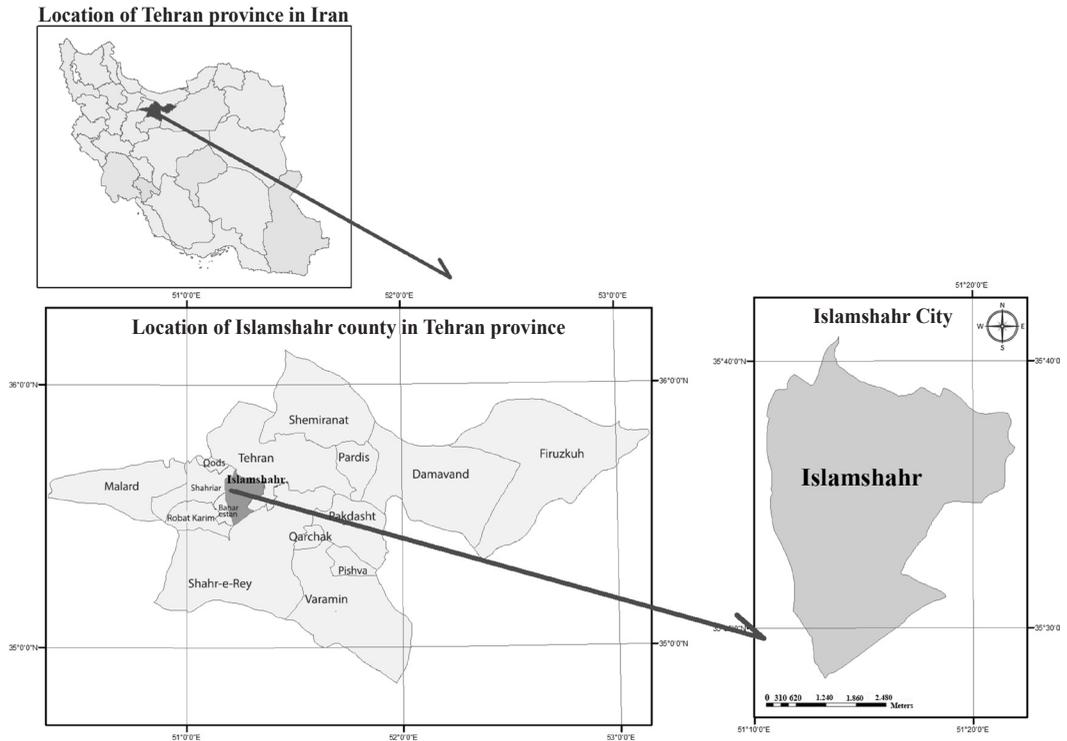


Fig. 1: Geographical location of Islamshahr in Tehran province, Iran
 Source: Authors

Islamshahr is located on one of the main transportation axes in Tehran- Saveh, and Tehran- Qom railway, 22 km southwest of the capital (Abdullahi, 2007). Known by the name Qasim Abad Shahi and Shad Shahr before the Islamic Revolution, Islamshahr was renamed to Islamshahr after the Revolution (Karegar, 2010). The population of this city reached 379,072 persons in 2016 (Statistical Center of Iran, 2016).

Methodology

The present study was conducted based on a descriptive-analytical method. We have used both qualitative methods like documentary studies and quantitative methods such as analytic statistics to analyze good governance.

Cochran's formula has been used to determine the sample size or the number of citizens who have responded.

$$n = \frac{\frac{t^2 pq}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} (\frac{t^2 pq}{d^2} - 1)}$$

$$n = \frac{\frac{1.96^2 \times 0/8 \times 0/2}{(0/06)^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{379072} (\frac{1.96^2 \times 0/8 \times 0/2}{(0/06)^2} - 1)} = 170$$

In this formula, the abbreviations are as follows:

t = The size of the variable in the natural distribution (also known as normal distribution or Gaussian distributions), which

is usually 95% in the humanities and social sciences. Therefore, the required number of samples at the level of 95% confidence and 5% error is 1.96%

P = Percentage of adjective distribution (variable) in society

Q = Percentage of people who lack that trait in society

d = Probability of error

N = The size of the population (Islamshahr which is equal to 379072 people)

According to Cochran's formula, the number of samples is 170 people. However, it should be added that the sample size in the above formula is known as the minimum sample, so if the population size is large, it is better to increase the sample size, which also

increases the validity of the research results (Hafez Nia, 2009).

For sampling in Islamshahr, a combination of stratified sampling proportional to the size and random sampling is used. For this purpose, the sample size in each district in proportion to its population and the area has been chosen at random by municipal zoning in Islamshahr. The statistical society and also the sample size of the study were classified into different classes of population as in Table 1.

The reviewed components of good governance in Islamshahr are participation, rule of law, accountability, transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency, and responsiveness. These components are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: The sampling size of different classes of the statistical society

Districts	Total population	Sample size	Population proportion in districts
District 1	125000	61	33%
District 2	155000	76	41%
District 3	48800	24	13%
District 4	15000	7	4 %
District 5	11272	6	3%
District 6	24000	11	6%
Total	379072	185	100.0

Source: Statistical Center of Iran (2016)

Results and discussion

The components of good governance were analyzed for the study area. For this purpose, 185 questionnaires were completed by the citizens. Among the participants, there were 58.9 percent men and 41.1 percent were women. In the field of statistics, a one-sample t-test was used and data were analyzed using

SPSS software. The indicators have been set in a 5-point Likert scale in which, strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neutral = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5, and 3 is the mean.

Therefore, if the average score is less than 3, it indicates the weak situation of that indicator and vice versa. Based on the findings of table 3, due to the obtained mean

Table 2: The components and indicators of good governance

Districts	Total population
Accountability	Accepting the mistakes and dereliction in performing the duties by the regional authorities and managers
	Taking into account the views and demands of urban citizens and residents
Rule of law	Awareness of citizens and residents about the neighborhood rules and regulations related to development issues
	Awareness of citizens and residents about the neighborhood decision maker and planner organizations
Transparency	Awareness of citizens and residents about the existence of plans and programs relating to neighborhood development
	Questioning from citizens about neighborhood development plans and programmes
Effectiveness and Efficiency	Effectiveness of municipality in providing services
	Degree of citizen satisfaction with the services provided by the municipality
Responsiveness	Willingness of citizens to participate in decisions related to neighborhood
	Willingness of citizens to participate in decisions related to the district
	Willingness of citizens to participate in decisions related to the city
Participation	Participating in lectures
	Role of the municipality in increasing public participation in urban management
	Participating in decisions related to neighborhood
	Participating in charity in the neighborhood
	Possibility of reform and improvement of the neighborhood with the participation of citizens
	People agreement or disagreement with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usefulness or futility of participation • Failure of given promises of council candidates as an obstacle to participation • Lack of culture (lack of education) to participate as a barrier • Participating in elections to meet the interests • Participation in elections due to giving respect and better situation • Creating barriers to participation by municipalities and municipal authorities as a barrier to participation
	Timely payment of toll
	Participating in city council elections
	Keeping track of issues and getting an appointment from authorities to express problems
	Participating in forums
	Believing in women presence and participation in urban activities

Source: Authors (2018)

Table 3: The results of on sample t-test¹

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Governance	185	2.3697	0.38472	0.02829	184	0.000

Source: Authors' fieldwork (2018).

Table 4: Anova Test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.766	5	0.553	4.046	0.002
Within Groups	24.468	179	0.137		
Total	27.234	184			

Source: Authors' fieldwork (2018).

(2.36) and given that the average score of the governance components is less than 3, so we can say that the governance situation in Islamshahr is below average.

It should be noted that Islamshahr consists of 6 districts. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to examine the difference between the mean of one variable in more than two groups. The variance analysis is used as the best statistical method to compare districts with each other because it is necessary to compare more than two independent societies with each other with respect to the distance scale.

As table 4 indicates, the F test statistic is calculated as the quantity of 4.046 from the F (relating to the table of critical values of the distribution F) of 0.05 alpha level. Also, the significance level (sig) is less than 0.05, which means that the mean of the districts is not equal to each other in terms of urban governance. But for a more detailed study of the difference between the means in Islamshahr, the Duncan test has been used, which is shown in Table 5.

The results of Tables 5 and 6 indicate that there is a significant difference across the 6 districts of Islamshahr in terms of governance components. In other words, areas 1 and 2 are significantly different from other areas, including area 5, which is an informal settlement. Therefore, the results of the quantitative study and analytical statistics also show that Islamshahr urban management is farther away from a good governance approach.

Conclusions

In general, characteristics like top-down decision-making, lack of participatory procedures, and centralized management structure are obvious in the Islamshahr management system as undesirable consequences of the same situation at the macro-level systems. Altogether, these characteristics have led to stabilizing the governmental management pattern and changing the urban spatial organization and the lives of the citizens.

The good urban governance approach emphasizes the interaction and participation

Table 5: Follow up Tukey Test²

(I) District	(J) District	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00	2.00	-0.01324	0.06375	1.000	-0.1969	0.1704
	3.00	-0.02929	0.08909	0.999	-0.2859	0.2274
	4.00	0.00877	0.14754	1.000	-0.4163	0.4338
	5.00	0.14241	0.15819	0.946	-0.3133	0.5981
	6.00	0.47806*	0.11676	0.001	0.1417	0.8144
2.00	1.00	0.01324	0.06375	1.000	-0.1704	0.1969
	3.00	-0.01605	0.08671	1.000	-0.2658	0.2337
	4.00	0.02202	0.14612	1.000	-0.3989	0.4430
	5.00	0.15565	0.15686	0.920	-0.2962	0.6075
	6.00	0.49130*	0.11495	0.000	0.1601	0.8225
3.00	1.00	0.02929	0.08909	0.999	-0.2274	0.2859
	2.00	0.01605	0.08671	1.000	-0.2337	0.2658
	4.00	0.03807	0.15882	1.000	-0.4195	0.4956
	5.00	0.17170	0.16875	0.912	-0.3145	0.6579
	6.00	0.50735*	0.13072	0.002	0.1308	0.8839
4.00	1.00	-0.00877	0.14754	1.000	-0.4338	0.4163
	2.00	-0.02202	0.14612	1.000	-0.4430	0.3989
	3.00	-0.03807	0.15882	1.000	-0.4956	0.4195
	5.00	0.13364	0.20569	0.987	-0.4589	0.7262
	6.00	0.46928	0.17584	0.087	-0.0373	0.9758
5.00	1.00	-0.14241	0.15819	0.946	-0.5981	0.3133
	2.00	-0.15565	0.15686	0.920	-0.6075	0.2962
	3.00	-0.17170	0.16875	0.912	-0.6579	0.3145
	4.00	-0.13364	0.20569	0.987	-0.7262	0.4589
	6.00	0.33565	0.18486	0.458	-0.1969	0.8682
6.00	1.00	-0.47806*	0.11676	0.001	-0.8144	-0.1417
	2.00	-0.49130*	0.11495	0.000	-0.8225	-0.1601
	3.00	-0.50735*	0.13072	0.002	-0.8839	-0.1308
	4.00	-0.46928	0.17584	0.087	-0.9758	0.0373
	5.00	-0.33565	0.18486	0.458	-0.8682	0.1969

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2018).

Table 6: The mean of sub-groups (homogenous subset display)³

Districts	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
6.00	12	1.9184	
5.00	6	2.2541	2.2541
4.00	7		2.3877
1.00	61		2.3965
2.00	75		2.4097
3.00	24		2.4258
Sig.		0.196	0.846

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2018).

of various governmental and non-governmental groups in decision-making, but in the study area, governmental elements such as governorship have the most roles in urban decision-making. In other words, the public sector and public entities have enjoyed the minimum weight in this case. It is noted that the pluralist power structure insists on the presence of all the actors, especially NGOs. But, the public institutions in Islamshahr do not influence each part of the policy, planning, and performance and the scores of governance components are lower than the total average, while the role of participative and democratic institutions, social groups, and citizen organizations was neglected during the urban plans.

According to the research findings, it is highly recommended to forming and strengthening the local and regional councils as well as devaluing the powers, duties and responsibilities to local authorities. Strengthening of non-governmental and non-profit organizations can be an important step in empowering citizens, more importantly in the informal settlements (e.g District 6 of Islamshahr). Local management institutions

and organizations can play a crucial role in empowering the residents of these settlements. In addition, the management system will also benefit from the social and human capital of residents.

The institutional capacity-building, inter-organizational reforms in terms of staffing, technology, and organizational structure particularly in municipalities, supporting the ideas and initiatives of local innovators as well as scientific and entrepreneurial initiatives related to the realization of good governance in Islamshahr, revisioning and updating of urban development documents and plans, recognizing the right of residence, ownership and security for the residents of informal settlements, and expansion of educational facilities, especially in the Miyanabad neighbourhood (District 6) are among other recommendations. It is also important to pay special attention to the low-income housing projects and plans. In this case, the government must take into account the methods and tools of financing

low-income housing, such as payment of mortgages, creating special funds, and so on.

Notes

- 1) One-Sample Statistics.
- 2) Follow-up Tukey Test was used to observe the real difference among groups due to district. In table 8, governance is considered as a dependent variable; also the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level, also alfa level: 0.05.
- 3) Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed: Tukey HSDa,b
 - a. Uses Harmonic Mean sample size = 12.924.
 - b. The group sizes are unequal. The Harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

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