



Participatory Governance Driving Innovation in Public Policy Implementation

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how community participation contributes to public policy innovation through a case study of the People's School Program and Smart City implementation in Makassar City. Using a qualitative case study approach with 15 key informants, data were collected through interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, then analyzed thematically. The findings show that active community involvement not only enhances policy legitimacy but also drives innovations in public service design, including inclusive education initiatives and more efficient technology-based services. The study concludes that participatory governance serves as a key catalyst for developing adaptive, collaborative, and community-oriented policy transformations, offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance for local governments in designing sustainable innovative policies.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid social, economic, and technological changes in the last two decades have prompted governments in various countries to transform governance. The complexity of public problems such as social inequality, poverty, access to education, and the need for digital-based services requires innovation in policy implementation. In the modern era of governance, the concept of participatory governance is an important strategy that facilitates collaboration between governments, civil society, the private sector, and non-state actors in the decision-making process. This approach not only increases the legitimacy of policies, but also enriches solutions with a broader and relevant perspective to the needs of society (Ansell & Torfing, 2021). In Indonesia, the urgency of implementing participatory governance is increasingly prominent, especially in the context of big cities such as Makassar that are developing technology-based public services through the Smart City concept to face modern governance challenges (Kurniawan et al., 2023).

In the global context, community participation has proven to be an important driver in the successful implementation of innovative public policies. Studies in Europe and Asia show that governance models that actively involve citizens in policy design and implementation encourage the birth of solutions that are more adaptive to local dynamics (Neshkova & Guo, 2022). In addition, cross-sectoral collaboration also plays a role in strengthening the capacity of government institutions to respond to complex policy challenges, especially in the areas of education, technology, and public services (Husted & Hansen, 2021). However, the implementation of public participation in the context of developing countries still faces challenges, such as low levels of policy literacy and gaps in access to technology. This condition creates space for further research on how participation can be formulated as an innovative strategy in the implementation of public policies at the local level (Rahman et al., 2023).

Nationally, Indonesia's major cities have adopted a participatory approach to policy design, but their effectiveness in encouraging innovation still varies. The city of Makassar is an interesting example because it has the characteristics of being a metropolitan city as well as the center of the South Sulawesi Province government, which is actively implementing the Smart City concept and social programs such as People's Schools as a solution for equitable education distribution (Syamsuddin et al., 2024). Both initiatives demonstrate collaborative efforts between the government, the community, and the private sector in improving the quality of public services. However, previous research has tended to focus on the technical aspects of policy implementation or program success separately, rather than on the direct relationship between participatory governance and policy innovation itself (Putri & Widodo, 2022).

The research gap is evident when looking at previous literature that has examined citizen participation from a normative and participatory perspective alone, without empirically linking it to the policy innovation process (Torfing et al., 2020). Some studies even show contradictory results: citizen participation can accelerate policy innovation in certain contexts, but in other contexts it slows down the process due to differences in the interests of actors (Voorberg et al.,

2021). This shows the need for a more in-depth study of how community participation plays a substantive role in creating sustainable public policy innovations.

This research specifically aims to analyze how participatory governance plays a role in encouraging innovation in public policy implementation, with a case study on the People's School Program and the implementation of Smart City in Makassar City. The focus of the research is directed at the collaborative process, the form of participation, and the real impact produced on the quality of public policy. This analysis is important because it can provide a deeper understanding of how multi-stakeholder collaboration contributes to the creation of innovative and socially relevant solutions.

From the theoretical side, this research contributes to the development of public administration science by integrating the theory of citizen participation, policy innovation, and collaborative governance into one analytical framework. The concept of participatory governance will be positioned not only as a political process, but also as a strategic mechanism in creating responsive and sustainable public policy innovations (Ansell et al., 2022). In addition, this study expands the study of the relationship between citizen participation and policy outcomes by emphasizing the context of developing countries that have different socio-political dynamics from developed countries.

From a practical perspective, this research has direct implications for local governments in formulating collaboration-based policy implementation strategies. Research findings can be the basis for the development of policy models that are not only procedurally inclusive, but also substantively effective in responding to community needs (Pratama & Rinaldi, 2024). This is important to support the bureaucratic reform agenda, improve the quality of public services, and strengthen public trust in the government.

Overall, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to understanding the role of participatory governance as the main driver of public policy innovation. By focusing the study on the context of Makassar City, the results of the research are not only relevant for Indonesia but can also be a reference for other countries that are developing participatory and collaboration-based policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory Governance Theory

Participatory governance is seen in the cutting-edge literature as a framework that encourages cross-actors—government, civil society, private sector, and academic institutions to jointly design, implement, and evaluate public policies. Torfing and colleagues assert that the transformation of the public sector towards the co-creation arena requires a new institutional design and public leadership capable of managing multi-stakeholder interactions to achieve shared public value (Torfing, Sørensen, & Røiseland, 2020). This approach is not only normative but also functional: participation can enrich policymakers' knowledge base, increase legitimacy, and pave the way for innovative solutions that are adaptive to local needs (Ansell & Torfing, 2021). However, the literature

also emphasizes that the design of participatory mechanisms such as representations, deliberative instruments, and feedback pathways determines the extent to which participation is truly productive towards policy innovation (Winsvold, 2024).

Citizen Participation and Policy Innovation

Recent comparative and empirical research links active citizen engagement to the emergence of innovations in public policy; that engagement facilitates the identification of real problems, the experimentation of solutions, and the social legitimacy for policy change (Neshkova & Guo, 2022). The OECD (2023) emphasizes that citizen participation also strengthens public support for innovation policies, for example in the climate change agenda or digital services, through the process of recruiting citizens as implementation partners and ambassadors of change. Studies on multi-stakeholder collaboration in developing countries show that when institutions facilitate structured co-creation, innovation outcomes are more likely to be sustainable; conversely, participation that is symbolic or fragmentary in nature tends to produce little substantial impact (Rahman, Ali, & Karim, 2023; Butzin, 2024).

Co-creation of Public Services as an Innovation Mechanism

The concept of co-creation/co-production in public services is the main channel for the realization of service innovation, not only as a consulting technique, but also as a joint process that produces new service products or improvements in bureaucratic processes (Skålen, 2024). Recent literature develops readiness models and service templates that help public organizations decide which services are best suited for the co-creation approach and how to prepare internal capabilities for collaboration (Vrbek et al., 2024; Hong, 2023). In addition, systematic studies show that co-creation often requires investment in human capabilities (facilitation, facilitators), digital infrastructure, and accountability mechanisms so that the resulting innovations can be implemented and scaled (Lee, 2024; Baines, 2024).

Digital Technology, Smart City, and Participation

The development of information technology opens up great opportunities for wider and real-time citizen participation, thus becoming an enabler for policy innovation within the framework of Smart City. Research shows that the integration of digital platforms with participatory mechanisms increases citizens' access to provide input, monitor services, and collaborate on local solutions (Butzin, 2024; Winsvold, 2024). OECD (2023) highlights practices in various cities that combine citizen engagement and innovation strategies (e.g. city missions) so that the resulting policies are more relevant to end-users. However, the literature also warns of the risk of digital "solutionism" in which technology is considered a single solution and thus requires participatory design that is aware of social context and inequality of digital access (Skålen, 2024; Lee, 2024).

Policy Innovation in the Education and Social Programs Sector

The education sector is often a tested arena for participation-based policy innovation because it involves a wide range of stakeholders (teachers, parents, communities). Models of educational service innovation that integrate community support and technology show increased inclusivity and relevance of the curriculum (Hong, 2023). In the context of free education programs or dormitories (such as the People's School Program which is the focus of the study), collaboration between actors can accelerate the development of support services (character development, dormitory logistics) that are practical and responsive to the needs of poor households. However, the literature emphasizes the importance of coordination mechanisms between OPDs and funding support so that participation-based educational innovation can be sustainable (Durrer, 2024).

Implementation Challenges in Developing Countries

Studies focusing on developing countries identify institutional and capability barriers that often hinder the benefits of participation towards real innovation: limited administrative capacity, inequality of digital access, fragmentation of actors, and bureaucratic resistance to change (Rahman et al., 2023; Butzin, 2024). Empirical analysis also shows that without clear incentive and leadership design, participatory processes can become a space for conflicts of interest rather than a source of innovation (Winsvold, 2024). Therefore, the literature suggests a layered approach that combines local capacity building, the establishment of accountability mechanisms, and the inclusive use of technology to foster a participatory-based innovation ecosystem (Skálén, 2024; OECD, 2023).

The Context of Indonesia and Makassar as an Arena of Study

The context of Indonesia, and especially the city of Makassar, is relevant as a research arena because Makassar is actively adopting the Smart City agenda and various social programs for equal distribution of services (Kominfo Kota Makassar, 2020). The city's policy documents and Smart City master plan emphasize the pillars of smart governance and citizen participation as the core of public service transformation. However, empirical studies that integrate the education sector (e.g., the People's School Program) with Smart City initiatives are still relatively limited; previous studies have tended to address the two separately (Smart City implementation studies vs. education program studies). This gap opens up research space to simultaneously examine how participatory governance drives innovation in both initiatives at the metropolitan city level.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method because it aims to understand in depth the role of participatory governance in encouraging innovation in public policy implementation in Makassar City. This approach was chosen to explore the meanings, perceptions, and collaborative processes that occur in social contexts in a naturalistic manner (Creswell &

Creswell, 2023). The case study method is considered the most appropriate because it allows researchers to contextually explore the phenomenon of cross-actor collaboration in public policy, including analysis of inter-stakeholder interactions, innovation strategies, and the social impact of those policies (Flyvbjerg, 2022). With this design, the research focuses on two main programs, namely the People's School Program and the implementation of Smart City, as a tangible form of collaboration between the government, the community, academics, and the private sector.

Population, Location, and Informant Selection Techniques

The research population includes actors who are directly involved in the process of formulating and implementing participatory governance-based policies in Makassar City. The city was chosen because it is a metropolitan city with complex governance dynamics and is a pioneer in the development of innovative technology-based policies and public collaboration. The technique of taking informants is carried out through purposive sampling, which is deliberate selection based on the relevance of their role and contribution to the policy being studied (Palinkas et al., 2023).

A total of 15 key informants were divided proportionally according to their involvement in the policy process, namely: (1) 5 local government officials, consisting of officials from the Education Office and the Makassar City Communication and Information Service who played a role in policy planning and implementation; (2) 4 community leaders, including local leaders, parents of students, and community representatives who are active in the implementation of the People's School Program; (3) 3 academics and public policy experts, including technology observers and Smart Cities who provide scientific analysis and policy recommendations; and (4) 3 private sector representatives or collaborative partners, who contribute to the provision of technology-based services and educational support. This division is designed to reflect a multi-stakeholder perspective in a representative manner, thereby enriching understanding of participatory governance and public policy innovation.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore in detail the views, experiences, and evaluations of informants regarding the process of collaboration and policy innovation. The interview guidelines were compiled based on findings and indicators used in previous research on public participation and governance innovation (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Sørensen & Torfing, 2022). Participatory observation was carried out at the location of the implementation of the People's School Program and Smart City facilities to directly observe the dynamics of interaction and policy implementation. Meanwhile, the documentation study was used to analyze regional regulations, implementation reports, statistical data, academic publications, and media news as supporting data.

Data Validity, Reliability, and Validity

The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources, methods, and time to ensure that research findings are valid and credible. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from various categories of informants, while method triangulation was carried out by combining interviews, observations, and documentation. The member checking procedure is carried out by providing the results of temporary interpretation to several informants to confirm their suitability with the reality of the field (Lincoln & Guba, 2021). In addition, trail audits are implemented to document all stages of the research, so that the analysis process can be traced back and improve the reliability of the results (Nowell et al., 2023).

Research Procedure

The research procedure is carried out through four main stages. First, the preparation stage, includes problem formulation, preparation of research questions, and instrument development. Second, the data collection stage, namely the implementation of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation in the field. Third, the data analysis stage, where the collected data is transcribed, coded, and analyzed based on key themes related to participation, innovation, and policy effectiveness. Fourth, the verification and conclusion stage, which is to integrate the results of the analysis with theories and empirical findings to produce valid conclusions (Bengtsson, 2022).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is carried out using thematic analysis to identify the main patterns, categories, and themes of the data obtained. The stages of analysis include the process of transcription, coding, categorization, and interpretation of results based on participatory governance and policy innovation theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2022). NVivo 14 software is used to help organize and visualize data systematically. This thematic analysis allows for an in-depth understanding of how public participation influences the design, implementation, and outcomes of innovative policies at the municipal government level.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Pattern in Policy Implementation

The results of this study show that the success of participatory governance in the implementation of public policies in Makassar City is largely determined by the strength of the collaboration pattern formed among the various actors involved. This collaboration is not only formal through institutional coordination mechanisms, but also takes place substantively through regular interactions, information exchanges, alignment of goals, and the creation of participatory spaces that allow each actor to contribute their perspectives and resources. The implementation of the People's School Program and the development of Smart City are concrete evidence that cross-sector collaboration can create relevant, adaptive, and sustainable policy innovations.

The role of government apparatus is the foundation in this collaborative process. Through the Education Office and the Makassar City Communication and Information Office, the government acts as a policy director as well as a facilitator who bridges the interests of various stakeholders. Government officials are responsible for the preparation of regulations, strategic planning, resource allocation, and evaluation of program achievements. They also play a role in ensuring the integration between education and technology policies so that implementation runs synergistically. A local government official emphasized the importance of this role by saying, "*We ensure that every step of program implementation always involves input from the community and other partners so that the resulting policies are truly in line with the needs of the field*" (Interview, IA-01, July 14, 2025). This statement shows that the government no longer positions itself as a single actor, but as a mover that opens up the widest possible space for participation.

Community participation is an important dimension in building effective collaboration. Community leaders, parents of students, and local community representatives play a role in identifying priority needs on the ground, conveying citizens' aspirations, and providing evaluations of policy implementation. Their involvement guarantees that the policies formulated are not top-down, but are the result of a deliberative process that takes into account the social context and the realities of people's lives. A community leader who is actively involved in the People's School Program said, "*We participate in voicing what our children need, from learning facilities to learning methods. The government listens to and follows up on the input*" (Interview, IC-02, July 19, 2025). This quote shows that the collaboration that has been built has shifted the paradigm of participation from mere consultation to a strategic partnership in decision-making.

Academics and public policy experts play an important role in linking theory to policy implementation practice. They provide research-based analysis, help formulate performance indicators, and suggest innovative strategies to address future challenges. In the context of Smart City, academics also contribute to integrating technological approaches with inclusive and sustainable governance principles. A public policy expert expressed his view, "*We see the importance of an evidence-based policy approach so that the innovations produced are not just momentary trends, but really bring long-term change*" (Interview, ID-01, July 21, 2025). This shows that the existence of academic actors not only strengthens the scientific legitimacy of policies, but also expands the analytical capacity of governments in responding to social and technological dynamics.

In addition, the contribution of the private sector is a catalyst in accelerating the process of policy innovation. Technology companies and industry partners not only provide digital infrastructure and technical solutions, but also bring an entrepreneurial perspective that drives the efficiency and sustainability of public services. This collaboration is reflected in the development of digital platforms for educational data management, public service applications, and the provision of communication networks that support the implementation of Smart City. A representative of the partner company stated, "*We not only supply technology, but also ensure that the systems we build are accessible and widely used by the public*" (Interview, IE-03, July 24, 2025). This

statement illustrates that private sector involvement is not just a business transaction, but a form of corporate social responsibility in strengthening government capacity.

The multi-stakeholder synergy formed through this collaboration results in a dynamic and adaptive governance ecosystem. The government plays a role as a policy director, the community as a source of contextual information, academia as a provider of scientific analysis, and the private sector as a provider of technological innovation. Each actor does not run alone, but complements each other in the policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation cycle. This pattern of collaboration also allows for the creation of a mutual learning process, where each party enriches its capacity through the exchange of experience and knowledge.

With this inclusive collaboration structure, policy implementation in Makassar City becomes more responsive to the needs of the community while being able to face the challenges of the complexity of metropolitan city governance. The pattern of multi-stakeholder cooperation not only results in innovative policies, but also increases public legitimacy and trust in the government. The results of this study prove that strategically designed participatory governance is able to be the main driver of public policy transformation that is sustainable, relevant, and oriented towards the interests of the wider community.

Dynamics of Participation in Public School Programs

The dynamics of community participation in the People's School Program in Makassar City represent a form of community-based education governance and real needs. The program is not only designed as a government intervention to expand access to education, but also as a collaborative space that encourages active engagement from citizens. The participation involves students' parents, community leaders, and community representatives at every stage, from planning, implementation, to policy evaluation. Their role does not stop at being beneficiaries, but also as co-creators of policies through the preparation of additional curricula, the provision of learning facilities, and monitoring the quality of program implementation. This participatory approach is essential, especially in the context of low-income groups, as it is able to articulate needs that are often overlooked by top-down approaches.

The presence of the community in the process of formulating and implementing policies has been proven to increase the legitimacy of the program while strengthening the sense of shared ownership. Community leaders, for example, serve as a liaison between the government and residents by bridging communication and advocating for local needs. This creates productive reciprocal relationships, where the government obtains accurate field information, while the community gains space to influence decisions. A community leader said, "*We were involved from the beginning, starting from arranging learning activities to monitoring their implementation. This makes us feel that this program belongs to the community, not just a government project*" (Interview, IC-03, July 15, 2025).

In addition, the involvement of students' parents also strengthens the relevance aspect of the program. They actively voiced their aspirations related to teaching methods, supporting facilities, and children's psychosocial needs. This creates a continuous evaluation cycle that ensures the program remains adaptive to the dynamics of learner needs. The government recognizes the importance of this participation in maintaining the quality and sustainability of the program. An official of the Education Office said, "*Without the participation of parents, this program would not run effectively. They provide important input that is not always seen from the bureaucratic side*" (Interview, IA-02, July 17, 2025). Thus, community participation not only strengthens the democratization of policies, but also becomes an important social control mechanism for successful implementation.

Public Service Innovation Through Smart City Approach

The implementation of the Smart City concept in Makassar City is a catalyst for a more effective, efficient, and responsive transformation of public services. The city government, through collaboration with the private sector, academia, and the community, develops various digital platforms to support data management, information delivery, and interaction between citizens and bureaucracy. One of the significant innovations is the integration of an education data system that allows real-time monitoring of student development, including attendance, academic achievement, and learning intervention needs. On the other hand, community service apps provide participatory channels that allow citizens to submit their aspirations, complaints, or suggestions directly, thereby accelerating government responses and increasing accountability.

This innovation becomes more effective when supported by active community participation. The public is no longer just a service user, but is involved in the application design and testing process to ensure ease of access and relevance of features. A community representative stated, "*We were invited to try the app from the early stages, gave us feedback on the features that we needed, and the results were indeed easier to use*" (Interview, IC-01, July 20, 2025). This approach shows that the success of technological innovation depends not only on the sophistication of the system, but also on the extent to which it accommodates the social context of society.

The role of the government in ensuring the integration of innovation into public policy cannot be ignored either. Apparatus from the Communication and Information Service plays a role in the development of technology architecture, data standardization, and information security. One of the officials explained, "*Innovation is not only about the application, but how the system becomes part of a larger and more sustainable governance*" (Interview, IB-03, July 23, 2025). With this multi-actor synergy, Smart City is not only a technological jargon, but also a strategic instrument in improving the quality of public services that have a direct impact on the lives of citizens.

The Role of Academics and Experts in Encouraging Policy Innovation

The presence of academics and public policy experts plays a central role in ensuring that policies implemented in Makassar City are not only responsive to local needs, but also aligned with international trends and standards. Through

research, policy analysis, and scientific consulting, they help governments identify structural challenges, formulate performance indicators, and develop evidence-based intervention strategies. This role is crucial in the context of digital transformation and Smart City development, where the complexity of public issues demands a multidisciplinary and data-driven approach.

Apart from being a provider of scientific analysis, academics also act as a bridge between theory and practice. They connect local experiences with best practices from other cities around the world, providing new perspectives that assist governments in designing adaptive policies. One of the academics said, "*We strive to ensure that policies are not only reactive, but proactive in the face of change. A research-based approach helps governments prepare for future challenges*" (Interview, ID-02, July 18, 2025). This statement shows that the involvement of academics not only improves the quality of policy, but also strengthens institutional capacity in responding to social and technological change.

In addition, the presence of academics in the collaborative forum also expands the analytical capacity of local governments. Data-driven discussions and scientific recommendations help improve policy planning, implementation, and evaluation mechanisms. The government recognizes that synergy with universities provides added value in policy formulation. A government official revealed, "*Analysis from academics often opens up new perspectives that we don't find in bureaucratic processes. It is very helpful in formulating a strategy*" (Interview, IA-04, July 22, 2025). Thus, academics not only play the role of knowledge partners, but also as agents of change in public policy innovation.

Private Sector's Contribution in Strengthening Service Capabilities

The involvement of the private sector in the development of public services in Makassar City has proven to be an important catalyst in accelerating the innovation process and expanding the scope of policies. Technology companies and industry partners not only supply digital infrastructure, but also provide technical solutions, human resource training, and financial support that strengthen government capacity. This collaboration creates a public-private partnership (PPP) model that is not only based on contracts, but also on shared values to improve the quality of public services.

Private sector investment helps governments overcome budget constraints and accelerate the implementation of digital initiatives. For example, cooperation in the provision of high-speed communication networks allows the integration of public service systems to run optimally. Representatives of the private sector mentioned, "*We not only provide technology, but also assist governments in the process of knowledge transfer so that they can manage the system independently*" (Interview, IE-02, July 25, 2025). This kind of collaboration strengthens policy sustainability as governments are no longer completely dependent on external providers.

In addition, the private sector also contributes to creating new innovations through co-creation with the government and the community. This approach not only improves efficiency, but also allows for the creation of services that are more relevant to the needs of citizens. The government acknowledges that this

partnership expands the capacity of the bureaucracy. *"Working with private partners gives us access to technology and knowledge that we don't have. This makes our services much faster and on target"* (Interview, IA-05, July 26, 2025). Thus, the private sector is not only a supporting actor, but an integral part of the policy innovation ecosystem that strengthens the competitiveness of cities and improves people's well-being.

The Impact of Participation on Policy Effectiveness

Multi-stakeholder participation in the implementation of public policies in Makassar City has been proven to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of programs, both in the context of the implementation of education through the People's School Program and in the development of technology-based services within the framework of Smart City. The results show that the involvement of actors from various backgrounds not only improves the quality of policy formulation and implementation processes, but also contributes to the achievement of more relevant, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes. In the realm of education, the participation of parents, community leaders, and local communities enriches the government's understanding of the needs of students, especially from low-income groups, while expanding the reach of beneficiaries. For example, input from the community has encouraged additional curriculum adjustments to be more in line with local social and cultural conditions.

Furthermore, participation also serves as a reinforcement of public policy legitimacy. When people feel they have room to be involved in the decision-making process, the level of public trust in the government increases, which in turn encourages higher levels of acceptance and adherence to policies. One of the community leaders said, *"We feel listened to and involved at every stage. This makes us believe that this program is not just a government project, but the result of joint work"* (Interview, IC-02, July 19, 2025). This sense of collective ownership is an important social capital in maintaining policy sustainability, because the community actively supervises the implementation of the program as well as providing feedback for sustainable improvement.

In the context of Smart City, multi-stakeholder participation accelerates the process of technological innovation and ensures that the solutions developed are relevant to the needs of citizens. The role of the private sector in the provision of digital infrastructure, for example, helps governments overcome resource limitations and accelerate the provision of data-driven public services. A representative of the technology company said, *"This collaboration makes the implementation process faster. We provide technology and training, while the government ensures policies remain in favor of the community"* (Interview, IE-01, July 21, 2025). This kind of collaboration strengthens the adaptive power of policies to dynamic changes in the social and technological environment, so that policies remain relevant in the long term.

Participation also plays a strategic role as a balancing mechanism for inter-stakeholder interests. In many cases, public policy often faces challenges in the form of differences in priorities between governments, communities, academics, and the private sector. The presence of participatory forums creates a deliberative space where various interests can be negotiated constructively, resulting in more

inclusive and common interest-oriented policies. One academic noted, "*Participation makes the policy process more democratic. The interests of each party can be discussed openly, and the results are more acceptable to all parties*" (Interview, ID-01, July 23, 2025). This shows that participation is not only a tool for gathering input, but also an important means of managing conflicts of interest and building social consensus.

In addition to increasing legitimacy and relevance, participation also contributes to increasing the institutional capacity of the government. Through intensive interaction with academia and the private sector, governments gain new knowledge on best practices in governance, technological innovation, and policy implementation strategies. An official from the Communication and Information Service stated, "*We learned a lot from this collaboration. There are many technical things and management strategies that we did not initially master, but became part of our capacity after working with partners*" (Interview, IB-04, July 25, 2025). This shows that participation not only impacts short-term outcomes, but also strengthens the foundations of public governance in the long run.

The significant impact of participation on policy effectiveness is also reflected in the government's ability to respond to changes in the external environment in a more adaptive manner. Through the involvement of the community and non-government actors, policies become more flexible to the dynamics of citizens' needs, technological developments, and changing social challenges. This participatory approach creates a policy cycle that is *adaptive learning*, where the implementation experience becomes the basis for continuous improvement. This is especially relevant in the context of Smart Cities that require constant innovation and adaptation to the development of digital technology.

Overall, multi-stakeholder participation plays a key driver of the effectiveness of public policies in Makassar City. It not only improves the quality and relevance of policies, but also strengthens legitimacy, accelerates innovation, balances interests, expands institutional capacity, and enables sustainable policy adaptation. In other words, participation is not just a complementary component in the policy process, but a structural element that determines the success of policy implementation in the midst of the complexity of today's social and technological challenges.

DISCUSSION

The main findings of this study show that participatory governance plays an important role as a driver of innovation in the implementation of public policies in Makassar City. These results are in line with various previous studies that view participatory governance as a process of co-creation or co-creation, which not only enriches the knowledge of policymakers but also strengthens the legitimacy of the policy itself (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Torfing et al., 2020). In theory, this study proves that when the government plays a role as a facilitator and provides space for the community to be involved in the decision-making process, the resulting policies will be more responsive and in accordance with real needs on the ground. The results of this study also show a strong relationship

between multi-stakeholder engagement and the birth of new public service designs, as has been identified in a number of comparative studies on participation and policy innovation (Neshkova & Guo, 2022; Sørensen & Torfing, 2022).

The mechanism that explains the relationship between participation and innovation lies in the co-creation process that occurs in policy. This process involves the exchange of practical knowledge from the community (practitioner knowledge) and scientific knowledge from academics (scientific knowledge), there are continuous feedback loops from the community, and technical capability support from the private sector to implement solutions. These results are consistent with the literature that emphasizes that organizational readiness, facilitator roles, and digital infrastructure support are important factors for transforming community input into tangible services (Skålen, 2024; Vrbek et al., 2024). On the other hand, if these elements are not met, for example, facilitation is not effective or the internal capacity of the government is limited, then public participation will only stop at the consultation stage without producing meaningful innovations.

In the context of the People's School Program, the results of the study show that the involvement of parents, community leaders, and local communities has a direct impact on improving additional curriculum, improving educational facilities, and strengthening the monitoring mechanism for program implementation. All of these things make educational services more relevant and easily accessible to the target group. These findings support previous research that shows the importance of the role of the community in improving educational inclusivity and curriculum alignment with community needs (Hong, 2023; Putri & Widodo, 2022). In practical terms, community participation in educational programs not only provides social legitimacy, but also maintains the sustainability of the program, especially for low-income families, an important step in expanding equitable access to education in urban areas.

The application of the Smart City concept in Makassar also shows the role of community participation in encouraging innovation, for example through the integration of educational data, the development of public service applications, and the provision of two-way communication channels that accelerate the government's response. These results are in line with previous findings that show that digital platforms play an important role as a link between people and policymakers (OECD, 2023; Lee, 2024). However, the study also highlights a limitation: the success of technology depends largely on the extent to which people are involved in the process of designing and testing features, as well as how governments address the risks of the digital divide. These findings reinforce the criticism of digital solutionism, which is the assumption that technology can solve all problems when without participatory and inclusive design, technology can actually deepen inequality and reduce public trust (Winsvold, 2024; Skålen, 2024).

The roles of the actors in this process are also complementary. The government functions as a facilitator, academics as knowledge brokers, while the private sector provides the technical capabilities needed in public service

innovation. These findings strengthen the theory of collaborative governance which states that the success of policy innovation is highly dependent on the institutional capacity and strength of collaboration networks between parties (Pratama & Rinaldi, 2024; Rahman et al., 2023). This proves that policy innovation is not only born from new ideas, but also from the strength of coordination, support of administrative capacity, and technical capabilities possessed by stakeholders.

This study also found several factors that affect the effectiveness of participatory governance. Supporting factors include government leadership that encourages participation, open communication both formally and informally, and flexible funding support for innovative programs. On the other hand, inhibiting factors include limited bureaucratic capacity, resistance to change, as well as the potential for domination by certain groups that can make participation only symbolic (Torfing et al., 2020; Voorberg et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2023). To overcome these barriers, institutional design that ensures equal representation, accountability, and access to technology is critical.

The use of a qualitative approach with case studies and a limited number of informants, with informants (15 people) did provide in-depth understanding, but made it difficult to generalize the results to other contexts. In addition, the potential for bias from informants and researchers is still possible even though it has been minimized by triangulation and member checking techniques. Rapid policy changes, particularly in the field of technology, also demonstrate the need for longitudinal follow-up studies to understand the impact more comprehensively.

Based on the findings of this study, several important recommendations can be conveyed. First, the government needs to formalize participatory mechanisms that include broad community representation, facilitation of deliberative space, and measurement of innovation effectiveness. Second, investment in digital inclusion and strengthening bureaucratic capacity is needed so that the benefits of Smart City can be felt equally. Third, partnerships between the public and private sectors should be complemented by agreements on knowledge transfer and technology accessibility. For further research, a mixed-methods approach and cross-urban comparative studies are suggested to broaden the understanding of the influence of participation on policy innovation. Overall, the contribution of this research lies in the empirical evidence that shows that participatory governance not only strengthens policy legitimacy, but also encourages the birth of innovations that are relevant, adaptive, and oriented to the needs of the community.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research confirms that participatory governance has a strategic role as the main driver of innovation in the implementation of public policies, especially in the context of managing metropolitan cities such as Makassar. Through the active involvement of various actors ranging from government officials, community leaders, academics, to the private sector, the process of policy formulation and implementation becomes more adaptive to the real needs

of the community. This participation not only strengthens policy legitimacy, but also opens up space for co-creation that produces innovative solutions, such as the provision of inclusive education services through the People's School Program and the use of technology in city governance through Smart City initiatives. This collaborative mechanism proves that multi-stakeholder engagement can broaden the policy knowledge base, accelerate the service innovation process, and increase the effectiveness of public policy implementation.

Theoretically, the findings of this study enrich the literature on collaborative governance and co-creation in public administration, while practically providing important guidance for local governments in designing policies that are sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to socio-technological change. However, the results of the study also underline that the effectiveness of participatory governance depends on institutional design that supports citizen representation, adequate bureaucratic capacity, and inclusive digital infrastructure. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen structured participatory mechanisms, data-driven policy evaluations, and sustainable cross-sectoral partnerships so that the resulting innovations are not only short-term, but also contribute to the overall transformation of public governance.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research should further examine how participatory governance can be institutionalized to ensure long-term sustainability of policy innovation in metropolitan settings. Comparative studies across different cities – both within Indonesia and internationally – would provide deeper insights into which institutional designs, digital infrastructures, and stakeholder configurations most effectively support co-creation and collaborative problem-solving. Future studies may also explore how data-driven evaluation systems can be integrated into participatory mechanisms to enhance evidence-based decision-making and accountability. In addition, research on strategies to strengthen bureaucratic capacity, expand inclusive digital access, and ensure equitable representation of marginalized groups will be crucial to advancing participatory governance models that are both innovative and socially just.

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