# ARTICLES

# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AS ONE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF OPEN GOVERNMENT

*A participação cidadã como um dos princípios de governo aberto*

*La participación ciudadana como uno de los principios de gobierno abierto*

**Daniel José Silva Oliveira\*¹** | djso@ufmg.br | ORCID: 0000-0002-0475-6564
**Ivan Beck Ckagnazaroff¹** | ivanbeck00@gmail.com | ORCID: 0000-0002-8179-269X

\*Correspondent author
¹Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Centro de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisas em Administração, Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil.

## ABSTRACT

In recent decades, citizen participation has become an instrument for deepening democracy and qualifying public management. Following this trend, some pioneering open government initiatives have included participation as one of their key principles. However, field literature has superficially discussed the meaning and characteristics of participation as a principle of open government. Therefore, this study aims to discuss different ways of classifying citizen participation and distinguish which of its characteristics are considered adequate as an open government principle. The results demonstrate that citizen participation in the open government context must go beyond simple consultations, as it is necessary to guarantee citizens' protagonism and involvement in political decisions. There must be real and active participation, in which citizens are part of the policy process and decision-making, contributing to strengthening citizenship, deliberative democracy, and the legitimacy of decisions.

**Keywords:** open government, citizen participation, social participation, participation typologies, governance.

### RESUMO

*Nas últimas décadas, a participação cidadã constituiu-se como um instrumento de aprofundamento democrático e de qualificação da gestão pública. Seguindo essa tendência, algumas iniciativas pioneiras de governo aberto incluíram a participação como um de seus princípios fundamentais. No entanto, o significado e as características da participação como um princípio de governo aberto têm sido discutidos superficialmente pela literatura do campo. Portanto, os objetivos deste estudo foram discutir diferentes formas de se classificar a participação cidadã e distinguir quais de suas características são consideradas adequadas enquanto princípio de governo aberto. Em síntese, o estudo demonstra que a participação cidadã no contexto do governo aberto deve ir além das simples consultas, pois é preciso garantir o protagonismo e o envolvimento dos cidadãos nas decisões políticas. Faz-se necessário que haja participação real e ativa, na qual os cidadãos possam fazer parte do processo político e tomar parte nas decisões, contribuindo para o fortalecimento da cidadania, da democracia deliberativa e da legitimidade das decisões.*

***Palavras-chave:*** *governo aberto, participação cidadã, participação social, tipologias de participação, governança.*

### RESUMEN

*En las últimas décadas, la participación ciudadana se ha convertido en un instrumento para profundizar en la democracia y mejorar la gestión pública. Siguiendo esta tendencia, algunas iniciativas pioneras de gobierno abierto han incluido la participación como uno de sus principios fundamentales. Sin embargo, el significado y las características de la participación como principio del gobierno abierto han sido discutidos superficialmente por la literatura en el campo. Por tanto, el objetivo de este estudio fue discutir diferentes formas de clasificar la participación ciudadana y distinguir cuáles de sus características se consideran adecuadas como principio de gobierno abierto. En síntesis, el estudio demuestra que la participación ciudadana en el contexto del gobierno abierto debe ir más allá de las simples consultas, ya que es necesario garantizar el protagonismo y la involucración de los ciudadanos en las decisiones políticas. Es necesario que haya una participación real y activa, donde los ciudadanos puedan hacer parte del proceso político y tomar parte en las decisiones, contribuyendo al fortalecimiento de la ciudadanía, la democracia deliberativa y la legitimidad de las decisiones.*

***Palabras clave:*** *gobierno abierto, participación ciudadana, participación social, tipologías de participación, gobernanza.*

## INTRODUCTION

Participation is a term originated from the Latin *participatio* (*pars-in-actio*), which means to take part or be part of an act or process of collective actions or public activities (Teixeira, 1997; Kurnia, Susmiyati, & Hamzah, 2016; Abreu, Silva e Oliveira, & Kraemer, 2019).

When it comes to the relationship between the state and society, participation is the process by which citizens can interact directly with public agents, interfere in the political-administrative cycle, and influence the decision-making process based on their interests and desires (Telles, 1994; Dagnino, 2003).

In recent decades, national and subnational governments in many countries have faced increasing pressure to engage citizens in public management, whether through new legislative requirements, the growth of activism and citizen engagement, or changes in values related to citizenship and democracy (Dagnino & Teixeira, 2014). Since then, the issue of participation has been discussed more intensely, involving governments, civil society organizations, and academia, often leading to proposals and initiatives for institutionalizing participation in different contexts.

There are various open government initiatives around the world, such as the Open Government Initiative (United States), Government 2.0 (Australia), and the international Open Government Partnership, created to promote participation, transparency, and collaboration, elements that are widely recognized as open government principles (Wirtz & Birkmeyer, 2015; Wirtz, Weyerer, & Rösch, 2018; Ramírez-Alujas, 2020).

However, in most studies on open government, the meaning and characteristics of these principles have been superficially addressed (Hansson, Belkacem, & Ekenberg, 2014; Wootten & Kiss, 2018). According to Tai (2021), there is a theoretical gap as most field studies focus more on transparency and less on participation and collaboration. Therefore, this study discusses different forms of classifying citizen participation and seeks to distinguish which characteristics of this participation are considered adequate as a principle of open government.

The research is based on a non-systematic literature review examining articles, books, and documents that specifically discuss the concepts and classifications of citizen participation regarding its typologies, forms, mechanisms, determinants, levels, and implications, observing the characteristics of participation as a principle of open government. The technique of a non-systematic review was chosen due to its exploratory nature and because it is a literature review suitable for synthesizing knowledge based on complementary studies, especially when the research objective involves multiple aspects of different topics (Dijkers, 2009). The main bibliographic databases consulted were: ScienceDirect, Web of Science, Scopus, Online Scientific Electronic Library (SciELO), Redalyc, and EBSCO. Classic books and other important works for the contemporary debate on citizen participation were also consulted, as well as documents from international organizations.

This article is structured into four sections, including this introduction. The next section presents the main forms of classifying participation. The third section discusses the characteristics of participation as a principle of open government, and the last presents the final considerations.

## MULTIPLE FACES OF PARTICIPATION

The academic debate on participation has occurred more frequently along two distinct lines: political participation and citizen (or social) participation.

Political participation is associated with representative democracy or indirect participation through elected representatives (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2017). It refers to the action of individuals or groups in the competition for political power and bargaining when choosing political goals and means to achieve them (Avelar, 2007; van Deth, 2016). This participation comprises a set of activities around political life, such as mobilization against or in favor of political authorities, movements to claim rights, lobbying, political action by various actors (elites, churches, military, etc.), and electoral activities (voting, running for office, acting in political parties, working in electoral campaigns, holding political office, among others) (Milbrath, 1981; Cornwall & Gaventa, 2017).

The demand for participation nowadays goes beyond these modes of political participation. According to Dagnino (2003), the direct participation of civil society in decision-making processes and formulating policies has been a critical demand in the struggles for citizenship and to ensure universal rights to all citizens. However, adopting direct participation requires a radical transformation in power relations between the state and society.

On the other hand, citizen or social participation occurs through the redistribution of power. Unlike political participation, citizen participation challenges the conception of a strictly representative democracy that restricts participation to electoral activities (Carneiro & Brasil, 2016). It is a concept related to citizenship and democratic governance (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2017).

Briefly, citizen participation consists of including citizens in political decisions and in the process of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Milani, 2008; Dagnino & Teixeira, 2014). For Santos and Gugliano (2015), the inclusion of citizens in deliberation processes on public policies aims to fill the gap between the demands of civil society and state decisions, which were previously based on assessing interests through forming electoral majorities. The idea is not to replace the state but to involve citizens directly in governance processes, urging politicians to listen to their constituents and bureaucrats to become more receptive to those they are supposed to serve (Cornwall, 2008).

Some authors argue that meaningful citizen participation not only contributes to the decision-making process but also facilitates social stability by developing a sense of community and promoting acceptance and respect for the governance process (Pateman, 1970; Callahan, 2007). It is worth mentioning that the construction of democratic governance through citizen participation is a complex and conflicting process linked to multiple ideological, social, political, and methodological factors that give rise to a wide range of interpretations (Teixeira, 2002; Dagnino & Teixeira, 2014).

The different interpretations and approaches to participation can be better understood by classifying participation into different typologies (Cornwall, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to recognize its forms, types, mechanisms, determinants, levels, and implications.

## Forms of participation

The form of participation can be spontaneous, voluntary, induced, provoked, imposed, or granted. Spontaneous participation is where participants form fluid groups without stable organization. It occurs when an individual participates out of their own conviction, without being influenced or persuaded by other institutions or individuals (Dusseldorp, 1981; Kurnia et al., 2016). In voluntary participation, participants create groups and define their own organization, goals, and work methods, as seen in trade unions, professional associations, cooperatives, social movements, and political parties (Dusseldorp, 1981; Meister, 1984). Induced participation occurs when other citizens or institutions persuade citizens or civil society organizations to participate in certain activities (Dusseldorp, 1981; Kurnia et al., 2016). Provoked participation is the situation in which the group is formed by external agents with objectives that differ from those of the group itself (Dusseldorp, 1981; Meister, 1984). In imposed participation, the individual is obliged to be part of groups and to carry out certain activities considered indispensable, as occurs, for example, with religious or tribal rituals and military enlistment (Dusseldorp, 1981). Lastly, granted participation occurs when organizations and/or public agents grant decision-making power or influence to subordinates and/or citizens, as in the case of participatory budgeting (Avritzer, 2008; Abreu et al., 2019).

## Types of participation

As for the type, participation can be classified as direct or indirect, active or passive, symbolic or real, complete or partial (Callahan, 2007; Dusseldorp, 1981; Richardson, 1983; Rothman, 1996; Abreu et al., 2019).

According to Richardson (1983), direct participation refers to people's involvement in influencing government policies through personal (face-to-face) interaction with official spokespersons. It occurs when individuals actively participate in specific activities during a participatory process, such as attending meetings, engaging in discussions, or voting for or against a project. On the other hand, indirect participation involves methods by which people participate through systems of representation without direct interaction with government actors (e.g., pressure groups, unions, protests).

For Callahan (2007) and Abreu et al. (2019), active participation occurs when individuals are engaged, take part, and act beyond merely choosing predetermined alternatives. In contrast, passive participation implies an unmotivated individual who is present but does not actively engage. They participate but do not have a say in the decision-making process.

According to Rothman (1996), symbolic participation occurs when individuals have minimal influence on decisions but are kept under the illusion that they exercise power, whereas real participation is when individuals effectively influence institutional life processes.

According to Dusseldorp (1981), participation can also be classified as complete or partial in terms of the involvement of participants in the various stages of the political-administrative cycle. Participation is considered complete when citizens, directly or indirectly, are involved in all stages of the process. On the other hand, it is considered partial when citizens are not involved in any of the stages of the public policy cycle.

## Mechanisms of participation

Citizen participation may occur through different mechanisms more or less formalized, and it has deliberative or only advisory and informative roles (Dagnino & Teixeira, 2014). Table 1 shows some of the main mechanisms of citizen participation.

Table 1. Mechanisms of participation

| MECHANISMS OF PARTICIPATION | PARTICIPANTS | CHARACTERISTICS |
|---|---|---|
| Public hearings | Citizens willing to participate. The number of participants is limited according to the capacity of the venue. Most of the hearing is dedicated to presentations by specialists and politicians | Agencies present their plans in open forums. The audience can express opinions but has no direct impact in terms of recommendation |
| Advisory committees | The committee is a small group selected by the government to represent points of view from different groups or communities | The government summons the group to examine a significant issue. There is interaction with representatives from the sector impacted by the referred issue |
| Management councils | Citizens, groups representing businesses, unions, governmental agencies, and civil society organizations | It is a collegiate body formed of representatives of the government and civil society. It offers a platform for discussion and formulation of policies in several areas. Management councils can be advisory or deliberative |
| Deliberative consultations | Random sample of citizens from a specific territory | A random sample of citizens is asked to respond to a set of questions, and a smaller group representative of this first sample is invited to participate in a deliberative event |
| Participatory budget | Open to the general public | Process in which citizens can deliberate about the allocation of part of the budget of a municipality or region. The process occurs through regional gatherings and direct negotiation with the government |
| Public forum | Open to the general public | Public event in which members of the government formally present an issue and a public debate is initiated |

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on Webler and Renn (1995), Rowe and Frewer (2000), Avritzer and Pereira (2005), Orr (2013), and Dagnino and Teixeira (2014).

The public hearing is one of the most common citizen participation mechanisms, adopted by several governments worldwide. It is an official meeting in which the public receives information and expresses opinions on the topic for which the audience was summoned (Webler & Renn, 1995). Some authors criticize public hearings as a citizen participation mechanism because

many of them are held mainly to meet legal requirements, tend to be inaccessible to the main stakeholders, and are easily dominated by some interest groups instead of promoting citizen participation. According to critics, they are often symbolic and superficial processes (Webler & Renn, 1995; Orr, 2013). Therefore, their effectiveness depends on the institutional design, the rules of the process, the inclusion of stakeholders, the resources available, and the power relations established (Lourenço & Vieira Junior, 2019).

An advisory committee is a purpose-built group of stakeholders who meet regularly to share ideas on specific issues. According to Orr (2013), it can provide external knowledge and help governments think constructively about public policy impacts. Unlike a management board, an advisory committee has no formal authority or power; its role is simply to advise as needed. Factors such as the frequency with which the committee is requested, its composition, and the capacity of its members are decisive for its effectiveness as a participation mechanism.

The management councils are collegiate bodies articulating the state and civil society to act in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Dagnino & Teixeira, 2014). According to Martins, Ckagnazaroff, and Lage (2012), these are spaces not only for opinion but also for action in which there is an effort to identify public demands and interests so that they are implemented in the form of public policy. As these councils can be advisory or deliberative, their effectiveness as a citizen participation mechanism depends on how their members are chosen and their power of influence (Avritzer & Pereira, 2005).

Deliberative consultation is a participation mechanism that aims to identify the behavior of public opinion when citizens receive information about certain issues. According to Orr (2013), in deliberative consultations, a random sample of citizens from a specific territory is selected and submitted to a set of questions. A representative sample of these respondents is then invited to a deliberative event. In the event, they receive information about the issues addressed in the questions applied to the larger group and are divided into small groups to discuss the theme. At the end of the event, the participants are asked to answer another set of questions. Finally, their answers are compared to the answers the larger group had provided at the beginning of the process, examining whether opinions have changed due to the discussions held at the event. The results suggest what the public would think if they were more informed and involved with a given issue. However, the effectiveness of this mechanism depends on what one does with the results of the consultation and the extent to which the views of participants are considered in decision-making afterward.

The participatory budget is a participation mechanism that started in Brazil in 1989, in the city of Porto Alegre (RS), which later spread to hundreds of municipalities in the country and in different parts of the world, such as Argentina, Uruguay, France, and Spain (Abreu & Pinho, 2014; Dagnino & Teixeira, 2014). Despite being practiced in different ways, participatory budgeting is basically a process of democratic deliberations and decision-making in which citizens can influence or decide on the allocation of part of the budget of a municipality or region through periodic assemblies and stages of direct negotiation with the government (Avritzer, 2012; Cunha, Coelho, & Pozzebon, 2014).

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the digital participatory budget was created in Brazil to increase the number of participants and follow the trend of using the internet to bring citizens closer to their governments. The initiative of the city of Belo Horizonte stands out. In 2006, the city managed to increase the participation of citizens, attracting those who were not used to engaging in the face-to-face participatory budget by adopting internet-mediated participation (Abreu & Pinho, 2014). Although face-to-face and digital participatory budgets are usually described as deliberative arrangements, this is not always true in practice. According to Sampaio (2016), in a considerable number of cases, the participatory budget is characterized only as an advisory arrangement. Therefore, its effectiveness as a citizen participation mechanism depends, to a large extent, on the government's political will to implement the citizens' demands and on the engagement of civil society (Avritzer, 2008).

Public forums are meetings open to the public, which are held in a place that accommodates stakeholders or in an online environment through platforms, in which government members make a formal presentation to participants on topics of interest, and subsequently, a debate is carried out through questions and comments. This participation mechanism allows disseminating information and resolving controversial issues through public debate (Orr, 2013). However, for public forums to be effective, the event must be accessible to those interested and capable of influencing political decisions.

It is worth highlighting here that public forums, participatory budgeting, and other participation mechanisms can expand their scope through information and communication technologies (ICTs). Digital participation platforms, social media, and electronic communication applications can be used to disseminate information or establish two-way communication between government and citizens in an interactive format (Orr, 2013; Hansson et al., 2014). However, although such tools have the advantage of enabling the involvement of a large number of citizens in the public debate, which is an advantage, their accessibility limitations must be considered. Citizens who do not have access to these technological tools may be left out of the political process if this format is the only one used for participation. Therefore, without digital inclusion, it is impossible to realize the potential of ICTs as a participatory tool (Abreu & Pinho, 2014).

## Determinants of participation

According to Dusseldorp (1981), Rowe and Frewer (2000), Abelson et al. (2003), Hassenforder, Smajgl and Ward (2015), Sabioni, Ferreira, Braga and Almeida (2016), and Sandfort and Quick (2017), some criteria are decisive for participation, such as information, representativeness, capacity, independence, frequency, involvement, permanence, influence, and context.

The information criterion establishes that participants must have access to appropriate and relevant information about processes and procedures, including how they are selected for decision-making (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). The representativeness criterion means that participants must correspond to a broadly representative sample of the population interested in or affected by a given policy. Thus, rights are not deprived for any group or segment of society (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Hassenforder et al., 2015). The ability criterion corresponds to the participant's level of knowledge necessary for them to be able to critically evaluate the information presented

and understand the important elements of the decision-making process (Abelson et al., 2003). The independence criterion determines that the participation process must be conducted independently and managed impartially (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). The frequency criterion is defined by the number of times participants are invited to give their opinion in decision-making processes (Hassenforder et al., 2015). Participation is considered intense when there is a high frequency of participatory activities (e.g., weekly, monthly), such as regular group meetings, or casual when there are irregular meetings or participatory events with long gaps between them. The involvement criterion indicates that participants should be involved as early as possible in the political process, as soon as value judgments about a given policy become prominent (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). The criterion of permanence refers to the extent to which the group of participants remains constant or changes throughout the different participatory events (Hassenforder et al., 2015). The influence criterion means that participation must have a genuine impact on the direction of policies and not just give apparent legitimacy without the real intention of considering the opinion of participants (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Finally, the context criterion concerns the social, political, cultural, economic, legal, and institutional environments, among others, that affect the dynamics of participatory processes, decision-making, and results (Hassenforder et al., 2015; Sabioni et al., 2016; Sandfort & Quick, 2017).

## Levels of participation

The involvement of citizens in political actions and decisions can occur at different levels. Some authors and organizations have worked to develop participation scales to improve understanding of the different possible levels of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Wilcox, 1994; OECD, 2001; IAP2, 2021).

Sherry Arnstein (1969), in her study "A ladder of citizen participation," proposed a scale that divides participation levels into "eight rungs of a ladder," as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation
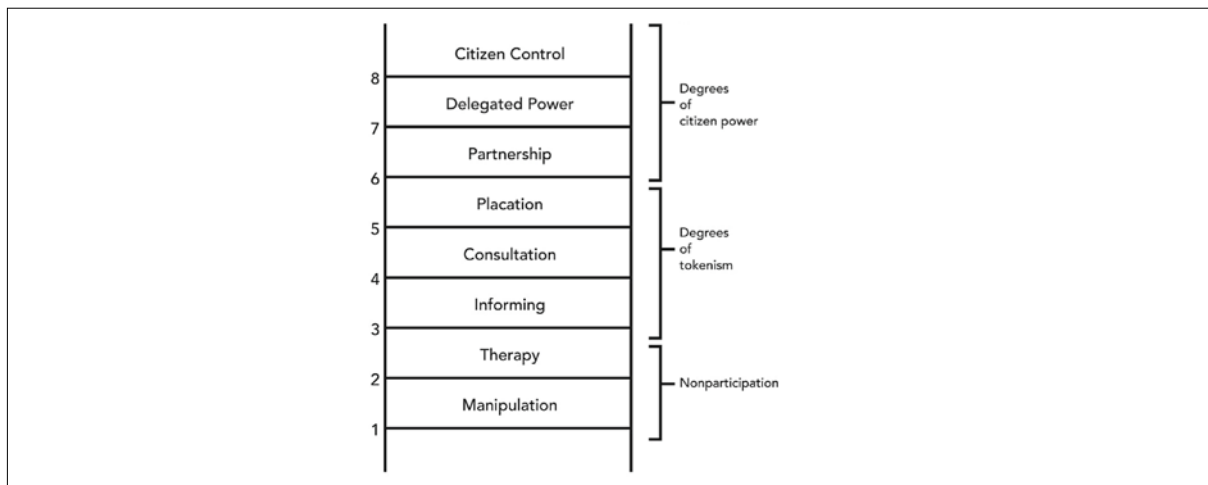


Source: Arnstein (1969, p. 217).

Figure 1 presents the levels of citizen participation in government decisions in ascending order of decision-making power. In Arnstein's conception (1969), the first two rungs of the ladder (manipulation and therapy) are the level of non-participation. They are most commonly seen in authoritarian governments, as their real aim is not to allow people to participate in planning or conducting policy but to enable power holders to compel or thwart participation.

The third and fourth rungs (informing and consultation) belong to a level of limited granting of power that only provides access to information about basic rights, still in a top-down approach, and that organized society (associations, unions, among others) is heard. However, even if organized, citizens at this level have no guarantees that their opinions can influence political decisions.

On the fifth rung (placation), citizens can express their opinion to the rulers, but the rulers still hold the power of the final decision and are not obliged to consider the citizens' viewpoint. The sixth rung (partnership) allows citizens to negotiate as equals with rulers. This is the co-participation level. On the seventh rung (delegated power), citizens are the majority in decision-making forums, having the power to ensure non-state public interests. The eighth and last rung (citizen control) deals with the centralization of decision-making power in the hands of citizens, who are responsible for planning and management without intermediaries.

The logic behind Arnstei's (1969) proposal is that the higher the rung on the ladder, the greater the level of participation. From the fifth rung onward, the citizen has an increasing ability to bargain, negotiate compensations, or even take control.

Inspired by Arnstein's work, Wilcox (1994) proposed another five-level participation scale, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Wilcox's levels of participation
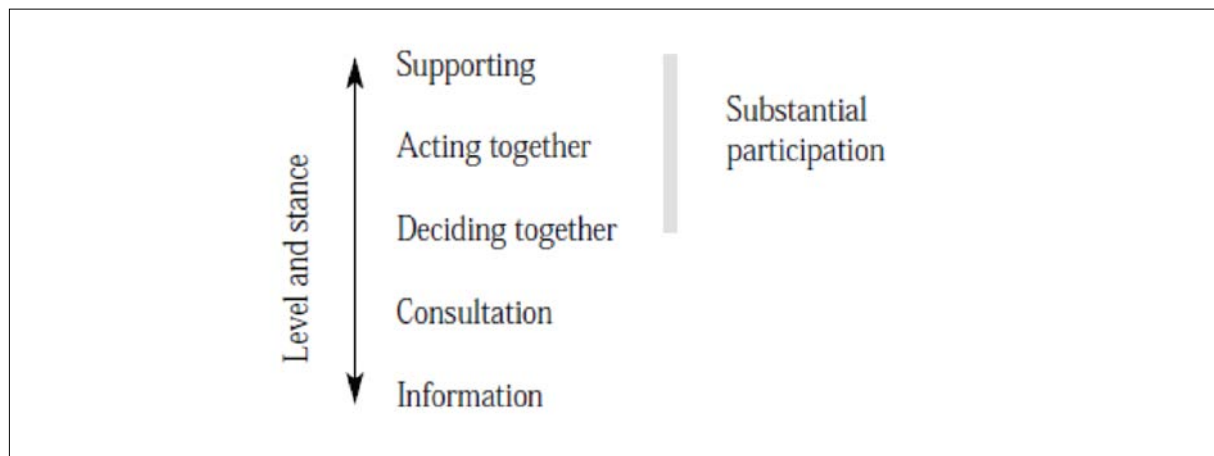


Source: Wilcox (1994, p. 8).

In Wilcox's (1994) participation scale, the lowest level of participation is "information," where individuals are informed about something already planned or a decision already made.

At the level of "consultation," the government can, discretionarily, consult the citizens asking for criticism or suggestions to solve a problem.

In "deciding together," citizens can make proposals, recommend measures, and decide the best way forward with the public administration, whereas "acting together" involves deciding and working collaboratively. At this level, participants can develop ideas or participate in the implementation of plans. This requires a common language, a shared vision, and the means to pursue such a vision.

At the level of "supporting" independent community interests, the administration helps citizens to develop and carry out their plans, albeit in a limited way.

Similarly, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) developed a participation scale called the "public participation spectrum," containing five levels (Table 2).

Table 2. Public participation spectrum of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

|  | INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE | COLLABORATE | EMPOWER |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public participation goal | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision. | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. | To place final decision-making in the hands of the public. |
| Promise to the public | We will keep you informed. | We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. | We will implement what you decide. |

Source: IAP2 (2021).

The IAP2 (2021) public participation spectrum primarily focuses on public engagement with decisions made by government agencies, particularly in situations where the government is the final authority and the public has decision-making power only at the last level of the scale (empower). At the first level (inform), the public only receives information without interaction. The levels "consult," "involve," and "collaborate" include interaction between the government and the public, but each level differs in the degree of engagement and ability to influence the decision-making process.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopted a participation scale that is simpler than the previous ones, containing only three levels, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Scale of participation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
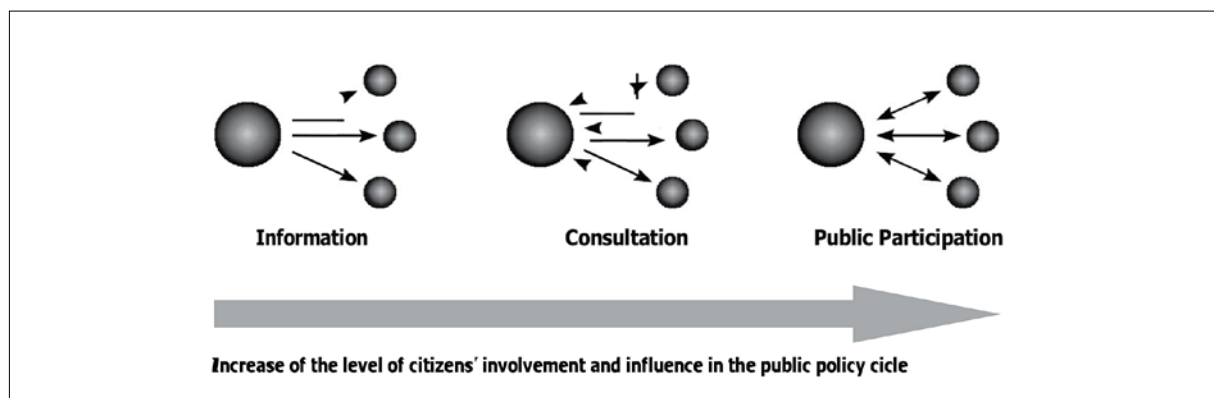


Source: OECD (2001).

At the information level, the government informs policies discretionarily, or citizens access information on demand. In both cases, information essentially flows in one direction, from government to citizens, in a one-way relationship. At the consultation level, the government requests and receives feedback from citizens on policies, which implies that the government provides citizens with information beforehand. Consultation thus creates a limited two-way relationship between the government and citizens. Finally, at the active participation level, citizens actively participate in decision-making and in the phases of the policy cycle, but the government is responsible for the final decision regarding policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

Despite the different focuses and number of levels, the scales of participation by Arnstein (1969), Wilcox (1994), OECD (2001), and IAP2 (2021) have some points in common. Table 3 represents a compilation of these points.

Table 3. Levels of participation

| AUTHORS | INFORMATION | CONSULTATION | RECOMMENDATION | CO-PARTICIPATION | DELEGATION | EMPOWERMENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arnstein (1969) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Wilcox (1994) | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| IAP2 (2021) | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| OECD (2001) | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |

Source: Elaborated by the author.

As observed, the levels of "information," "consultation," and "co-participation" are common in the four participation scales, while at least two authors highlighted delegation and empowerment. It is worth mentioning that, in the four scales, the level of information is the starting point for participation. According to Jacobi (1990), information as a basis to guarantee real participation should not be limited to its dissemination by the government. It is essential to ensure that participants fully understand the information provided to advance to the highest levels of participation, with real transfer of power in the decision-making process.

## Implications of participation

The expected implications of citizen participation in the context of open government are strengthening citizenship, deliberative democracy, and legitimacy (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Paes de Paula, Palassi, & Zanon, 2021).

The strengthening of citizenship can be obtained by incorporating citizens into the political process, developing their social and political capacities (Pateman, 1970). Citizenship is strengthened when participation overcomes various types of discrimination and inequalities in political arenas, allowing citizens to influence government actions and decisions (Sánchez, 2004). Citizenship also becomes stronger when technobureaucratic resistance is overcome and there is political will from those who govern to open spaces that ensure the inclusion of groups with different social interests and cultural values, enhancing opportunities for change (Jacobi, 1990). Thus, citizen participation is essential for institutional and cultural changes that grant greater political autonomy to citizens through the redistribution of power (Teixeira, 1997). It is necessary to prepare informed and engaged citizens, offering conditions for people to actively and effectively contribute to decision-making processes, free of formal or informal co-optation throughout the process (Abelson et al., 2003).

Deliberative democracy, as an implication of participation, is not considered an alternative to representative democracy. It is, instead, an expansion of representative democracy (Chambers, 2003). For Cohen (2005), deliberative democracy is based on a commitment to problem-solving through public reasoning between citizens and institutions that establish the framework for public deliberation. According to Chambers (2003), deliberation takes place through a debate aiming to produce reasonable and well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise their preferences based on discussion, new information, and claims made by other participants. In addition, the deliberative process must be transparent, inclusive, and equal in terms of opportunities for participation. According to Dryzek (2002), as important as the involvement of citizens in deliberation is the acceptance only of decisions that are legitimate and justified in convincing terms.

Finally, legitimacy is an implication less related to the direct result of citizen participation, considering that, in many cases, the influence of citizens on final decisions may be limited. Legitimacy provides an alternative way of analyzing participation outcomes through citizens' perception of the policymaking process as fair and reasonable (Chang & Jacobson, 2010). Häikiö (2012) distinguishes legitimacy as "input legitimacy," when political decisions reflect the will of the people, and "output legitimacy," when political choices enhance the welfare of the people. In both cases, legitimacy results from open dialogue between citizens and government agencies in a process that includes recognition, acceptance, and support of political choices by those who are governed. From this perspective, the result of citizen participation is the granting of legitimacy and the ratification of the government's political decisions by the citizens.

In summary, these different typologies demonstrate that there are many approaches to citizen participation. This classification can be used in different ways to support analysis or guide the choice of participatory methods.

For authors such as Meijer, Curtin, and Hillebrandt (2012), Viscusi, Spahiu, Maurino, and Batini (2014), and Wirtz and Birkmeyer (2015), participation has become a central issue in discussions about open government around the world. Therefore, it is essential to categorize it as a principle of open government.

## PARTICIPATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF OPEN GOVERNMENT

The term "open government" is currently understood as a modern method of governance that provides a new space of openness based on the principles of transparency, citizen participation, and collaboration (Meijer et al., 2012; Viscusi et al., 2014; Wirtz & Birkmeyer, 2015; Ramírez-Alujas, 2020).

As noted in the previous section, citizen participation can take different forms. However, only some are adequate for what is expected from an open government. Among the forms of participation classified by Dusseldorp (1981), Meister (1984), Wilcox (1994), and Kurnia et al. (2016), spontaneous, voluntary, and granted participation are suitable for the context of open government. Citizen participation can and should include both informal groups of citizens

and organized groups, such as associations and unions. This category does not include groups induced by external agents to achieve objectives other than those of the group itself. Imposed participation is also inappropriate since an open government must ensure free and democratic participation.

Regarding the typologies, the ideal is direct, active, real, and complete participation. Participation must be direct so citizens can influence policy by interacting directly with the government. It must also be active, as citizens need to take part and act in the face of reality. In addition, participation must be real and complete, i.e., citizens' opinions must be effectively incorporated into political decisions (Dusseldorp, 1981; Richardson, 1983).

Regarding the determinants of participation in an open government, the criteria of representativeness, independence, information, capacity, involvement, influence, frequency, permanence, and context must be observed (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Hassenforder et al., 2015; Sabioni et al., 2016; Sandfort & Quick, 2017). Participants must be independent and represent the population interested in and/or affected by the policies. They need to have access to relevant information and be empowered so that they can critically evaluate the information. Furthermore, they must be involved from the beginning to the end of the processes, impacting the direction of public policies. The social, political, cultural, economic, legal, and institutional contexts must also be taken into account so that decisions generate better results.

Regarding participation mechanisms, an open government can interact with citizens in different ways, as shown above. However, it is essential that the mechanisms are open to the main interested parties and that citizens can actually be part of and take part in the decisions and not just be kept in the illusion that they exert some influence (Webler & Renn, 1995; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Avritzer & Pereira, 2005; Orr, 2013). Most importantly, the participation mechanisms adopted allow for a real impact on political decisions (Dagnino & Teixeira, 2014).

Concerning the scales of participation defined by Arnstein (1969), Wilcox (1994), OECD (2001), and IAP2 (2021), in an open government, citizen participation must occur above the level of consultation so that stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute with ideas, opinions, and experiences, and citizens can influence the decision-making process (Avritzer & Pereira, 2005).

Citizen participation is expected to contribute to strengthening citizenship, deliberative democracy, and the legitimacy of decisions. Governments must overcome discrimination and inequality in political arenas by opening spaces that not only question the established order but guarantee the inclusion of groups with different social interests and cultural values, giving citizens a chance to influence actions and government decisions, making them more legitimate (Jacobi, 1990; Chambers, 2003; Sánchez, 2004; Cohen, 2005; Chang & Jacobson, 2010; Häikiö, 2012).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study discussed different ways to classify citizen participation and distinguished the characteristics of participation that qualify it as a principle of open government.

The article explored the various aspects of participation. As a principle of open government, participation demands the creation of interaction channels that promote the leading role and involvement of citizens in political decisions and the policy cycle. This involves meeting a set of criteria that are crucial for the effective openness of government. Participation must be direct, active, real, and complete, enabled through mechanisms accessible to key stakeholders, allowing citizens to genuinely influence the decision-making process. Citizens need to be actively involved in the political process, going beyond the mere consultation level of participation scales. As a result, this approach is expected to strengthen citizenship, deliberative democracy, and the legitimacy of decisions.

However, achieving this level of meaningful participation presents a significant challenge, as it often involves a conflictual process where citizens seek to claim and gain power to influence political decisions. In some participation spaces, citizens may be induced to grant legitimacy to preconceived decisions made by government officials. Therefore, truly significant participation from an open government perspective depends on meeting the requirements outlined in this study, the government's political will to open spaces for genuine participation, and citizens' mobilization, engagement, and persistence.

In conclusion, further research is needed to delve into the characteristics of the principles of open government and expand knowledge in this field. Additionally, new theoretical-empirical studies are crucial for understanding how public administrations committed to open government incorporate citizen participation.

## REFERENCES

Abelson, J., Forest, P.-G., Eyles, J., Smith, P., Martin, E., & Gauvin, F.-P. (2003). Deliberations about deliberative methods: Issues in the design and evaluation of public participation processes. *Social Science & Medicine*, 57(2), 239-251. doi: 10.1016/s0277-9536(02)00343-x

Abreu, J. C. A., & Pinho, J. A. G. (2014). Sentidos e significados da participação democrática através da Internet: uma análise da experiência do Orçamento Participativo Digital. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 48(4), 821-846. doi: 10.1590/0034-76121707

Abreu, J. C. A., Silva e Oliveira, V. C., & Kraemer, C. F. B. (2019). Uma análise de construtos teóricos sobre participação e gestão social. *Desenvolvimento em Questão*, 17(48), 34-51. doi: 10.21527/2237-6453.2019.48.34-51

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216-224. doi: 10.1080/01944366908977225

Avelar, L. (2007). Participação política. In L. Avelar & A. O. Cintra (Eds.), *Sistema político brasileiro: uma introdução* (2. ed., pp. 261-280). São Paulo: Editora Unesp.

Avritzer, L. (2008). Instituições participativas e desenho institucional: algumas considerações sobre a variação da participação no Brasil democrático. *Opinião Pública*, 14(1), 43-64. doi: 10.1590/S0104-62762008000100002

Avritzer, L. (2012). The different designs of public participation in Brazil: deliberation, power sharing and public ratification. *Critical Policy Studies, 6*(2), 113-127. doi: 10.1080/19460171.2012.689732

Avritzer, L., & Pereira, M. L. D. (2005). Democracia, participação e instituições híbridas. *Teoria e Sociedade, (Ed. Especial)*, 14-39.

Callahan, K. (2007). Citizen participation: models and methods. *International Journal of Public Administration, 30*(11), 1179-1196. doi: 10.1080/01900690701225366

Carneiro, R., & Brasil, F. P. D. (2016). Control social y las nuevas instituciones participativas: un panorama del caso brasileño pos-1988. *Praxis Sociológica*, (21), 173-193. Retrieved from https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6316497

Chambers, S. (2003). Deliberative democratic theory. *Annual Review of Political Science, 6*(1), 307-326. doi: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085538

Chang, L., & Jacobson, T. (2010). Measuring participation as communicative action: A case study of citizen involvement in and assessment of a city's smoking cessation policymaking process. *Journal of Communication, 60*(4), 660-679. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01508.x

Cohen, J. (2005). Deliberation and democratic legitimacy. In D. Matravers & J. Pike (Eds.), *Debates in contemporary political philosophy: an anthology* (pp. 342-360). Londres: Routledge.

Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking 'participation': models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal, 43*(3), 269-283. doi: 10.1093/cdj/bsn010

Cornwall, A., & Gaventa, J. (2017). Participation in governance. In A. S. Huque & A. Shafiqul (Eds.), *International Development Governance* (pp. 405-413). Nova York: Routledge.

Cunha, M. A. V. C., Coelho, T. R., & Pozzebon, M. (2014). Internet e participação: o caso do orçamento participativo digital de Belo Horizonte. *Revista de Administração de Empresas, 54*(3), 296-308. doi: 10.1590/S0034-759020140305

Dagnino, E. (2003). Citizenship in Latin America: an introduction. *Latin American Perspectives, 30*(2), 211-225.

Dagnino, E., & Teixeira, A. C. C. (2014). The participation of civil society in Lula's government.

*Journal of Politics in Latin America, 6*(3), 39-66. doi: 10.1177%2F1866802X1400600303

Dijkers, M. P. J. M. (2009). The value of "traditional" reviews in the era of systematic reviewing. *American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, 88*(5), 423-430. doi: 10.1097/PHM.0b013e31819c59c6

Dryzek, J. S. (2002). *Deliberative democracy and beyond: liberals, critics, contestations.* Nova York: Oxford University Press.

Dusseldorp, D. B. W. M. v. (1981). Participation in planned development influenced by governments of developing countries at local level areas. In R. A. J. van Lier & H. van de Belt (Eds.), *Essays in rural sociology* (v. II, pp. 25-88). Wageningen: Agricultural University Wageningen.

Häikiö, L. (2012). From innovation to convention: legitimate citizen participation in local governance. *Local Government Studies*, 38(4), 415-435. doi: 10.1080/03003930.2012.698241

Hansson, K., Belkacem, K., & Ekenberg, L. (2014). Open government and democracy: a research review. *Social Science Computer Review*, 33(5), 540-555. doi: 10.1177%2F0894439314560847

Hassenforder, E., Smajgl, A., & Ward, J. (2015). Towards understanding participatory processes: Framework, application and results. *Journal of Environmental Management, 157*, 84-95. doi: 10.1016/j.jenvman.2015.04.012

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). (2021). *Public participation spectrum*. International Association for Public Participation. Retrieved from https://www.iap2canada.ca/foundations

Jacobi, P. (1990). Descentralização municipal e participação dos cidadãos: apontamentos para o debate. *Lua Nova: Revista de Cultura e Política, 1*(20), 121-143.

Kurnia, M. P., Susmiyati, H. R., & Hamzah, H. (2016). Model of public participation in formation of good local regulation in East Kalimantan Province. *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization, 55*(1), 222-233. Retrieved from https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Model-of-Public-Participation-in-Formation-of-Good-Kurnia-Susmiyati/aa71f9e62912aed913bb390a9e18296690876b3a

Lourenço, D. B., & Vieira Junior, W. M. (2019). Efetividade das audiências públicas como mecanismo de participação social: o caso da Agência Nacional de Saúde Suplementar. *NAU Social, 10*(19), 101-120. doi: 10.9771/ns.v10i19.33896

Martins, S., Ckagnazaroff, I. B., & Lage, M. L. C. (2012). Análise dos conselhos gestores de políticas públicas à luz dos relatórios de fiscalização da controladoria geral da União. *Administração Pública e Gestão Social, 4*(2), 221-245. doi: 10.21118/apgs.v4i2.4087

Meijer, A., Curtin, D., & Hillebrandt, M. (2012). Open government: connecting vision and voice. *International Review of Administrative Sciences, 78*(1), 10-29. doi: 10.1177%2F0020852311429533

Meister, A. (1984). *Participation, associations, development, and change*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.

Milani, C. R. S. (2008). O princípio da participação social na gestão de políticas públicas locais: uma análise de experiências latino-americanas e européias. *Revista de Administração Pública, 42*(3), 551-579. doi: 10.1590/S0034-76122008000300006

Milbrath, L. W. (1981). Political participation. In S. L. Long (Ed.), *The handbook of political behavior* (v. 4, pp. 197-240). Boston: Springer.

Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Econômico (OECD). (2001). *Citizens as partners: Information, consultation and public participation in policy-making*. Paris: OECD.

Orr, S. K. (2013). *Environmental policymaking and stakeholder collaboration: theory and practice*. Boca Raton: American Society for Public Administration / CRC Press.

Paes de Paula, A. P., Palassi, M. P., & Zanon, R. S. (2021). Políticas públicas, neoliberalismo e participação social: transições e dilemas. *Cadernos Gestão Pública e Cidadania*, 26(85), l-18. doi: 10.12660/cgpc.v26n85.84362

Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and democratic theory*. Londres: Cambridge University Press.

Ramírez-Alujas, Á. V. (2020). El estado del Estado abierto en América Latina: avances, alcances y perspectivas. *Estado Abierto*, 4(1), 13-38. Retrieved from https://publicaciones.inap.gob.ar/index.php/EA/article/view/132

Richardson, A. (1983). *Participation*. Londres: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Rothman, J. (1996). The interweaving of community intervention approaches. *Journal of Community Practice*, 3(3-4), 69-99. doi: 10.1300/J125v03n03_03

Rowe, G., & Frewer, L. J. (2000). Public participation methods: a framework for evaluation. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 25(1), 3-29. doi: 10.1177%2F016224390002500101

Sabioni, M., Ferreira, M. A. M., Braga, M. J., & Almeida, F. M. (2016). Contextos (in)adequados para o engajamento cidadão no controle social. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 50(3), 477-500. doi: 10.1590/0034-7612153518

Sampaio, R. C. (2016). e-Orçamentos participativos como iniciativas de e-solicitação: uma prospecção dos principais casos e reflexões sobre a e-participação. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 50(6), 937-958. doi: 10.1590/0034-7612152210

Sánchez, F. L. (2004). Los presupuestos participativos: nuevos mecanismos de innovación democrática en los gobiernos locales. *Psychosocial Intervention*, 13(3), 325-344. Retrieved from https://journals.copmadrid.org/pi/art/fca0789e7891cbc0583298a238316122

Sandfort, J., & Quick, K. (2017). Deliberative technology: a holistic lens for interpreting resources and dynamics in deliberation. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 13(1), 7. doi: 10.16997/jdd.273

Santos, P. R., & Gugliano, A. A. (2015). Efetividade das políticas participativas no governo brasileiro: o Conselho de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social. *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, 23(56), 3-19. doi: 10.1590/1678-987315235601

Tai, K.-T. (2021). Open government research over a decade: a systematic review. *Government Information Quarterly*, 38(2), 101566. doi: 10.1016/j.giq.2021.101566

Teixeira, E. C. (1997). As dimensões da participação cidadã. *Caderno CRH*, (26-27), 179-209. doi: 10.9771/ccrh.v10i26.18669

Teixeira, E. C. (2002). *O local e o global: limites e desafios da participação cidadã* (3. ed.). São Paulo: Cortez.

Telles, V. (1994). Sociedade civil, direitos e espaços públicos. *Pólis*, (14), 43-53. doi: 10.1590/S0102-69092003000100011

van Deth, J. W. (2016). What is political participation? In G. Mazzoleni (Ed.), The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Viscusi, G., Spahiu, B., Maurino, A., & Batini, C. (2014). Compliance with open government data policies: An empirical assessment of Italian local public administrations. *Information Polity, 19*(3-4), 263-275. doi: 10.3233/IP-140338

Webler, T., & Renn, O. (1995). A brief primer on participation: philosophy and practice. In O. Renn, T. Webler, & P. Wiedemann (Eds.), *Fairness and competence in citizen participation: evaluating models for environmental discourse* (pp. 17-33). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

Wilcox, D. (1994). *The guide to effective participation.* Brighton: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Wirtz, B. W., & Birkmeyer, S. (2015). Open government: origin, development, and conceptual perspectives. *International Journal of Public Administration, 38*(5), 381-396. doi: 10.1080/01900692.2014.942735

Wirtz, B. W., Weyerer, J. C., & Rösch, M. (2018). Citizen and open government: an empirical analysis of antecedents of open government data. *International Journal of Public Administration, 41*(4), 308-320. doi: 10.1080/01900692.2016.1263659

Wootten, G. W., & Kiss, S. J. (2018). The ambiguous definition of open government: parliamentarians, journalists and bloggers define open government in accordance with their interests. *Canadian Journal of Political Science, 52*(3), 479-499. doi: 10.1017/S0008423918000446

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Daniel José Silva Oliveira: Project administration; conceptualization; writing (first draft); writing (revision and edition), research; methodology.

Ivan Beck Ckagnazaroff: Project administration; conceptualization; writing (revision and edition), methodology, supervision.