What Makes a Citizen? Reflection on the Zimbabwean Urban Space

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Abstract

The article focuses on determinants of urban citizenship concerningthe rights, duties and responsibilities of citizens in urban areas. This is against the background that a connection between citizens and their participation in urban affairs is critical towards urban resilience. Urban areas are spaces where rights and duties of citizenship can be enacted and exercised. Seemingly missing in the literature is the variability in the rights and duties of urban citizens in different contexts and their importance in shaping the urban space, their contributions and adverse actions that tarnish the image and development of the urban space? Experiences in Zimbabwe show that citizenship is shaped mainly by the politics, institutions and laws of that area. It is recommended that the consideration of the rights of citizens in urban areas be done to allow full participation in the development of urban areas. Citizenship ought to be defined without any political influence to enable the participation of urban dwellers in shaping and transforming the urban space more sustainably without fear of exercising one's right or informally acting in a manner that destroys the outlook of urban areas and their public and private spaces.

Keywords: *citizenship, participation, sustainability, resilience, local government*

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INTRODUCTION

Citizen participation in urban affairs has been supported in development, policy and academic literature. The present status of the urban space and urban citizenship prompted this study as it tries to figure out ways in which the urban citizens can be involved in the planning and designing of urban space and the best presentation for sustainability and resilience. Avenues allowing for citizen participation in the local government system encompass local government elections, local authorities participatory budgeting (PB), consultative fora, public hearings, open meetings of councils and legislative bodies, joining associations, like civil society organisations and development committees within local communities. Understanding the constitution of a citizen is very crucial in identifying one's role in urban activities and other aspects of the urban area (Kelly, 2020). The flourishment of urban areas can be strengthened by a conducive relationship between citizens and different aspects of these areas. There are several definitions of a citizen around the world of writers. The Oxford English Dictionary (2011), defines a citizen as an inhabitant of a city or town, possessing civic rights and privileges. In New York, citizenship comes with several privileges, among them discounts on most of entertainment activities, like sporting events, movie tickets and at health centres (Wood, 2018). Thus, being a citizen is not about being a resident but can be regarded as a source of benefit to an individual through the enjoyment of the privileges that are acquired. Being a citizen comes with duties and responsibilities (OED, 2011), hence it should be noted that it is in these duties that makes one a citizen whereby one can be active in all sorts of activities of the urban area in which they dwell.

The article aims to discuss the qualities of being a citizen with regards to Zimbabwean urban spaces. The concept of being a citizen of an area is determined by several factors. Citizenship is linked to society and politics of the area in which one resides (Falola and Falola, 2020), hence the idea of what makes one a citizen differs from societyso society. In urban areas, issues related to processes of belonging, inclusion and exclusion are played out and contested and this varies from one context to the other. This often raises the urban politics debate that is rooted in understanding the

spaces available for the participation of the majority of citizens and the change or influence resulting from this participation (Gebhardt, 2016).

Lundi (2016: 1200) argues that "struggles over citizenship are therefore as much about the scope and constitution of political authority as they are about access to resources and membership of a political community". The article unveils the qualities of urban citizens and their interrelationship with the urban environment around them. The different aspects of urban space help to know the rights and responsibilities that define an urban citizen (Giband and Siino, 2013). An understanding of how urban citizens contribute to shaping urban areas in all aspects of urban space and also how they destroy this outlook of urban areas through different activities, is important in urban studies. This study originates from an observation that there is a relationship that exists between urban space and urban citizens, hence the structure and shape of urban areas are determined by citizens that dwell in that area.

Citizenship is about the meaningful membership of an organised political body (Swerts, 2017). This is reflected through formal and informal institutional structures deliberately put in place to define the rights and obligations of one's membership. Citizenship, many times, is a fight for recognition between different groups, including ordinary persons and recognising authorities. The process of recognition of citizenship rests in an institution that provides such recognition with recognition of its authority to do so (Wood, 2018). Citizenship is recognised and conferred by authority and this is reflected through deliberate policies, laws and practices protecting people and advancing their interests (Lundi, 2016). The state takes the lead in recognising and advancing the interests of people. The recognition of citizenship is mostly contested. Struggles for citizenship are, generally, struggles for the recognition of the very right to have rights in a body politic (Lundi, 2016). This can be exemplified by people in informal settlements fighting for their settlements to be recognised and upgraded.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study focuses on defining the aspects that contribute to the identification of one as an urban citizen with the focus centred on urban areas of Zimbabwe. The article tries to clarify the prevailing citizenship of urban Zimbabwe and find ways in which it is best resolved for the betterment of urban spaces. It also digs in to find core causes of current issues between citizens and the urban morphology, not forgetting the key issues that affect the full practice of citizenship rights among urban dwellers. It is believed that though Zimbabwe is an independent country, its citizens are in captivity when it comes to freedom to act, mostly with the coming of the Second Republic, (beginning 2018, after the ousting of former President Robert Mugabe), hence this has been seen to affect the development of urban spaces. This study formulates ways that can be followed to address this gap for the success of public engagement.

The understanding of what makes a citizen can be traced from knowing what a citizen is (Lundi, 2016). There are many definitions of the word "citizen". It is simply defined as a member of a community, state or nation. An urban citizen, therefore, can be viewed as a person residing in an urban area with all the legal rights (Falola and Falola, 2020). However, it should be noted that there are also illegal citizens who do not have that legal right to reside in urban areas, such as the informal settlers (Kelly, 2020).

It should be noted that being a citizen of an urban area does not only emanate from the legal rights that one holds and owning a place to stay and watch things happening. It is where one participates fully in the activities of the area in which one dwells, thereby giving ideas and volunteering in different ways that lead to the development of the area. In short, an urban citizen is not limited to the legality of being a resident but the capacity of one's positive actions for the improvement of the present and future wellness in the designed urban space (Lundi, 2016). Therefore, this study seeks to discuss the correlation of urban citizens with different aspects of urban space, like a political sphere, economy, social circles, the built environment and the natural environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

On a global scale, the idea of citizenship has been viewed in many different ways. Urban citizenship is found in a revised relationship with the urban space (Giland and Siino, 2013). This means that one is made a citizen through their connection with urban space. Being a citizen is linked to the society and political community in which one dwells (Kelly, 2020). From this, what makes a citizen can be argued to be the definition set aside by the area in which one is located. Urban citizenship lies in a dialectic relation between politics, individual and collective engagement and urban space (Giland and Siino, 2013).

FACTORS LEADING TO A CITIZEN

Many factors form an urban citizen in the developed world. It is the status given to an individual that qualifies him or her to become a citizen of an urban area or city. This status is given by the municipality as an identity card that formalises a person with city citizen status (Wood, 2018). It is through this citizen identity card that one gets access to services provided in the urban area in which one resides. The use of municipality identity cards has been used in Spain where one is regarded as an urban citizen through registration done at local town halls.

Access to municipal services and a symbolic local membership is gained through this registration (Gebhardt, 2016). This is believed to be successful as evidence has been gathered from some of the cities like Madrid and Barcelona that have succeeded in the implementation of this notion. Apart from Spain, in New York City (USA), one is considered to be an urban citizen through the Identication Document for the New York City (IDNYC) Card that enables a person to access the services offered in that area, such as school, city-building or police, among others (Daley, 2016). This is believed to instil a greater sense of belonging among the citizens of New York (Wood, 2018). Therefore, it is summed that gaining status is one key component of being a citizen and one can be considered a citizen only when they receive the city, town or urban status and its only after acquiring this status that one becomes fully active in the participation of issues regarding urban planning and urban space.

It is said that the right to an urban area can make one a citizen (Wood, 2018). Wood argues that urban citizenship is shaped by the degree to which one often refers to the cosmopolitan norms, including international human rights law. One is regarded as a citizen by analysing the way they defend their position, hence being a citizen is whereby one stands for their rights and knows them as well. One is a full citizen when they are allowed to freely exercise their rights to the maximum without any regulations. Gland and Siino (2013) have noted the acquiring of rights that makes one a citizen is beneficial to the regulations and material development of urban areas. It is possible through the claims, political activism generated from the rights of being a citizen hence it is said that the manifestation of urban rights within a citizen is crucial for the wellness and expansion of the city and all its features.

CITIZENSHIP IN ZIMBABWE'S CONTEXT

In Zimbabwe, the constitution describes a citizen in three aspects (Section 36-38 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe). At a national level, one is made a citizen through birth whereby an individual is born in Zimbabwe with either parent a citizen or where any of the grandparents is a citizen by birth or descent (Section 36, Constitution of Zimbabwe). Second, one can become a citizen by descent when one is born outside Zimbabwe but with one of the parents or grandparent being Zimbabwean by birth or descent or registration (Section 37, Constitution of Zimbabwe). Lastly, one becomes a citizen through registration when one has been married to a Zimbabwean for five years or has been continuously and lawfully resident for at least 10 years (Section 38,Constitution of Zimbabwe).

In Zimbabwe, being a citizen is guided by many laws that provide the individual with rights to do something and restricting one from an act. Among them is the Constitution of Zimbabwe that explains a citizen at national level,The Citizenship Act [Chapter 4:01] and the urban citizens are given certain rights that combine them with the urban space through the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act [Chapter 29:12] that guides the development. Regarding urban citizenship, there are no regulations that guide or make one a citizen in this present age. During

the period of colonialism, urban citizenship was regulated but with the coming of independence, everyone gained access to urban areas leading to urbanization and congestion. Urban space is currently at its fringe of losing shape through the creation of informal settlements that have negative impacts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article is based on a literature review and document analysis. Literature in connection with the urban environment and the different rights and constraints of urbanites to express their rights was reviewed. The literature review is an account of what has been published on the topic by accredited scholars and researchers. The literature review provides the knowledge and ideas that have been established. Document analysis was engaged in the preparation of this article.

RESULTS

URBAN CITIZENS AND THEIR URBAN SPACE

Different features shape one to be a citizen in an urban area. The connection between urban citizens and their urban space is inseparable.Therefore, the outlook of urban areas is attributed to the actions of the people dwelling in these areas (Lundi, 2016). The argument is that urban citizens can modify the urban space for the better through their sustainable activities and, on the other hand, can destroy it by their unhealthy activities. The development of urban areas rests in the hands of its citizens, hence the importance of identifying the role of each citizen in the development process of different urban aspects, such as the economy, social, political and cultural aspects, among others. The citizens must shape their urban space in different ways.

INFORMALITY AND CITIZENS IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe's urban citizens form the greater part of the informal sector and their contribution to the economy is very high. Citizens are playing a pivotal role in sustaining the economy of different urban centres in the country at large.For instance, the employment of citizens in Chegutu has

led to the improvement of women-headed families through vending and other informal jobs (Nungundu and Lombard, 2014).

Chidoko, Mukuyana, Mutungamire and Bemani (2011) assert that the informal sector in Zimbabwe has several benefits to the economy, including its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment creation and new investments. However, it has been discovered that the prevailing adverse effects on the urban space are also a result of the activities of the citizens. Though the citizens strive to build up urban areas in which they reside, their efforts are underrated by different political situations in these cities and other adverse situations and factors (Shah, 2008). Politics is one of the influential factors that has affected the citizenship of urban dwellers in most cities, especially Harare. It has been observed that different types of pollution that are affecting urban areas are a result of citizen's actions. Informal urban citizens have also led to the distortion of the urban quality and layout of these areas through the emerging of informal settlements, with such settlements accumulating in Harare, for instance, Hopely. The results also show that the outlook of urban space in Zimbabwe has been affected by the citizens.

Reflecting on the urban open spaces, many of them have become the home of illegal activities, such as money changing and vending. Streets and pavements have been invaded by informal traders and vendors making it difficult for other citizens to enjoy their rights of moving freely in the streets. Apart from that, due to lack of garbage collection, most open spaces are now being used as dumping areas in most residential areas and the Central Business District. This has become a threat to the health of the people and the environment.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON CITIZEN'S PARTICIPATION
However, though citizens have tried to practise their roles in urban areas, political influence has been seen to control citizens in different urban areas and, in most cases, it is oppressing and suppressing the rights of citizenship held by urban dwellers. Urban citizenship is not only shaped or defined by the laws that regulate one to become a citizen but is also affected by the play of different political parties and other factors. Though

citizenship is accompanied by several rights, not all citizens are free to exercise their rights because of fear of losing certain privileges.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CITIZEN'S RIGHTS

Some citizens lack knowledge about the rights and privileges they have within the urban space, hence their illiteracy excludes them from participating in most of the development processes in their neighbourhoods. In Zimbabwe, everyone has the right to the city, thus making it difficult to analyse the factors making an urban citizen. In other words, it is said that there is no legal logic that determines one as an urban citizen. Since there are no regulations to the access and stay in urban areas, urbanisation has increased and due to shortage of housing, the growth of informal settlements has increased within the urban space, resulting in the destruction of the natural environment and other urban open spaces that are being invaded by land barons. This has also resulted in the uneven distribution of facilities as some of the areas that have been left out for other developments are being occupied thus an imbalance in the form of urban space.

The results also indicate that urban citizens are contributing to the well-being of the economy through informal sectors and small and medium enterprises. Besides their role in the informal sector, urban citizens have also increased food production in urban areas through urban agriculture (Chaminuka and Dube, 2017).

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE PARTICIPATION BY CITIZENS

Citizenship in urban spaces cannot be mentioned without reference to how citizens help shape their urban environments. Thus, this section will focus on the roles of citizens in Zimbabwe's urban spaces in the context of active and passive participation. According to the United Nations, as cited in Makumbe (1996), active participation requires time to attend meetings, vote and inform oneself about issues. Passive participation, on the other hand, pertains to such choice-making and even manipulation of the masses by those who will have critical decisions in the first place. The playing field for both active and passive participation of citizens in the

urban spaces is local democracy. This is when citizens can participate actively in the local democratic process.

According to Fung (2001:41), local democracy provides citizens with the freedom to participate in making decisions that are locally appropriate and serve the needs of the local community. Local democracy simply means rule by the people, giving people a say in the decisions that affect their lives and access to their resources. Thus, local governments provide room for citizens to influence the future of their environments and their needs. Chikerema (2013) posits that local government is a product of devolution as a dimension of decentralisation. In Zimbabwe, local government is the third tier of government, deliberately created to bring the government closer to the grassroots population. The existence of local government has always been defended on the basis that it is a crucial aspect of the process of democratisation and intensification of mass participation in the decision-making process.

It is critical to note that if the Zimbabwean system of government, especially in urban landscapes, is functioning properly. Citizens must actively participate in its operations at all levels and the local government system. Chikerema (*ibid.*) indicates that local officials have a responsibility and a stake in keeping citizens fully informed about local programmes and activities and giving them clear opportunities to play meaningful roles in determining and implementing local public policy.

Responsible citizenry maintains vigorous, informed and continuous participation in the process of local government. Chikerema (*ibid.*), provides that the individual citizen in the Zimbabwean local government system has numerous ways to influence policies and practices and they are given space to participate in institutional issues. These are the avenues allowing for citizen participation in the local government system and encompasses the following aspects: local government elections, local authorities' PB, consultative fora, public hearings, open meetings of

councils and legislative bodies, joining associations, like civil society organisations and development committees within local communities.

KEY PLATFORMS FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN ZIMBABWE

Local government elections provide a broad base of participation in local government. This forms the foundation of democracy and proper citizenship in urban spaces. Thus, electoral processes provide ways in which individual citizens express their views at the local level. According to Braun and Grote (2000), participatory local governments are more responsive to local needs, elected officials are more accountable and responsive to the needs of the public and they are involved in decision-making. Muriisa (2007) also states that decentralisation of the local government system enables people to voice their needs and access certain resources through their elected representatives and enhances efficiency through reduced bureaucracy. Thus, urban councils in Zimbabwe are run by a council that consists of councillors elected for each ward and these councillors are there to represent the wishes and voices of the urban citizens.

Participatory budgeting is another platform on which one shows one's citizenry in Zimbabwe's urban spaces. It is a process of democratic deliberations and decision-making in which ordinary citizens decide how to allocate part of a municipal or public budget. It is characterised by several design features that are: identification of spending priorities by community members, the election of budget delegates to represent different communities and vote on spending priorities and the implementation of local direct impact community projects. In the case of the Zimbabwe local government system, according to the Local Government Acts, budget proposals are published in three issues of newspapersto provide the public a chance to scrutinise the budget. The Urban Councils Act (2006) participatory budget is part of the overall strategic effort to promote local democracy in local authorities and its main objectives are: to promote civic interest and participation in local governance, to involve the community in generating self-sustaining livelihoods options and to promote accountability and transparency in local public finance and budgeting. This process highlights issues of

citizenship and their roles in the urban landscape that is fundamental in answering who a citizen is in Zimbabwe's urban spaces.

Consultative fora and public hearings enhance citizen's participation in the running of local government systems in Zimbabwe considering the aspects of decentralisation. According to Saito (1999), there are consultative fora for local decision-making in councils. Through elected representatives, proposals are channelled to the legislative bodies, all districts are expected to compile district development plans that reflect grassroots needs. Local administrators report to local council officials who in turn account for the people. These accountability procedures are reflective of the democratic process in service provision. The planning process and accountability procedures reflect popular participation in initiating and implementing programmes.

Zimbabwe's urban spaces comprise the existence of civil society organisations that encourage the participation of urban citizens in local decision-making. In Zimbabwe, the local government system is characterised by a large number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These organisations play a pivotal role in complementing government efforts in the provision of efficient service delivery as well as facilitating local participation. Some churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) and Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, are a good example as they are involved in the active management of the education and health sector in most districts (Chikerema, 2013). For instance, the Roman Catholic Church has a good number of schools that includes the Catholic University which has branches in different provinces, training centres and teachers colleges that offer tertiary education, high schools that include Gokomere, Marist Brothers and Dominican Convent, among others, primary schools are also included. The Catholic church has hospitals that offer health services in all its dioceses with big hospitals, such as Muvonde, St Alberts and St Joseph, to mention a few. The Reformed Church also offers education at different levels and owns primary and secondary schools, such as Capota School for the Blind, Mogenster University and Hospital, among others.

DISCUSSION

Knowing that the citizenry is made up of different aspects that are connected to one's dwelling area, citizenship does not rely only on having legal rights to stay within an area. It is through the fulfilment of responsibilities and contributions made by one towards the development of the area in which they stay that makes them true citizens. The current situation on citizenship of urban areas and their space is limited to factors, such as politics and economic dysfunction. It should be noted that though citizens taking responsibilities in keeping urban open spaces clean and safe from pollution, the challenge remains on the service providers who do not offer the required services, such as solid waste management, hence the citizens will be left with no option but to dump their litter where they deem fit to. Another challenge is the absence of proper infrastructure for urban citizens who rely on informal activities for their living. It is said that there is less attention in solving or in cooperating with the informal dealers among the planning authorities. People in this sectorare ignored when it comes to the provision of good infrastructure in which they can do their daily activities. In some cases, the infrastructure is provided on the outskirts where it is difficult for the aimed customers to reach, hence, they keep returning to the streets and pavements where they can easily make money.

It has also been highlighted in the article that urban spaces, through the local government systems, provide room for citizens to determine development issues and make decisions affecting their lives and needs. This level of citizen engagement is done under the purview of decentralisation provisions of Zimbabwe's constitution. Some of the fundamental aspects of urban space in which citizens practise their citizenry, including their participation in local government elections, local authorities' PB, consultative fora, public hearings, open meetings of councils and legislative bodies, joining associations, like civil society organisations and development committees within local communities. This article argues that for one to be called a citizen, one has to be a participant in development issues in their localities or be a passive

participant. Strengthening participation in local governance is strengthening and guaranteeing the citizenry of urban residents.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded that citizenship is linked to the legality of the person in that urban area or state in which one resides and, therefore, it comes with different responsibilities and rights that are adjoined to it that one has to keep in mind. These rights may be understood to be suppressed to political structures in that urban area and corruption among the authorities and power holders, hence it is recommended that there should be ways to protect the rights of the citizens from political influence and corruption.

Political influence should be regulated among citizens as it is the major cause of some of the challenges faced by urban citizens in most cities today. In other words, politics and urban planning must be separated. This should be formulated to limit the problem of land barons and the invasion of wetlands and other open spaces around the cities. Curbing corruption is also another way that will decrease the rate of informal settlements which have been tarnishing the image of urban space due to poor quality infrastructure found in such places and the unavailability of proper infrastructure and services that suit these areas into the urban rhythm.

Recommendations:

- Transparency is called for in all sectors and strict laws should be implemented to limit its occurrence.
- Local authorities and other responsible authorities in urban areas should reconsider urban planning policies and cater for operating areas for the informal sector in which most of the urban citizens now rely on, due to the absence of employment opportunities.
- Those in the informal sector must be relocated to places where they can freely work in quality infrastructure. The development of proper infrastructure will also help local authorities to collect more revenue through taxes that will be used for the development of the urban spaces, such as the reconstruction of road infrastructure and proper waste management, among others. This

will help preserve the streets and pavements, among other urban public spaces for their proper uses by other citizens.

- There should be a framework in which legal terms are put in place to determine what an urban citizen is. This will help in knowing who and where the citizen is and to gain more information about these urban dwellers that helps local authorities to gather the information that will be used for the development of urban space and quantify the citizens.

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