

CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL SUB-COUNCILS IN OPTIMUM GOVERNANCE OF URBAN CASE STUDY: LOCAL SUB-COUNCILS OF TEHRAN

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ABSTRACT: After the Iran Islamic revolution on February 1979, political leaderships paid attention to Islamic councils as local government. A section of the constitution of Iran is devoted to them and their activities. Islamic councils are inspired from scripture of Quran. Due to political instabilities and the lack of expertise, the councils were virtually inactive till March 1999. After this date, Islamic councils of urban and rural were formed. Due to too many local and area problems of Tehran metropolitan, Islamic council of Tehran created “local sub-councils”. These councils were formed in a democratic way in 372 localities of Tehran; each council was composed of ten members. They had two essential bases: “Association” and “executive groups” which were under the supervision of the “coordination staff”. In this article we try to answer the following question whether the local sub-councils and local politics can be used as a pattern to elaborate a form of urban governance suitable in era of global world. The results of our study show that even though mega-cities and metropolitans play a major role in the process of globalization, their administration relies deeply on local councils of urban.

KEYWORD: Optimum Governance of Urban, Local Sub-council, Globalization, Tehran

1 INTRODUCTION

In the early 19th century, centralization states, as they couldn't meet the local needs of people, thought of decentralization systems and authorizing the local instates (Chandler & Clork, 1995:76). Through these mechanisms, the states attempted to revive their legitimacy via decentralization (Castells, 2004). In the second half of 19th century focusing on civilized society and local cooperation, the concept of localization consisting of different sub processes: decentralization (concentration, authority ceding and power cession), cooperation, social wealth and civilized society, need for good governance and democracy appeared in civil governance theories.

The city governance structures and dominant rules are deeply rooted in political system. Iran governments were always monarchical, despotic and absolute rule (Shabani,1990:75). In this system, monarchic institute was the only authentic authority to deal with the country affairs (Modirshanechi,2000:66). Therefore, super-ordinate commands from the super-ordinates and hierarchical observation always shaped the power model in Iran (Bashiriyh,2002:30-31). It was a boss-peasant system (Hafeznia,2001:198). This mechanism leads to decentralization system in urban management and government in Iran. Although in 1906 constitution revolution founded democracy rules and structures in Iran, after a short time it failed. After Islamic Revolution in 1979, council, people cooperation, public freedom, and keeping the rights were the main concerns of revolution. Accordingly, council viewpoints via using Quranic concepts were reflected in the seventh chapter of constitution law. Consequently, Islamic councils' law was approved in 1983. Such a law entails a variety of authorities and responsibilities from highest to lowest levels. However, due to imposed war between Iran –Iraq (1980-88), centrifugal activities and conservative authors and executive institutes these councils were postponed for about 17 years (hafeznia & veicy,2007:103). Having approved the law of the Islamic councils' duties and mayors' selection rules was passed in March 1996. The Islamic councils of Tehran referring to the issue 71 of 1996 law and due to a variety of complicated difficulties of urban and in order to make use of different groups of people points of views passed the law of “sub-council” at enforced November 1999. One year later this law was enforced as a pilot study (Islamic councils of Tehran,2009). Since then sub-councils association elections was an attempt to investigate the quarter problems, develop the quarters and investigate whether these sub-councils are necessary or not. More specifically, it attempts to probe into whether the quarter sub-councils and localization policies can be appropriate models for city governance at globalization era?

2 METHODOLOGY

In the present study the sub-councils of Tehran were studied. There are 372 sub-councils with 10 members in each. The total participants of study were 3720. This was a descriptive-analytic study and the data were analyzed through logical reasoning technique.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK RESEARCH

The nature and philosophy of the existence of local government and autonomy lie in the creation system. This concept originates from human nature. Human are loyal to their living place and want to improve and develop its values (Hafeznia & kaviani,2004:5; Moqhimi,2001:169). Such emotion is appropriate more than ever time for incorporation of citizens on urban management and urban governance. Most of thinkers believe that metropolises and mega-cities are less democratic and large units should be divided into smaller units for conserving democratic culture and having responsibility for their own members (chandler & clark,1995:78). According to this basic, political decisions and planning of metropolitan should be based on the smallest urban unit, quarter, which designs by citizens in a consultative association. This process is based on low levels and system of lower to upper planning which plans in quarter council form. This council describes advisory process in which consultation carries out freely and equally between people and conversational environment would be design for people to freely enter in discussion with regard to their own and others priorities. If consensus and general agreement obtained, social decision making would be taken, otherwise the decision making would be based on majority (Mirahmadi,2008:386). Therefore, De Tocqueville (1969) considers the local councils as an engine for democracy and Daneshkhoshbo (1972: 24) considers it as primary stone of democracy. Rousseau believes that all those who want to respect to the low, should be involved in its approval. He considers this as necessary condition for general consent and calls the result of it as general will (Jones,1941).

4 DATA AND RESULTS

From the formation onset of primary cities to constitution revolution and Pahlavi dynasty the urban management style has been influenced by decentralization system of monarchical. During Pahlavi dynasty central government of Iran because of huge oil incomes and economic and political power did not need people cooperation and voices in management of Tehran city (Comrava,2000,86). After revolution, Iranian urban management was based on councils system. Having enforced councils law in 1998, Tehran city management was formed on the basis of council-mayor system. Tehran city councils in 1378 formed quarters, sub-councils experimentally. In each quarter 10 people were selected as council assistants.

Sub-councils are non-governmental, non-political, voluntary, cooperative, self-governed and decentralized associations. Its voluntary members work at quarter scale (Issue 2, Law of Sub-council). It is supervised by Tehran city council and the members are selected by quarter residents. The main responsibilities of sub-councils are to identify the main problems, to supervise and to consult. This institute consists of two elements: "Association" and "work groups". They are controlled by the "coordination staff" "Fig 1".

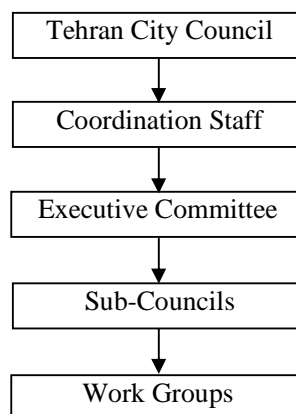


Figure 1 The hierarchy of local institutes of Tehran

The “executive committee” is the main executive element of coordination staff which take up and follows up the approved laws of the staff and paves the way for interactions between sub-councils, organizations and public departments “Table 1”.

Table 1 Duties, number and selection procedure of sub-councils, coordination staff and executive committee.

	Sub-councils	Coordination staff	Executive committee
Duties	Determining the problems and suggesting guidelines to make a healthy environment, to improve inter trips, to develop manuals and signs and to name squares and streets, to develop artistic and sport fields, teaching civil rights studying the shortcomings and social, cultural, educational, health, and economical lacks.	Policy making and supervising the sub councils, delivering reports to the sub councils, coordinating, sub-councils transacting decisions and sub councils, making executive staff, and assigning the members duties, selecting the members and determining inter-action process.	Following up and enforcing the issued schedules, making interaction between executive dependents and sub councils, solving financial problems of quarters sub councils, giving reports to staff, sub council elections based on staff guidelines and procedures.
Number of members	Each quarter 10 (7 main and 3 substitutes)	5	The staff determines the member
Selection procedure	Selected by quarter resident	3 members of council (selected by council) and 2 from social and cultural commission	The staff head appoints

The quarter sub-councils in order to do their duties well constituted voluntary work groups. Each expert member is the head of one work group “fig 2”.

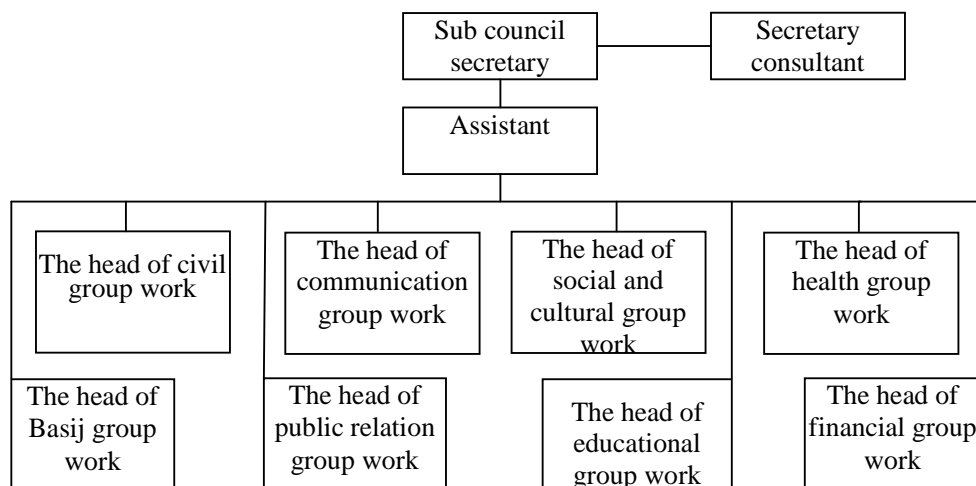


Figure 2 sub-councils association structure

According to heads of sub-councils coordination staff after the staff’s calling for 10 projects which were mostly urgently needed by quarters 3720 proposals which were submitted. Between 55% - 60% of the submitted were operationalized. Almost all submissions were about bridge of passenger, repairing the streets asphalts and the streams. The remaining 40% -45% were macro national or Tehran related projects (Faregh,2008). In addition the sub councils members played roles in developing 20 year development plans of Tehran as well as 5 year plans (Ssalimpoor, 2008). There have been some transactions among sub councils and coordination staff to select 3 members from each quarter (22 areas) so that they can select the chief board of divisions. Totally 66 members will be selected to make the parliament of Tehran (Ibid). This process is still novice and informal. It needs councils and parliament bills.

5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Tehran sub-councils having educational, consultancy and supervising functions in line with the city council policies and limited executive responsibilities at each quarter is responsible for calling for and increasing citizens, participation and linking people to city managers. Although sub-councils members are limited in their responsibilities, they turned out to strengthen citizens, participation city management. The members due to their engagement in daily issues of citizens and their permanent presence in the quarters can play important and constructive roles in categorizing people needs, adjusting them and managing their participation. On the other hand, they can urge the public department, mayors and organizations to feel responsible towards people needs. It seems that sub-councils because of their group work, common decision making, independence to state, and their inexpensive supervisions can lead to the city (Tehran) growth and development. Such a quarter based planning and sub-councils were taken into consideration when metropolitans increase globalization processes to achieve global models. Sub council localization is not against globalization because such a global local model is in the globalization course.

6 CONCLUSION

Human beings have a self-determined nature. They prefer the values of their residence to the even the other higher values. Therefore, they are more motivated than the other people to manage the living environment (quarter). Increase development in urban living dimensions of metropolitans caused the urban managers a lot of challenges. In order to solve the living problem, they needed the citizens' cooperation. That is why; the council of Tehran city established sub -councils. The underlying assumption is to make a change in the process of decision making (an ascending order is required). In doing so, the citizens play important roles in decision making process. Although the main duties of sub-councils are consultative and suggestive, they could take an important step in establishing the citizen cooperation systems in the management of Tehran and lay the foundation of optimum urban governance. Although it seems that metropolitans develop the globalization process, they optimum governance depends on localization.

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