

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

CONTEXTUALISING STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNANCE OF HARARE'S INFORMAL ECONOMY SECTOR

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—Abstract —

The purpose of this study was to explore various public participatory stakeholders in the management of the City of Harare's informal sector as well as to assess the role of stakeholders in the governance of this sector within the context of political polarisation. In doing so, the study employed a mixed method approach which included a questionnaire survey (N=195), in-depth interviews (N=12) and documentary analysis. Main observations suggested that public participation was far from being achieved due to a multiplicity of factors. Furthermore, despite the introduction of a progressive constitution and the existence of various participatory mechanisms, various challenges continue to inhibit public participation in Harare. These include lack of funding, continued central government intervention, re-centralisation of governance due to loss of political power by the ruling party, political polarisation, resistance by administrators to co-opt the public into decision-making processes and failure to adapt to change. In addition, despite commendable efforts by various stakeholders to engender stakeholder participation, there was a distinct absence of the development and implementation of effective stakeholder involvement strategies in flea market governance. The analysis also showed that the role of the Council especially that of councillors, has been diminishing over the years and conversely, City administrative officials have become more powerful beyond their line of duty. To make matters worse, currently, there are no specific legislative provisions that provide for community participation. The findings will be of interest to local government officials and scholars alike as they have a number of practical implications. There is a need to put in place a robust legislative framework that promotes citizenry involvement and that de-links party politics from development and governance of local authorities. A key policy priority should, therefore, be to inculcate a culture of inclusivity, tolerance and decentralisation of power and governance.

Key Words: Public participation, polarisation, governance, flea markets

JEL Classification: R38

1. INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder engagement has become one of the key tools in management and administration of the service delivery across the world (Certomà, Chelleri, & Notteboom, 2019; Seetharaman et al., 2019; Rangaswamy, 2019). Drawing on its perceived effectiveness, some governments have made such engagement a constitutional requirement. For instance, the *Preamble of the 2013 Zimbabwean Constitution* makes the democratic participation in government by all citizens and communities in the determination of development priorities within their areas a constitutional value worth pursuing. The practical and theoretical arguments for such stakeholder engagement are well documented in both theoretical and empirical works (Dube & Casale, 2019; Ligomeka, 2019; Arnstein, 1969). However, it seems the benefits of stakeholders' involvement have not been realised fully in some areas of governance in the Zimbabwean local government. This could be due to high political polarisation between the two dominant political parties, ZANU PF and MDC. This often leads to the problem of a low level of participation restricted to tokenism and manipulation. This problem is clearly manifested in the governance of the informal traders in the capital city, Harare. Although recent studies have examined the state stakeholder engagement in Zimbabwe (Dube & Casale, 2019; Ligomeka, 2019) these studies have been restricted mostly to limited descriptions of cases without a thorough analysis of the nature of relationships between stakeholders and the government officials. As a result, our knowledge of the role played by a multiplicity of actors in the governance is based on speculation and conjecture. This study sought to contribute to the growing body of literature on stakeholder engagement in the governance of local government institutions by analysing its application in the context of flea markets (informal traders) in the City of Harare. This paper argues that, while stakeholder engagement is theoretically advantageous, its benefits are not realisable in the manner assumed by these particular proponents. Instead, the ruling élite is often opposed to public participation as they believe the citizenry should be subordinate to their viewpoints.

Following this introduction, the next section reviews the literature on public participation in order to clarify the role of such stakeholders in different contexts across the world. This is followed by the third section that deals with the key elements of citizen involvement that are outlined by Ebdon & Franklin (2006), as well as planning theories as the theoretical foundations underpinning this study. The fourth section describes the methods that were employed to collect data, the fifth and the sixth sections present and analyse the data using the theoretical framework and extant literature before drawing conclusions in the last section.

2. CONTEXTUALISING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current study applies the works of Kalandides (2018) & Drazkiewicz et al., (2015) to demonstrate the role of a multiplicity of stakeholders and how collaborative participation can lead, meaningfully, to development and diffusion of conflict leading to the implementation of acceptable and proper urban planning policies. Kalandides (2018) emphasises the need to embed participatory governance in the institutional framework as well as to recognise participation as a right in the public sphere. Meanwhile, whilst looking at four policymaking case studies in Germany, Drazkiewicz et al., (2015) argue that the success of participation is dependent upon numerous aspects of the broader framework within which processes are located, including the role of stakeholders. Furthermore, Drazkiewicz et al., (2015) have managed to showcase that through stakeholder participation and use of a variety of approaches, decisions tend to be popular and have a public buy-in.

However, the above-mentioned scholarly works have focused too much on the centrality of decision-making resulting in some informational gaps such as the importance and lack thereof of various stakeholders. This study will address such gaps by putting stakeholders at the centre of decision-planning, making and implementation process. Using case studies of two wards in Harare, this study hopes to cause a debate on the importance of stakeholder participation in the governance of flea markets. This is because very little research has paid attention to the role, views and perceptions of flea market traders in the governance of the informal sector. The little available literature on citizen participation in local government planning and management in Zimbabwe shows that stakeholder participation remains a myth, an abstract and an ideal. This is because of undermining factors which stem from the political, socio-economic, legal and technological milieu that local governments operate in (Garcia-Zamor, 2019; Saab et al., 2018; Purcell, 2019; Chirisa, 2007; Chirisa & Bandaiko, 2015; Aikins, 2013). Having taken note of the above scholarly works and variables, it becomes clear that there exists a paramount need to interrogate the manner, type, form and context of stakeholder participation in Harare's flea market sector.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: THE LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

This study adopts Ebdon & Franklin's (2006) key elements in citizen participation and planning. In utilising these elements as outlined in Table 1, this study is able to unpack the nature and form of stakeholder participation in Harare's flea market sector governance whereby it is observed that the existing socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe is influencing the role of stakeholders especially flea market operators and citizens in the area of flea markets.

Table 1: Modified adaptation of Ebdon & Franklin's key elements of citizen participation

Elements	Variables
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation and form of government • Political Configuration and Population size • Legal Requirements
Process Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing and Participants (selection method, numbers and representation)
Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and Focus Group Meetings • Advisory Committees • Surveys
Goals and Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of cynicism • Educate participants about policies • Gather input for decision-making

Source: Ebdon & Franklin (2006: 438), Researcher 2017

The study also applies planning theory as it contends that when plans are conceptualised through a strong civic involvement process, enactment of policies is likely to be relatively successful as the resulting plan will be supported by the majority of the affected communities. This is because when residents and stakeholders are involved, they "are less likely to come out of the woodwork to oppose implementation in the future (Day, 1997: 421). Furthermore, a network of support that guarantees a successful implementation emerges as stakeholders get to know and understand each other. This also results in the emergence of a

well-organised and crafted participatory process that brings together key players in implementation into the problem-solving process. As a result, through the discussion of solutions, a road-map for implementation begins to emerge (Kantamaturapoj et al., 2018; Gandy, 2019; Gough, 2019; Natarajan et al., 2019; Williamson and Fung, 2004). In addition, according to (Day, 1997: 427) “when the professionals orchestrating the planning process bring in local knowledge, the information used to formulate plans improves, leading to a greater likelihood that the decisions made will solve the problems that necessitated planning in the first place.” Neglecting public participation in planning may halt the relationship between civic involvement in the planning process and the prospect of a successful implementation. Beierle & Cayford (2002: 112) also advocate that “a strong participatory planning process has a positive relationship to implementation progress.” According to Brody (2003), public participation increases accountability for and ownership of a plan, often bringing about successful implementation.

The current study applies the works of Liu et al., (2018), Ma et al., (2018), Pu et al., (2019) and Sun et al., (2016) to demonstrate how stakeholder participation can address public dissatisfaction meaningfully and lead to the implementation of universally acceptable and proper urban planning policies. The quartet in their studies show that public participation and collaborative governance in China has, over the past decade, become a key instrument in addressing public dissatisfaction over the country’s governance system and is also quickly becoming an important catalyst for local economic and political development. China is important when assessing the level of civic involvement processes in Zimbabwe given the fact that, like Zimbabwe, it is one of the countries that is facing criticism over its lack of transparency and implementation of best practices in governance. Furthermore, the country is modelling its governance system along with the Chinese model through its Look East Policy. It is therefore important to compare Zimbabwe with other countries in a similar bracket on how, despite these challenges, the public is still involved in governmental processes.

Using two case studies, namely the Shanghai Hongyng Substation Project in Shanghai and the South East New Territories (SENT) landfill in Hong Kong, Sun et al. (2016) presented two juxtaposed outcomes noting that timing, the gradation of participation, participation approach as well as government’s aptitude to deal with a myriad of issues from key actors, have the potential positively or negatively to impact on conflict and conflict management. These authors also articulate important public participation tenets which can be used when analysing public participation of Harare residents in the formulation and implementation of flea market policies. Issues raised by the authors such as citizen-initiated contacts and citizens surveys are important mechanisms and approaches in looking at how public participation can help governments in having their policies accepted by the general public. It further helps in evaluating whether or not the ‘bottom-up’ or ‘top-down’ participation through the use of petitions, informal participation through protests, online advocacy, advisory committees and citizens surveys can work in a heavily polarised and politically toxic society like Harare.

Furthermore, despite the invaluable insights provided by the scholarly work of Sun et al., (2016), very few scholars have managed to undertake any systematic investigation of the role of stakeholder public participation and collaborative governance in Zimbabwe which leaves both researchers and practitioners clutching at straws. The participatory and collaborative governance history of Zimbabwe is still littered with several information gaps. There is a deficiency of empirical data that looks at public participation in local authorities. This study, therefore, seeks to fill in some of those gaps.

4. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

This paper draws on data for a broader study that were collected through a mixed method approach in the City of Harare (CoH), an area that falls under the metropolitan province of Harare.

4.1. Participants

The data for this study emerged from a broader project that used interviews with purposefully selected participants and randomly chosen surveys participants. Table 2 shows the profile of the respondents.

Ward		Harare Central		Mbare		Total
		(N=65)		(N= 130)		(N)
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent	
Age group	Between 18 to 25	12	18.5	25	19.2	37
	Between 26 to 35	20	30.8	44	33.8	64
	Between 36 to 45	18	27.7	39	30	57
	Between 46 to 55	11	16.9	17	13.1	28
	Above 55	4	6.2	5	3.8	9
Level of Education	No Formal Education	2	3.1	2	3.1	4
	Primary	4	6.2	4	6.2	8
	Secondary	41	63.1	41	63.1	82
	Tertiary	12	18.5	12	18.5	24
	Post Graduate	6	9.2	6	9.2	12
Gender	Female	33	50.8	71	54.6	104
	Male	32	49.2	59	45.4	91
Respondent category	Customers	50	76.9	80	61.5	130
	Flea Market Operator	15	23.1	50	38.5	65
Total		65	100	130	100	195

Source: Field Survey 2018. Sample size = 195.

As shown in Table 2, in Harare Central, out of 65 respondents, 76.9 per cent were flea market customers whilst 23.1 per cent were flea market operators or vendors. In Mbare, 130 respondents were interviewed, out of which 61.5 per cent were flea market customers whilst 38.5 per cent were flea market operators or vendors. This indicates that the majority of respondents from both Harare Central and Mbare were flea market customers. This is attributable to the fact that, due to high competition and the nature of flea market trading, vendors were reluctant to be interviewed as it entailed losing revenue. Further to this, 12 participants from members, policymakers in the Harare City Council, Flea Market leaders and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) leaders/lobbyists were purposely selected to participate in the study.

4.2. Instrumentation

In order to elicit the views of both the vendors and their customers, a survey questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire included four broad themes, namely, policy formulation, institutional design, facilitative leadership and collaborative process in order to gain perspectives on and perception of flea market governance and participation. The first theme sought to comprehend the respondents' opinions on their perceptions and experiences in policy formulations whilst the second theme sought to understand the framework in which the respondents participate in flea market governance and management. A five-step Likert Scale was also one of the data collection instruments that was used whereby respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement in terms of their perceptions of public participation in Harare's flea market sector (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire also contained open-ended questions where respondents could express their views.

4.3. Data collection procedures

Having been granted permission to conduct field work by the Ministry of Local Government and permission from various vendor organisations and role players, the researcher engaged vendors and their customers explaining to them the purposes of the study and that their participation was voluntary. In administering the questionnaire, this study used intercept interviews. Hornik & Ellis (1988) argue that intercept interviews have become the most popular method of data collection. Upon identification of a potential respondent, the researcher used the gaze and touch techniques as suggested by Mardanbegi & Pfeiffer (2019) and Dolinski (2015), to approach potential interviewees in the most densely populated flea markets in the districts of Mbare East and Harare Central. Upon contact, the target was greeted and advised of the broad aims and goals of the study and why their input was important in contextualising issues. The face-to-face interviews took a minimum of 40 minutes. Permission was also sought to audio record the interviewees.

4.4. Data analysis

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. With regard to interviews. All interview transcripts were processed and analysed. Firstly, all the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data generated approximately 50 A4 printed pages. This study also utilised four (4) steps in thematic analysis. These are: the identification of major themes; allocation of codes to main themes; thematic classification of responses; and thematic integration of responses into texts. Quantitative data analysis was also utilised in focus group discussions and interviews in order to derive patterns and meanings. The Chi-square was also used to test the study's hypothesis on whether variables such as the vendors' and their customers' age, place of origin, gender and qualification determined their responses and whether or not their responses were influenced by such variables.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Designing a framework that will clarify the role of the community in policy formulation and implementation

The Republic of Zimbabwe makes public participation, a constitutional requirement in all spheres of government. In fact, Chapter 14 of the *Constitution* emphasises that the participation of local communities in determining matters related to development in their area is important. However, although the *Constitution* provides for public participation in governance and there are various role players ranging from the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe to Ward

Councilors and residents, there is no current legal framework to operationalise public participation in Harare. In a bid to understand as well as to unpack the views of various stakeholders that are critical to the governance of flea markets, respondents were asked whether or not the government needed to design a framework, which clarifies the role of the community in policy formulation and implementation. The responses are outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: It is not necessary to involve the community in policy formulation

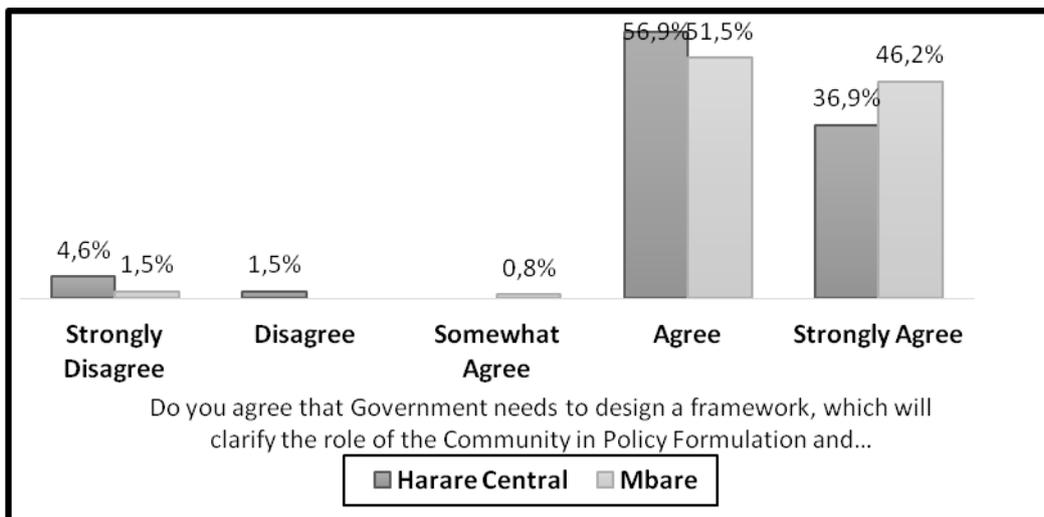


Figure 1 above reveals that 56.9 per cent agreed and 51.5 per cent of respondents in Harare Central and Mbare East, agreed strongly that government needed to design a framework, which will clarify the role of the community in policy formulation and implementation. Of those who strongly agree 36.9 per cent were from Harare Central and 46.2 per cent were from Mbare East. Other respondents are those who strongly disagreed to the statement at 4.6 per cent in Harare Central and 1.5% in Mbare East, followed by those who disagreed at 1.5 per cent in Harare Central. Only a small percentage of respondents in Mbare East, somewhat agree to the statement and that represents 0.8 per cent. This may partly be because the Zimbabwean population is highly educated and due to their standard of literacy, they understand their rights and roles. Furthermore, based on their experiences in the sector where decisions are routinely imposed on them, the respondents feel strongly the need to be consulted as well as the need to have a framework that specifically spells out the role of each stakeholder. They feel that such a scenario will lead to inclusivity and acceptability of policies. Without the buying in of all stakeholders, there is a high likelihood of friction, conflict, ostracism and lack of successful implementation of flea market policies.

Given the importance of civic participation especially during the initial stages of planning, one would have expected the City of Harare (CoH) to have an established structure of communication and collaboration with its constituents. However, from the data obtained from City officials during fieldwork, this is not the case as, most of the time residents only get involved when a policy is being implemented. Their role is that of validating or being receptors of newly formulated policy or policies. From the foregoing, it is apparent that a coordination and communication plan should be put in place through which not only the City of Harare has an established communication link with the central government but for non-state actors as well as residents to have an established platform through which they can channel their ideas.

5.2. The need to define the role of the community if they are to be truly involved in local governance

This study also asked respondents whether or not there is a need to define the role of the community if they are truly to be involved in local governance. Findings reveal that 55.4 per cent and 44.6 per cent of respondents in Harare Central and Mbare East, respectively, agree that there is need to define the role of the community if they are to be truly involved in local government. 43.1 per cent in Harare Central and 50.8 per cent in Mbare East strongly agree with the statement. Other respondents somewhat agree at 0.8 per cent in Mbare East, followed by those who disagree at 2.3 per cent in Mbare East. Another, 1.5 per cent of the respondents in both districts strongly disagreed with the statement. The respondents feel strongly about participation and the need to define the role of stakeholders as they feel they are being left out of the flea market governance decision-making processes. The feeling among participants in the study is that the Municipality is heavy-handed in its dealings with them and that it is one-way traffic of information. As has been highlighted, the City prefers a top-down approach in the governance of the sector, rather than opting for a consultative and participatory approach that considers all the viewpoints.

When the community is fully engaged and aware of the activities and developments within their neighbourhood, it is usually as a consequence of the quality, ability and will of community leaders. The respondents were therefore asked if their involvement or non-involvement has to do with the ability of community leaders or forums, and their responses are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The involvement or non-involvement of the community has to do with the ability of the community leaders or forum leaders

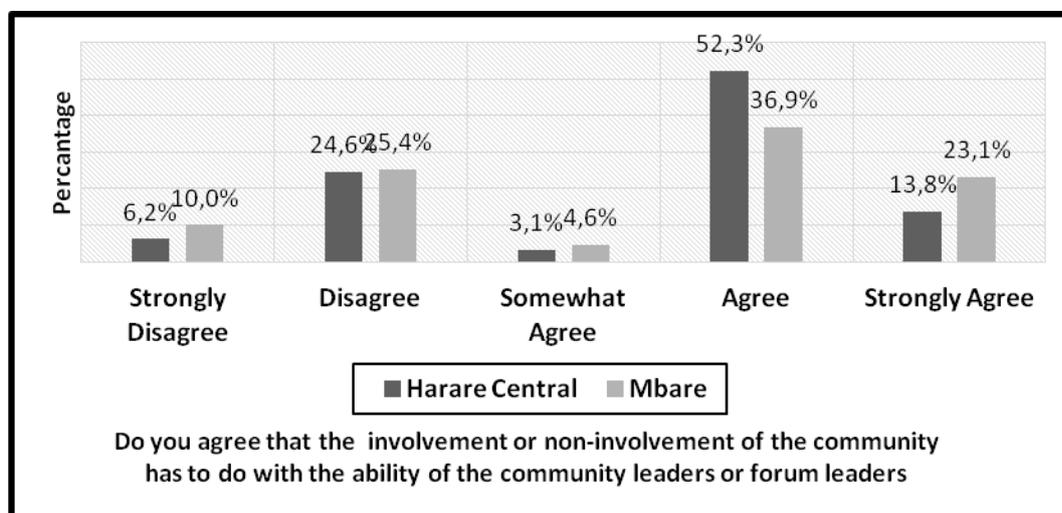


Figure 2 reveals that 52.3 per cent and 36.9 per cent of the respondents in Harare Central and Mbare East, respectively, agreed that the involvement or non-involvement of the community has to do with the ability of the community or forum leaders, followed by those who strongly agree at 13.8 per cent in Harare Central and 23.1 per cent in Mbare East. Other respondents are those who disagree with the statement at 24.6 per cent in Harare Central and 25.4 per cent in Mbare East, followed by those who strongly disagreed at 10 per cent in Mbare East and 6.2 per cent in Harare Central. Only a small percentage of respondents somewhat agreed with the statement at 3.1 per cent in Harare Central and 4.6 per cent in Mbare East. Despite the

apathetic posture taken by vendors and citizens alike over what they perceived to be a useless political leadership that is not responsive enough, the respondents still maintain faith in their political and community leaders. Therefore, their responses in the affirmative that the capacity of community or forum leaders is a determining factor in their involvement in local affairs is significant. A community that is aware of the developments and able to interpret developments within the community is an asset as they are able to comprehend and conceptualise issues, which results in the community being able to remain engaged and involved with matters that affect them. From the above responses, it can be concluded that the respondents are aware of the importance of community or forum leaders in the articulation of their concerns, positions and viewpoints. Furthermore, the responses elicit the view that the society should be central in all decision-making processes. The above results were confirmed by the findings from the qualitative data which show that it is important to co-opt community leaders, particularly, non-state actors into local governance structures. Under normal circumstances, civil society organisations are supposed to either complement government efforts on a particular issue or to fill the gap left by the government. In fact, they have become an indispensable appendage to governance and in some countries, are now being recognised as the fifth estate of the state. In the case of Zimbabwe, since the early 1990s, there has been an upsurge in the formation of non-governmental organisations, especially in the field of advocacy, human rights, governance, and democracy, with the aim of complementing or bridging the gap left by government. The informal sector is one such sector that has seen the mushrooming of vendor organisations with the aim of representing the voice of the flea market sector which, despite, becoming one of the biggest contributors to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continues to remain marginalised, ostracised and maligned.

Due to intense lobbying and advocacy, there has been a marked improvement in relations between vendors and the CoH. Having realised their importance, the City Council now closely collaborates with vendor organisations on matters of mutual interest. Periodical meetings are held jointly with the central government with the aim of finding common ground. Furthermore, the vendor organisations' advocacy and public awareness campaigns encouraging communities to be involved in local governance, are starting to bear fruit. The public is becoming more engaged and animated on issues that directly affect them. Communities are now aware of their role and rights. They now demand more accountability and responsiveness from the Council. A closer inspection of the statistics as previously highlighted in Table 2, shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents agree that there is need to define the role of the community if they are to be truly involved local government. Had the CoH been facilitative enough, respondents' dissatisfaction would have been minimal yet the data shows a community that is frustrated and disenfranchised with the Council's governance system.

6. DISCUSSION

The study was aimed at assessing the role of stakeholders and their effectiveness against a background of the current literature, theory and practice. It analysed the impact and effectiveness of participatory mechanisms in the promotion of an involved citizenry in Harare's flea market sector. It notes that the promulgation of the *2013 Constitution* introduced participatory democracy in Zimbabwe. Prior to its introduction, there were no provisions in the country's supreme law that provided for the involvement of the public in local governance (Jonga, 2014: 78) This has, however, changed as the new *Constitution* gives prominence and importance to public participation. It sees public participation in decision making as one of the fundamental pillars of the attainment of devolution and democracy. Their involvement also fosters efficiency and effectiveness. The new *Constitution*, therefore, provides the citizenry

with an opportunity to partake in decisions that affect them and their communities. This has had a tremendous impact on the local government level. There has been a progressive shift from a centralised to a decentralised governance system as well as the preponderance of 'bottom-up' approach at the expense of the traditional 'top-down' system. This study evaluated the role of community in policy formulation and implementation. It argues that there is still a lot to be done for the community to be truly involved in decision-making. This study was able succinctly to establish that although the *Constitution* provides for public participation, currently there is no legal framework to operationalise public participation among local authorities, particularly in Harare. In addition, given the importance of civic participation especially during the initial stages of planning, one would have expected the CoH to have an established structure of communication and collaboration with its constituents. However, the situation on the ground tells a different story as residents only get involved when a policy is being implemented. Their role is that of validating or of being receptors of newly formulated policy or policies. The views expressed during this study and the evidence gathered validate an assertion made by the *African Capacity and Development Programme (ACDP)* that there is too much national government involvement at the local level (ACDP, 2004). Consequently, there is limited flexibility for local authorities to implement major public participatory mechanisms. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the findings are consistent with the arguments propounded by Haruta & Bianca (2010: 76) that, in Romania, even though there are mechanisms in place that provide for public participation, there is low-level citizenry involvement in the decision-making process. There is no evidence to show that Harare incorporates citizenry input in their decision-making processes. In fact, evidence points to a preference by the City leadership for a top-down and one-way communication approach. In fact, top officials from both central and local government have perfected the art of manipulation. It can, therefore, be argued that as the Arnstein (1969) typology of the Ladder of Participation suggests, the City of Harare through its Information and Publicity Department, seems to prefer non-participative processes. It has perfected the art of manipulating its citizenry whereby participation is deflected. It has also been established that Harare uses platforms for participation merely to inform and to educate communities concerning predetermined Council programmes. There is no genuine desire to engage and to obtain input from the community. FMMCs and City departments have been turned into one-way communication channels with limited channels for feedback. Consultation is merely a token and a window-dressing ritual. It is, therefore, quite apparent that there is need to put a meaningful coordination and communication channel in place through which not only the City of Harare has an established communication link with the central government but, non-state actors, as well as residents, can have an established platform through which to channel their ideas. This will not only improve service delivery but relations among all stakeholders as well. There would then be an established platform where ideas and perspectives could be shared leading to effective collaboration and to the betterment of society. These observations validate the aims and objectives of the study, where it is quite apparent that a great deal still needs to be done for Harare to achieve an egalitarian system where residents are an important stakeholder in decision-making and implementation.

The findings are a microcosm of what is happening in all the local government authorities in Zimbabwe and the Southern African region, in general. Therefore, there is an urgent need for not only the Zimbabwean government but for regional governments to review their participatory strategies to make them more inclusive and responsive to their citizens' needs. There is, therefore, need for further research on the matter, not only for Harare but Zimbabwe and the region as a whole. Although some studies such as Chikerema (2013, 2014), Chirisa,

(2016) Masvaure, (2016), Roberts, (2004), Roberts-Lombard, (2002), and Williams, (2006) look at the dynamics of citizen participation in Zimbabwe and in the region, their studies are not exhaustive enough and thus require further scrutiny. It is quite apparent that there are a number of stakeholders in Harare and all participate in various ways in the governance of the flea market sector. Their role, opinions and perceptions help shape the informal economy policy. From the findings, it has also been established that Harare is still far from achieving full participation as envisioned by Arnstein (1969). There is no evidence to suggest that, through negotiation between citizens and the CoH, power is being redistributed. In fact, planning and decision-making responsibilities are still the preserve of the Council and are not shared by residents through mechanisms such as joint committees. Furthermore, Harare does not even have systems and mechanisms where citizens are in complete control. There are no mechanisms to ensure that the Council is held to account by its public. Citizen control of municipal decision-making processes is still a pipe dream and a distant possibility under the current governance system. Furthermore, the country's local governance architecture, as is currently instituted, does not give power to the have-nots to handle planning, policy-making and management processes on any policy or programme. As highlighted, the current leadership feels entitled to rule without any input from the electorate.

Consistent with Bond & Manyanya (2003), Chikerema (2013), Chikerema & Chakunda (2014), this study has established that participation of the Zimbabwean citizenry has been on the decline over the past two decades and is also very limited to areas such as elections, budgeting, consultative forums and public forums. It has been established that the role of councillors, has been diminishing over the years and that this has resulted in them being sidelined, even by the residents they are supposed to represent. In fact, since the turn of the century, administrative officials across local authorities in Zimbabwe have become more powerful than the elected representatives themselves. Furthermore, the policy whereby local authorities administrators are supposed regularly to consult with central government line departments to ensure that their activities are in line with national policy, have made them less accountable to local authorities' political leadership. To make matters worse, citizens no longer play an important role in modern-day Zimbabwean politics and governance processes. In fact, they are pawns in an inter-political fight and perpetual victims of incompetence and arbitrariness of city councils.

Considering the role of various stakeholders, this study looked at the role of the community participation led by community leaders, forum leaders and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). It notes that CSOs provide an umbilical cord between the City Council and the community as most vendor organisations in Harare and Zimbabwe in general, were formed with the aim of filling the void left by local authorities. The findings dovetail with the work of Chikerema, (2013) when he argues that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in complementing government efforts in facilitating local participation. Therefore, looking at the role of CSOs in Harare, this study discovered that due to public awareness programmes, advocacy and lobbying by CSOs, there has been a marked improvement in relations between vendors and the CoH. Through their efforts, the City Council now collaborates closely with vendor organisations on matters of mutual interest and hold periodic meetings with the aim of finding common ground. Furthermore, the public is becoming more engaged and animated on issues that directly affect them. Communities are now self-aware of their role and rights. They now demand more accountability and responsiveness from the Council. The seminal work of Kalandides, (2018), who looked at civic involvement and participation in Berlin, Germany, is also important as it brings to the fore many similarities between these two cities. Kalandides

argues that the City of Berlin was able to introduce new formats of participation and communication between the Senate (government) and citizens and to strengthen direct democracy through close collaboration with stakeholders.

The findings reveal the inadequacies of civic participation in Harare. It is quite apparent that public administrators have not been doing what they are supposed to do. This is partly as a result of the rigid and autocratic nature of the *UCA* and the reluctance of the executive to change the status quo. In spite of the new *2013 Constitution* placing civic participation at the core of local governance and requiring the central government to play an enabling rather than a controlling role in local government, these provisions remain aspirational as they are yet to be put into operation. The above-mentioned findings validate Christiano (2018) argument that that decision-makers ought to play their part in building and nurturing civic consent by ensuring that citizens participate meaningfully and constructively in decision-making processes. The myriad of complaints from both vendors and various stakeholders within the Zimbabwean government and non-state actors suggest the need to involve the citizenry and to abandon the centrist approach favoured by Zimbabwean administrators. More so, from the evidence gathered during fieldwork the ideal scenario as propounded by Board & Council (2004) remains a pipe dream when they suggested that stakeholder participation should complement, not circumvent, political and decision-making processes. There is, therefore, a need to place civic involvement at the centre of flea market decision-making and to make sure all decisions in local authorities have the validation of the residents. This will not only improve accountability but democracy as well.

Like Kimemia (2011: 56), it was established that whilst vendors are gainfully contributing to the country's economic development, their rights continue to be trampled upon and their role is constantly ignored. This is despite the fact that the *2013 Constitution* and to a lesser extent, Chapter 29:15 of the *UCA* (2002), institutionalises community participation as a core function in local governance. The *Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe*, in particular, provides a platform for citizens to participate effectively, politically, or economically at municipal and RDC level. For example, Section 13:2 stipulates that Zimbabwean citizens must be involved "in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes that affect them" (*Zimbabwe, 2013: 19*). In addition, the *Constitution* provides "for the participation of local communities in the determination of development priorities within their area" (*Zimbabwe, 2013: 123*). These findings are also consistent with the views of Simonsen (2018). It is quite apparent that the decision-making structure of HCC has become increasingly beholden to moneyed interests in the form of space barons in, the same way the United States political establishment is beholden to corporate and moneyed interests. The sad reality is that the situation in Harare does not satisfy the requirements of a functioning democratic and developmental state or the aspirations of the vending community. It is a system that favours the élite and subjugates the have-nots.

This study has been able to demonstrate that trust in representatives has declined. Therefore, non-state actors having realised that there is a serious public participation deficit and trust in urban councils they have attempted to fill that gap. Having realised that municipal participatory mechanisms were facing serious constraints such as the existence of highly politicised management committees which were forcing them to deviate from their mandates, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) such as Action Aid, Trust Africa and OSISA have partnered with vendor initiations in order to fill this gap. They have, therefore, invented other mechanisms that allow and enhance uninhibited participation in local government processes,

especially in Harare. This has had a tremendous impact on re-igniting the citizenry's desire for participation, while at the same time reducing the level of conflict and mistrust.

7. CONCLUSION

This study examined various stakeholder roles and the impact of participatory governance processes in Harare's flea markets. It notes that, although the *Constitution of Zimbabwe* provides for collaborative governance and the formulation and implementation of policies by co-opting the citizenry in decision-making, there is a severe flea market governance crisis in Harare, which, if not addressed urgently, will lead to civil dissonance, disobedience and, ultimately to insecurity. While the roles of stakeholders are well articulated in various regulations, Acts of Parliament and even in the *Constitution* itself, there is very little, if any, that has been done to incorporate the public into policy formulation and implementation in the informal sector. In fact, there is reluctance on the part of the management of the CoH to implement fully the public participation architecture as enshrined in the *Constitution* for fear of losing power and influence. There are also misperceptions that the citizenry is less educated and poorly informed in the sphere of governance. This has unfortunately led to the engendering of one-way communication between the CoH and the ratepayers. More importantly, most of the public participation strategies currently being employed by authorities in Harare are all about manipulation as postulated by Arnstein (1969). There is, therefore, no real effort at genuine citizen participation through collaborative governance. Public administrators do not consult the public in their decision-making processes nor in the implementation of a policy that affect this important constituency.

Furthermore, the current ruling élite is opposed to public participation as they believe the citizenry should be subordinate to their viewpoints. In the rare circumstances where public participation is practiced, it is along partisan lines. In fact, from both focus group discussions and surveys, what came out clearly is that one's political affiliation is more important than what is provided for in the *Constitution*. In fact, politics triumphs and affects the quality of decisions. What is being practiced in Harare goes against the tenets suggested by Drazkiewicz et al., when they looked at various factors that influence the quality of decisions and implementation. What is evident in Harare is that there is no inclusion of varied stakeholders that represent different value systems and interests and the development of creative as well as innovative solutions due to the inclusion of different perspectives. Furthermore, there is an acute absence of incorporation of different types of knowledge through the amalgamation and accommodation of local knowledge, perspectives and interests as well as through raising awareness among stakeholders.

Finally, the obtaining situation is that of a community that is divorced from local governance systems and a national government that is involved in the minutiae of issues at the local government level. There is, therefore, an urgent need by the CoH to define the role of the community in public participation and also for the Municipality to build capacity and to empower community leaders for active public participation.

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