THE CITIZEN REPORT CARD AS A WAY OF STRENGTHENING SERVICE DELIVERY: A CASE STUDY FROM ANTALYA, TURKEY*

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Abstract

A citizen report card (CRC) is deemed to be an advocacy tool to improve the quality of public services through rating them from a user perspective. In 2012, the Antalya City Council, together with the Antalya Governorate and Akdeniz University, launched a Citizen Report Card (CRC) initiative to reveal the views of the citizens about the quality of public services within the boundary of Antalya Metropolitan Municipality. This paper, two years later from the report, examines the changes with the aim of finding out if the CRC initiative in particular and civic engagement efforts in general have indeed an impact on the *public service ethos* in the relevant public sector units of the city to hearten the citizens for getting more involved in the provision of public services. In this paper, the case study method was employed, and a combination of observations, interviews, and written documents was selected to complete the case study investigation. The study shows that there has been a change in the organizational culture of public units in Antalya city toward a welcoming approach to the engagement of citizens in public affairs.

Keywords: Citizen Engagement, Citizen Report Card, New Public Service Ethos, Information Asymmetry.

Introduction

As a reaction to the economic rationalist prescriptions for government service delivery, which impaired the social fabric of many countries, more inclusive forms of governance have recently appeared to reconnect communities with their governments. In line with this, a variety of terms such as *social capital, civic engagement or social entrepreneurship* have come to the front in academic writings to explain the changing pattern of state/market/civil society relations. These terms symbolize a rising significance of the ideas and values of *community, localism and citizen participation* (Brown & Keast, 2003; Reddel, 2002).

Today, in a decentralized government, the policies are implemented through dialogue between local government and civil society. In the same vein, local priorities should be identified through deliberative, strategic planning process linking government and civil society in order to be more responsive to local needs (Guthrie, 2003).

Besides, in recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in Public Administration from an inward-looking organization centred perspective towards an outward-looking orientation, which concentrates on the impact of services of the bureaucracy to its publics or citizens. This may be regarded as a test of responsiveness of institutions to the public they seek to serve. Accordingly, the effectiveness of public services is not judged only by internal management values. Instead, citizens are involved in the process to determine whether their requirements have been met and public services have been efficiently delivered (Reyes 2010; Callahan, 2010; Smith, 2004). Moreover, Callahan (2010) maintains that the priorities of citizens and public managers in the measurement of public service performance may drastically differ. For example, unlike public managers, citizens are not so concerned about how many tons of garbage were collected. They just mind if the streets are clean.

On the other hand, an important but often unrecognized aspect of strengthening citizen engagement is the actions aimed at public servers who work for the government itself. What is needed is a *new public service*

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ethos to advance, and coordinate the coproduction capabilities of service users and the communities (Bovaird, 2007; Svara & Denhardt, 2010; Boxelaar et al. 2006). The rise of citizen report card applications may be considered as an outcome of the above mentioned paradigm shift in PA. The citizen report card (CRC hereafter) is an advocacy tool for improving service quality (Lindroth, 2013). It is a new way to rate different service providers from a user perspective and to utilize this information to make the providers more accountable to the people (Paul, 2005).

In 2012, the Antalya City Council, together with the Antalya Governorate and Akdeniz University, launched a large-scale Citizen Report Card (CRC) initiative to reveal the views of the citizens about the quality of public services within the boundary of Antalya Metropolitan Municipality. This paper, two years later from the report, examines the changes with the aim of finding out if the CRC initiative has indeed an impact on the *public service ethos* in the public sector units to hearten the citizens for getting more involved in the provision of public services.

There is a scarcity of literature about the effect of the organizational culture on citizen engagement. Therefore, it can be said that the main significance of the study is the demonstration of the interaction between organizational culture and civic engagement.

The paper employs a case study approach. The following section provides the basic framework concerning the civic engagement. Afterwards, the roles of public and public managers are identified. Then, the paper discusses different citizen engagement techniques and the case of Antalya city. Finally, a conclusion is given.

Objectives of Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement focuses on revitalizing democracy, building citizenship and reinforcing a sense of community, and it cannot be equated with one-way exchanges between government and citizens (Svara & Denhardt, 2010). It lets individuals to express their demands on government, and makes their voices heard. Networks of civic engagement make citizens more competent and they are deemed to be schools for democracy where civic duties are learned (Michels & De Graaf, 2010).

Civic Engagement issue has come to the fore in the aftermath of drastic changes in government models. In the 1960s *Welfare State* emerged with the development of major social policy and infrastructure. Later, by the 1980s, the limitations of traditional provider centric-inward looking-models of the welfare state had become obvious. Thus, the *Contractual State* emerged with an emphasis on the adoption of business principles by government. On the other hand, the current focus on community engagement is part of *Enabling State*, in which government is both a catalyst and partner to improve community capacity and add value to community outcomes (Cavaye, 2004; Bovaird, 2007).

In citizen engagement, the first motive is to try to overcome citizens' rising sense of disconnection, and distrust of government. Another issue is to further community involvement in service delivery and policy making with the aim of delivering better public services (Brown & Keast, 2003; Gouilding, 2009). Therefore, citizen engagement activities mainly fall into two categories: a) *instrumental* activities aiming to inform citizens or use their feedback for government decisions; and b) *normative* activities seeking to bolster the fundamental structures of communities and governance processes in order to bring about a better quality of life for all (King, 2010; Svara & Denhardt, 2010; Carpini et al, 2004).

In normative perspective, citizen engagement is the end, and the ultimate goal is to make the people become "citizens" in the highest sense of the word. Evaluation is made based on whether or not the citizen engagement activities have advanced openness, collaboration, and a sense of shared responsibility. In the absence of a widespread sense of full citizenship, there is a tendency for activists to dominate the world of participatory politics and for ordinary citizens to be excluded. (Svara & Denhardt, 2010; Mahmud, 2004).

On the other hand, from the instrumental perspective, engagement is a means to assist local governments in delivering better services. Effective local governance increasingly asks for active citizen participation in planning, policymaking and service delivery. Therefore, today, citizens have more opportunities to oppose the implementation of plans in which they do not have a say. Accordingly, the goal of citizen participation might be to increase support for a specific policy (Svara & Denhardt, 2010).

In citizen engagement, the most important question to be addressed is the *information asymmetry* between public managers and citizens. Public managers may claim that citizens do not appreciate their services as they do not get the complex characteristic of service provision. Nonetheless, citizens may complain about unresponsive and inefficient government. This may cause cynicism and misunderstandings (Robbins &

Simonsen, 2010). Similarly, Glaser et al. (2006) assert that, from the instrumental perspective, the main question is the efficiency. This form of engagement prioritizes the professionalism. Hence, public debates may be regarded as time consuming as they have limited positive effect on the quality of decisions.

Identifying the Roles of Public and Public Managers

Vigoda (2002) underscores the changing nature of the role of citizens and public administration. He presents an evolutionary continuum of interacting with citizens, and identifies 5 types of interaction, namely *coerciveness, delegation, responsiveness, collaboration and citizenry coerciveness* as seen in Figure 1.

Besides, Thomas (2013) identifies the public's three primary roles as *citizen, customer, and partner*, and he argues that finding out the role that the public should play in public management has long been an important question for scholarly debates in public administration. He maintains that public managers should know how to work with the public in all three. For him, viewing the citizens as partners paves the way for the questions that can help in solving the problem, whereas viewing them as customers helps public managers to be helpful and respond quickly. He argues that effective engagement with the citizens necessitates public managers to respond without delay, listen to the citizens, and be courteous. Public managers should have ability to grasp how to work with the public in all three roles as public policy often requires public managers to serve the same group of people in several ways that reflect multiple roles. Here at this point, the biggest challenge of public managers arises as they may have a rethink of how they view the public, recognizing that the citizen/customer/partner perspective brings new needs such as getting better information about customers, understanding the reality of the public partnering in service production, and perceiving the merits of sharing authority with the public. Needless to say, this structure poses a challenge to the traditional organizational culture. Additionally, members of the public may refuse requests to coproduce, and the citizens may not join in public involvement in a representative and cooperative manner. Thomas claims that the success is more likely if the public managers embrace the people's three roles as customer, partner and citizen.

Figure 1. An Evolutionary Continuum of Public Administration-Citizen Interaction
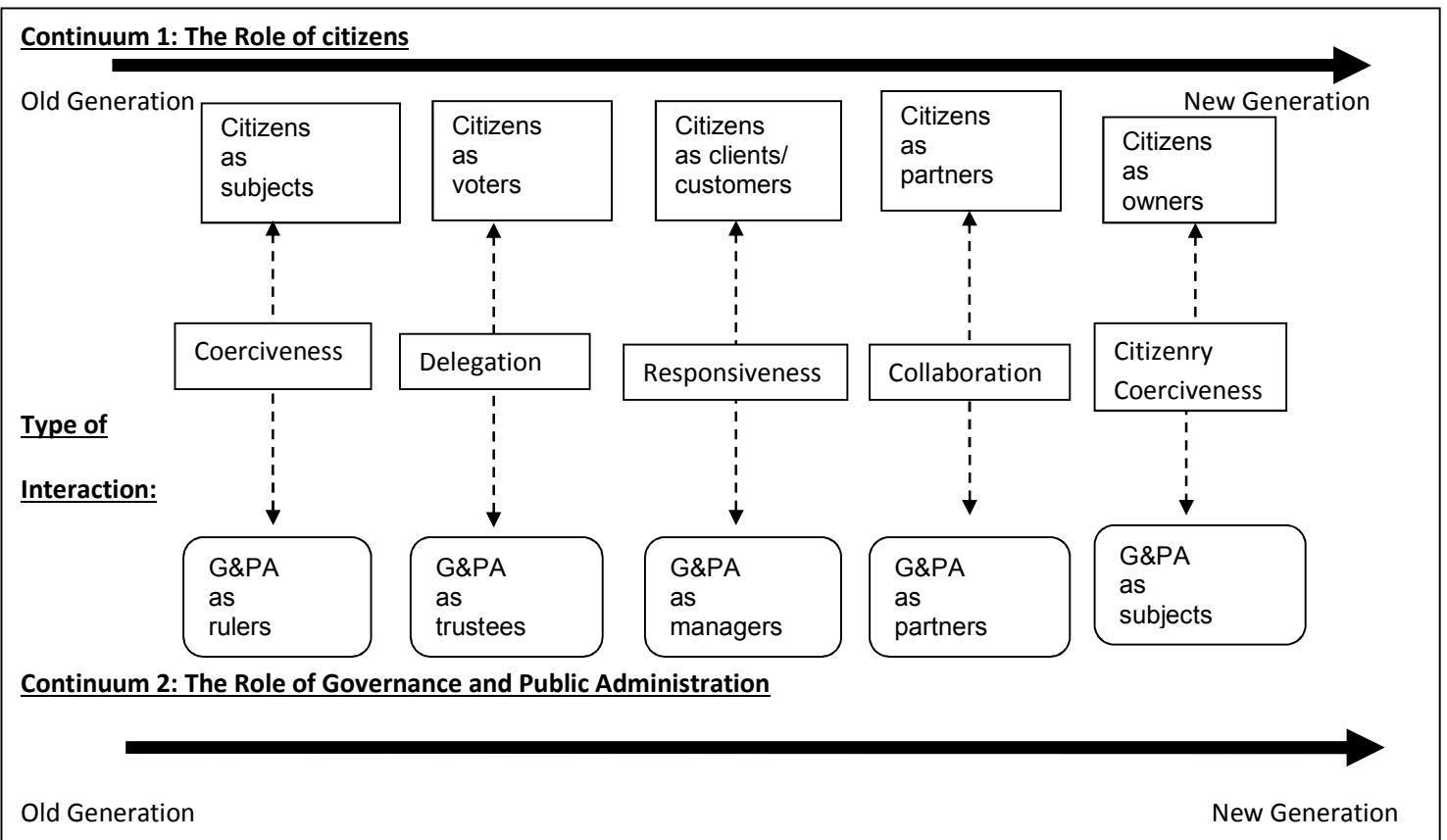
Source: Vigoda, 2002

In the same vein, for Behn (1995), one of three big questions in Public Management is about motivation. He argues that the main question on motivation is how public managers motivate people including those outside the formal authority of government to work vigorously and intelligently towards achieving public purposes.

As a matter of fact, the question of motivation is a long-time question in organizational management studies. In organizational management, this strain of thought thrived during the humanist era, beginning with Maslow in the 1940s hitting the highest point during the 1960s. Maslow's theory has influenced many writers like McGregor, Schein and Argyris (Wart, 2003; Wahba & Bridwell, 1976)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the most popular theories of motivation. The said theory is about the rank and satisfaction of various human needs and how people pursue these needs. Maslow theorized that there is a general pattern of needs satisfaction that people follow in the same sequence. He also postulated that a person could not pursue the next higher need in the hierarchy until her or his currently recognized need was substantially or completely satisfied. It is generally shown as a pyramid with the survival need at the bottom and the self actualization need at the top (Gawel, 1997). However, today the difficulty is that public managers should consider the priorities of people both inside and outside their organization, and citizen engagement techniques provide a useful tool for public managers to ascertain these priorities.

Citizen Engagement Techniques

Table 1 defines the level the technique represents the citizenry and the amount of information it provides for decision makers. Techniques with less informative and representative give limited useful information for policy makers. Public hearings and Come one, come all (COCA) forums fall into this group. These techniques provide little information since those who attend public hearing meetings and COCA forums are people who have the time and/or motivation such as people with commercial interests in the topic. This makes it difficult for officials to interpret information from these meetings. Other techniques such as consulting with advocates provide more information. However, they do not represent the citizenry at large.

The techniques which provide high representativeness use probability sampling to prevent interest groups from being overrepresented. Among these techniques are citizen satisfaction surveys, and focus groups selected with probability sampling and budget pie. However, only budget pie is designed to present information to participants about the topic thus they grasp the context and complexity. Preferences may change when more information is known to participants (Robbins & Simonsen, 2010).

Table 1. Citizen Engagement Techniques

Degree of Information	Degree of Representativeness	
	High	Low
High	Budget pie	Consulting with advocates-activists
Low	simple polls, and citizen satisfaction surveys (e.g. CRC)	COCA, Public Hearings

Adapted from Robbins & Simonsen, 2010

The Synopsis of Civic Engagement in Turkey

In Turkey, there is a growing academic literature about the local governments and participation. The number of scholarly works underlining the significance of local governments for the efficiency of public services and democracy has drastically increased within the last two decades. In one of the early articles on this subject, Aykac (1999) maintains that local democracy is a key concept for the reorganization of local governments, and the participation of the public into decision-making processes is the most vital issue. Likewise, Ozdenkos (1999) and Pustu (2005) argue that the efficiency in public service provision at local level demands the participation of the locals into administrative issues. Besides, Henden & Henden (2005) emphasize the e-municipality applications as a means to facilitate the participation of locals into decisions, and improve the quality of public services by increasing accountability and transparency.

In Turkey, Act. No 5393 was a springboard for strengthening the citizen participation to the decisions on local level. In 2005, the Act No. 5393 on Municipalities gave various new powers to local authorities, and brought new concepts and practices (Kibaroglu & Baskan, 2011). Among these, city councils and voluntary participation to public good provision are the most noteworthy novelties.

The participatory decision-making process at local level is a relatively new development in Turkey. In 1997, participatory platforms were established, for the first time, at municipal level within the framework of LA 21 (Local Agenda 21) processes. Later, in 2005, Article 76 of the Act No. 5393 on Municipalities gave a strong legal basis to city councils (Herguner, 2012). Article 77 of the said Act paved the way for the voluntary participation to various public services at the local level.

Despite the above-mentioned progresses, there are still several shortcomings in civic participation. Esen (2008) highlights the political culture in the country as the main problem as the civic participation is regarded as a way of exploiting public resources. For him, there is still a tendency towards seizing the participation processes for personal gains. Therefore, these processes can lead to growing governmental expenditures at the local level, rather than achieving efficiency.

According to Es (2008), anomic urbanization is a major problem in Turkey. He underlines the drastic change in the population and demographic characteristics of Turkey, stressing that 75 percent of the population were living in the cities in the early years of Turkish Republic. However, today, more than 75 percent of the population live in the cities. He further argues that if local governments fail in providing public services, informal mechanisms replace the formal institutions. This reduces residents' trust in formal institutions, causing alienation of people to their own city. For him, citizen involvement at the local level is crucial in increasing the living standards and creating sustainable cities in the country. Nonetheless, Ebdon (2000) maintains that citizen involvement does not have equal value in all cities as government structure and city culture are influenced by the general characteristics of city residents.

The Case of Antalya City

This is an exploratory case study investigating the prospective social and administrative functions of Citizen Report Card. In this study, a combination of methods was employed. First, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted, and written documents were analyzed. In addition, naturalistic observation technique was used. In naturalistic observation, the researcher makes observation in a particular natural field over a period of time. It involves observing behaviour in its natural context, and is particularly useful if it is employed in tandem with other methods to increase validity and reliability of the research rather than being single method of data gathering (Gökçe, 2012). In this study, the unobtrusive form of naturalistic observation, in which the presence of the observer is not known, was employed.

Antalya is a coastal city located on the southwest of the country. Today, it is the main tourist destination of the country known for its history, nature, and resorts. In 1980, Antalya province had a population of 784,764. In 2013, total population of the province reached 2,158,265. The population of the city also drastically increased as a result *of migration from other cities*. In 2011, the metropolitan municipality had a population of 1,041,972 (TSI, 2014).[1] This paved the way for ongoing debates about the "civic adaptation" of newcomers, and the quality of public services to keep up with the rapidly growing population.

In 2012, the Antalya City Council, together with the Antalya Governorship and Akdeniz University, launched a Citizen Report Card (CRC) initiative to reveal the views of the citizens about the quality of public services within the boundary of Antalya Metropolitan Municipality. The fundamental basis of the CRC was to get the views of the residents from different segments of the society on the success of public services affecting their lives.

The CRC project was conducted with households between the age of 18 and 65 in a total of 3064 houses. A survey questionnaire using the five-point likert-type scale was created and data were collected between 26 May and 10 June, 2012 to measure the success of 31 different kinds of public service work as seen from the eyes of residents. The results indicated that the greatest problem of the city residents was transportation with a disapproval rate of 63%, while the most successful public service work was cultural events and local festivals (ACC, 2012). The results of the CRC were later published by the Antalya City Council.

The Antalya Metropolitan Municipality reacted on the CRC results about transportation and traffic problems, stating:

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[1] With the Act No. 6360 passed in 2012, several new metropolitan municipalities were founded in the country and the total number of metropolitan municipalities reached 29. See Ulusoy & Akdemir (2013) for details. In addition, the administrative boundaries of the said municipalities were enlarged after the local elections in March 2014. Accordingly, 19 districts were included to the administrative boundaries of the Antalya Metropolitan Municipality after the said elections in 2014. Thus, the current population to be served by the municipality is higher.

According to the CRC, the principal problems for citizens are transportation (%63) and sewer system (%13). Nonetheless, for us, it is clear that the reason behind these problems is the high rate of migration to Antalya city, which causes unplanned urbanization. However, according to the satisfaction survey-i.e. CRC-migration (%6) is not regarded as a major problem for the city. This shows that citizen perception is derived from basic observations, and it is deprived of the context.

This feedback from the metropolitan municipality reflects the *information asymmetry* between citizens and public managers. Thus, this critique coincides with the views regarding the aforesaid pitfalls of satisfaction surveys. However, when she was asked to comment on the critique of municipality officials, S.K., the chairwoman of the City Council, (semi-structured – face to face -open ended interview, September 24, 2014) disapproved of this approach and offered the following remarks:

We disagree with this approach since we prioritize how public services facilitate the citizens' life. If the said services do not increase the quality of life, or if the citizens believe in this way, the citizens may naturally show their disapproval. The CRC paved the way for public institutions in Antalya to check and revise themselves.

As a matter of fact, these differing views are a sign of the aforementioned normative-instrumental perspective debates about the community engagement. The City Council clearly regards these studies as a way of strengthening citizenship, whereas the Metropolitan Municipality considers them as a means to strengthen service delivery. Thus, the former views the CRC from a normative perspective, while the latter is inclined to take it from an instrumental perspective. When she was asked whether she has observed any change about the organizational culture-from an inward looking approach to a more outward looking one-in the aftermath of the CRC, the chairwoman of Antalya City Council remarked as follows:

To tell the truth, we have been working for a transformation towards a new public service ethos for more than 16 years since the founding of our city council. The CRC is only a part of this goal, and it is not the first initiative of ours in this way. However, undeniably, it helped to make a change in the perception of public managers in a way that motivates them not to take the decisions at office but in interaction with citizens to make a thorough analysis of the problems… This year, the municipality allocated funds in its budget to support similar initiatives. Therefore, we may expect that similar studies reflecting the views of residents will be conducted more often in the future… Concerning the traffic problem, after the release of the CRC results, public institutions in charge made several meetings on the issue and there are several ongoing works to minimize the traffic problem.

Recent developments in the city justify this opinion. For example, the Antalya Metropolitan Municipality has recently held a mini popular poll on the proposed new tramline system planned to be completed before the city's hosting of the EXPO 2016, which will be the first EXPO event to be organized in Turkey.[2] The voting included the locals of 20 neighborhoods, and the Mayor promised to continue consulting Antalya locals about new projects in the future (http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/antalya-holds-poll-for-building-of-tramline-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=71205&NewsCatID=341).

Additionally, in Antalya, a serious momentum on the railway and maritime investments is expected for the coming years to solve the transportation problems. For example, a high speed train project which will link the city to other cities is being planned to be completed until EXPO 2016 (http://www.antalya.bel.tr/ENG/content.asp?MAINMENUID=38&MENUID=167). On this issue, several Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the city launched signature gathering initiatives, and collected signatures from the residents of Antalya to support the high-speed train project. The author of this study also gave his signature to prop up the undertaking of the project in one of the said initiatives.

Furthermore, as a long time resident of the city since 1979-though with intervals-the author observes a growing interest of the locals in affecting the developments in the city which will or may have an impact on their lives. For example, between the months of June and August 2014, the author took daily walks through the main street of the city-the Sarampol Street-and observed the social and political events in the street. The observed number of demonstrations and rallies, organized by different groups and attended by visibly more than 100 people, were about 2-3 times in a week. Given the fact that the number of rallies was so small during the same period ten years ago, and almost none 20 years ago, this may be considered another significant indicator for the growing interest of the residents to have a say in the decisions. However, it is more appropriate to link this to the mounting interest of locals in participating to the decisions rather than simply considering it as a sign of

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[2] For more info about Antalya EXPO 2016, see http://www.expo2016antalya.org.tr/en

deteriorating public services or social conditions. This observable fact compels the public managers to develop a new public ethos in order to take heed of what locals demand. Different citizen engagement techniques including CRC should be applied for this purpose, even if the feedback from locals has limited use for the enhancement of public service delivery due to information asymmetry.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Studies

As discussed in this paper, today, motivating people including those outside the formal authority of government to work cooperatively towards achieving public purposes is one of the main tasks of public managers. The major challenge of public managers is the shift from inward-looking approach to outward-looking approach which compels them to consider the values and priorities of city residents. Thus, the change in city culture and priorities of city residents should be carefully examined to improve a model for use by public managers in deciding about the level of public involvement in decision making and methods of involvement (e.g. CRC).

In the light of the scholarly debates previously mentioned, it may be said that even if there is a discrepancy on the purpose of citizen involvement-instrumental or normative-there is a trend among local governments to examine ways to ease the participation of locals into decision processes and to make them more engaged with the government officials. Likewise, this study shows that there has been a change in the organizational culture of public sector units in Antalya city toward a welcoming approach to the engagement of citizens in public affairs. Compared to the past, the city managers are more welcoming to the participation of residents in the decision-making processes, and the residents are more vocal compared to the past.

In the sense of initiatives such as the CRC, information asymmetry is regarded as an excuse for neglecting the views of participants by the public managers. However, revealing the existence of the information asymmetry may also be deemed as a sign for the need of better informing the locals about the public services. In that case, different techniques such as *Budget pie* that is designed to present information to participants about the topic in order to make them grasp the context and complexity may be preferred.

To sum up, more comprehensive analyses of policy-making processes and citizen engagement outcomes are necessary for a better evaluation. In this study, a combination of observations, interviews, and written documents was selected to complete the case study investigation. As the study is a single case study, the results do not provide certainty that the case is truly representative. Broad generalizations from this study are not advisable, and future studies in different contexts are needed to validate or improve the results of this research.

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