



DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Nature of Modern Urban Government

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1. Concept

What is the urban government we are discussing and want to form? We need find a definition of this government otherwise we will be distracted.

The urban government, as simply understood, is machinery for controlling townspeople and social life under normal conditions by using different instruments, such as law and propaganda. According to this definition, we have had urban governments for a very long time, possibly since the 1870s when the first colonial towns were built.

Thus, we are discussing modern urban government. It is a product of an industrialized and modernized society. Even if we haven't developed into such a society yet, we should build a modern government right now because development is always a

long process.

Generally, urban management is considered as "relations between the State and citizens, the leader and the led, and the central and local governments. Those relations imply political legality and trust that could be achieved by responsibility, transparency, and active responses from all partners (governments of all levels, communities, civic organizations, NGOs, etc.) taking part in social activities voluntarily."

In his article in VIE/95/051 national project, Robert Van der Hoff, senior expert from HIS Institute (Netherlands), suggests the following definition: "Urban management is a continuous activity of mobilizing and seeking for different resources, coordinating to make plans and programs,

building, running, maintaining and preserving public service and environment in order to obtain goals of the sustainable development by urban government."

Thus, the urban management is "a scientific system and an art of coordinating in all aspects and scopes, from macro to micro levels, from sewerage to parliament, in order to help millions of people in a small existential space live in balance, and allow all differences and diversity to exist peacefully together."

2. Three formative phases and characteristics of the modern urban management machinery

The urban government, at whatever phase of development, should take shape based on the following factors:

- General education level of

townspeople

- Political and democratic awareness of the people and the ruling party

- Level of economic development of the city and the country in question

- Traditional cultures of urban communities

- Level of scientific and technological development

- Rate and degree of urbanization and industrialization

- Regional and international background

take part.

The direct democracy means that the voice of the people plays a decisive role in the policy making and leader selecting processes.

- Direct ballot: This could be used for selecting presidents, governors or mayors. To prevent this from becoming a formality, candidates (the number of candidates must be larger than one and they are nominated by various parties and organizations) present their action plans and launch election campaigns under various forms. Mayors elected by these

countries, many politicians decided to retire when their credit rating is lower than 60%.

- Popular forum: Such forum could be held by the press or TV channels (usually private ones) or held outdoors in which any citizen is allowed to express their political view as long as they observe certain principles. The Singaporean government has gathered a lot of what Lee Kwan Yew called "people's initiatives" from such forums.

- Dialog with high-ranking officials: These dialogs could take place on TV or go online in which officials explain their policies and answer question raised by the people or even a kid. In many developing countries, this form is increasingly common.

- Demonstration: This could be seen as a thermometer for the political atmosphere. Any agreement or disagreement by communities has its own political meaning, which help authorities to realize public opinions about some problems or personnel in their machinery. However, it could be exploited by extremists to attack individuals and authorities causing riots or social unrest.

The direct democracy is not a totally new phenomenon or discovery. Many forms of the direct democracy have been made into laws; and concepts and theories on these forms have made their appearance in ancient Athens in the 7th century B.C. and its republic lasted for more than 300 years. The direct democracy is the real nature of a civil society and the management machinery of the society. What is more important is the fact that the direct democracy should be made into laws, regulations, bodies and practices that help the management machinery to operate well and individuals living in that society reach their full creative potentials ■

Development of the urban government usually experiences the following phases.

	Social characteristics	Characteristics of urban management system	Structure
Phase 1	Fast and extensive urbanization; fast and raw industrialization; low general education; residents getting accustomed to democracy; open policies and economic reform; per capita GDP of under US\$1,000 per year.	High centralization, top-down policy making and promulgating; state control over all domains; widespread subsidization and asking-granting mechanism. Management machinery based on appointments and indirect democracy through elective bodies. Control over society by laws and dictatorship.	Pyramid
Phase 2	Intensive urbanization; high-level industrialization; high general education; per capita GDP of over US\$2,000	Intensive delegation of rights with participation of the people; more developed civic organizations and NGOs; a stronger private sector; the State control contracted; and direct democracy. Society control by laws and other social forces. A professional, transparent and honest machinery for urban management.	Diamond
Phase 3	High-level urbanization and post-industrialization; higher quality of life; higher general education; per capita GDP of over US\$10,000	The State acts as a protector and supporter of socioeconomic development. Radical delegation of rights; direct democracy; the leading role in economic growth by the private sector; residents acting as real owners of the city.	Hub-and-spoke shape

3. Direct democratization

One of important measure of the modern management machinery is the degree of democracy of the society. To the macroeconomic policies local residents could only contribute through their representation. Opportunities for local residents to enjoy the direct democracy are not numerous, exception for some occasions for talking to NA members, and in such talks, only selective participants are allowed to

open, direct, free and transparent ballots are usually people of prestige and talent. Chinese cities adopted position of mayor and direct ballot in 1995.

- Referendum: Citizens have rights to start and take part in periodical or irregular referenda. They are used to present the public opinion about different things (a regulation, a legal act, or confidence in an official). Most Southeast Asian countries have adopted referendum laws since the 1990s. In developed