

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS IN MANAGEMENT OF COASTAL CITIES  
(A CASE STUDY OF ANZALI PORT, CASPIAN SEA, IRAN)

Fahimeh Shokoohfar<sup>1\*</sup>, Elahe Shabanjola<sup>2</sup>

1- Department of Architecture, Buin Zahra Branch, Islamic Azad University, Buin Zahra, Iran

2- Tehran university, College of Fine Arts, Department of Urban Planning, Tehran, Iran

**ABSTRACT:** Urban good management is nowadays, one of the most important issues in urban planning. Citizen participation has an important role to succeed in this field. As different research and experience has shown, management and city administration would be more successful if the participation and cooperation of citizens and residents was took attention during planning and making decisions. This factor especially in coastal cities is more important due to their special features; because good management and governance of coastal cities can help to preserve valuable natural and social resources. This article is trying to evaluate participation in Anzali Port, Iran and finally has developed some strategies for promoting the involving stakeholders in city management. Method of Check list of criteria is used for this survey. The results show slightly lower than expected level of participation in Anzali and the city must be undergoing some changes to achieve good urban management.

**KEYWORDS:** Participation, Urban good management, Anzali Port, Caspian Sea, Iran.

**INTRODUCTION**

Planning theories over the past few decades have made a strong case for participatory approaches ([Wilmsen et al., 2008](#); [Forester, 1989](#)). Similarly, within natural resource management research ([Jentoft and McCay, 1995](#); [Mikalsen and Jentoft, 2001](#); [Ostrom, 1990](#)) and development studies ([Blumenthal and Jannink, 2000](#)), citizen and user group participation is often regarded as vital and something that should be encouraged, because it tends to make the planning process more effective, equitable and hence legitimate ([Mitchell et al., 1997](#)), provided those who participate are representative of their constituents and capable of looking after collective interests as well as those of their own group.

Increasing awareness of anthropogenic impacts on coastal ecosystems and their local users and the emergence of growth with equity strategies have triggered changes in environmental governance in many parts of the world ([Wever et al., 2012](#)). Effective public participation is an essential component of Integrated Coastal Zone Management implementation. To promote such participation, a shared understanding of stakeholders' objectives has to be built to ultimately result in common coastal management strategies ([Meliadou et al., 2012](#)). There are Differences in forms of participation which can classify in 2 kinds, formal and informal participation. We have identified and defined 4 subsets of formal participation and 3

subsets of informal participation in Anzali Port. Analysis processes is done according to mentioned model.

*1.1. Role of participation in urban good management*

To improve the quality, legitimacy, and capacity of environmental decisions, public participation has begun to include more direct roles for involvement and dialogue, such as formal comments, public hearings, and citizen suits ([National Research Council, 2008](#)). In recent years, the public has also helped to inform a wide range of planning and decision-making processes by participating in stakeholder, also referred to as citizen, advisory groups ([Crowfoot and Wondolleck, 1990](#); [Beatley, 1994](#); [McCool and Guthrie, 2001](#)). While critics raise concerns about the drawbacks of a more involved public, the benefits of two-way interactions between the public and decision-makers have been widely advocated as a way to increase the legitimacy and quality of government decisions ([National Research Council, 2008](#)). This includes decision-making within the field of resource management and more specifically, marine spatial planning. For planners the challenge is not only instrumental: they must also demonstrate political awareness and sensitivity. They must be able to bring stakeholders together, facilitate their interaction, and assist them in constructively addressing their conflicts of interest ([Buanesa et al., 2005](#)).

As long as their net gain is positive, rational stakeholder groups will participate. This requires a strategic assessment of the potential outcome of involvement, much of which cannot be known in advance. As [Ferraro, \(1996\)](#) remarks, "values often appear to be a product of the planning process itself." This also relates to the fact that the transaction costs may change during the process, sometimes unexpectedly, e.g. when more stakeholders become involved, or more themes are introduced. Then the workload of participants may increase to unforeseen and possibly untenable proportions. But even if this equation develops in ways that increase the costs of participation, stakeholders may still continue to be involved if, during the course of interaction, norms, expectations and trust have been generated that would make exit difficult ([Buanesa et al., 2005](#)).

## METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Study Area

Bandar-e Anzali (Anzali Port) is a arbor town ("Bandar" means "port") on the Caspian Sea, close to Rasht. Bandar-e Anzali is one of the most important seaports in the north of Iran. It has the most humid climate of any city in Iran, having a climate somewhat similar in its heavy autumn and early winter rainfall and persistent high humidity and low sunshine to the Sea of Japan coast of Japan, though it receives much less summer rainfall than that region it remains classified as a humid subtropical climate. The warm and humid weather has allowed this region to grow crops such as rice and tea that require very large amounts of moisture,

especially with the extra water draining from the Elburz Mountains. In fact there are many useful natural resources in the coastal city.

### 2.2. Data Collection

The data presented below were collected by means of a survey carried out during the summer of 2012. Out of a total of 110,643 habitats in Anzali Port, a stratified random sample was selected. Method of "Check list of criteria" is used for this survey. As it is shown in table1, the model, involve 7 criteria, which have gathered from the subject literature.

The main method of collecting the data, was questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 12 elements, each covering different aspects of formal and informal participation in the Anzali Port planning process. The questionnaire contained a variety of graded categories and the respondents were asked to rank "the rate of participate in unions, local institutions and NGOs", "number of NGO's", "awareness of municipal projects", "participation in local elections", "assistance in daily activities", "enterprises in charitable activities" and "enterprises in religious practices".

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As previously mentioned, to assess the level of public participation in management of Anzali Port, two criteria were defined as formal and informal participation. Formal participation was measured by four subsets and informal participation by three items. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** measuring participation criteria and their sub-criteria

Forms of stakeholder participation in Anzali Port planning			
Formal participation		Informal participation	
Participatory form	Average of rates	Participatory form	Average of rates
1. Rate of participate in unions, local institutions and NGOs	2.7	1. Assistance in daily activities	2.4
2. Number of NGO's	2.1	2. Enterprises in charitable activities	2.5
3. Awareness of municipal projects	1.5	3. Enterprises in religious practices	3.6
4. Participation in local elections	2.8		

To convert qualitative data into quantitative, Likert scale is used. As it's shown in table 1, all parts except the last one, is under 3. It means that the level of people's participation in urban management is not high. The situation is worse in some of the sub-criteria. Average number of votes obtained in the criteria of "Awareness of municipal projects", define that there isn't good interaction between municipality and residents and municipal projects, moves forward without coordination with the people.

The highest score and the best situation relates to "Enterprises in religious practices". It's not so

unexpected because in Anzali Port, as well as other cities of Iran, people have strong religious beliefs which are not directly affected by municipalities and other organizations.

By measuring the mean scores on the two criteria, we can conclude that informal participation with score 2.83, is better than formal participation with the score of 2.75. It also shows that both aspects need to be planned.

## CONCLUSION

With a better understanding of the formal and informal participation in Anzali Port, and by

analysis of obtained scores, it can be concluded that although participation rate is not so high in this city, informal participation is more powerful than formal one. All of them are below the average level and it shows the necessity of good planning for improving the involvement of inhabitants.

According to the city's potential, following strategies is proposed in order to promote people's participation in governance in Anzali:

- Allocating sufficient resources for public engagement specialists offered a more comprehensive outreach and engagement strategy.
- Recognizing, understanding, and addressing the unique characteristics of Anzali port will help initiative staff build local relationships and overcome barriers and challenges for the public to access information.
- Directly engaging those who otherwise might have been opponents to the process helped build credibility, trust, and a more robust dialogue.
- Involving interested members of the public as "key communicators" to help relay process information to a broader audience.
- Continually identifying misinformation and gauging public sentiment throughout the process allowed for developing more timely and effective messaging.
- Traditional and "new media" strategies were valuable tools employed to reach a more diverse and inclusive public.

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