# Fragmented Urban Spaces in Zimbabwe: Can Meaningful Citizen Engagement be Achieved for Resilient Urbanity?

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## Abstract

**Urban centres in Zimbabwe have been characterised by contestations and coalitions where citizens have been fighting for access to city space. These coalitions and contestations are due to the fragmented nature of city space and the sidelining of some sectors in the development of cities. Some urban dwellers have been given special treatment in the access to city space while others have been disenfranchised of their right to access city space. As a result, cities are boiling pots characterised by contestations and coalitions. To minimise these contestations and conditions, cities should build platforms for citizen engagement for sustainable and resilient cities. This article examines the methods used to engage citizens in development planning in Zimbabwe and also explores challenges faced by different individuals and groups in civic engagements. The findings show that effective citizen participation in Zimbabwe can be scaled up by improving the structures and processes for their participation in city development.**

**Keywords:** *participation, fragmented urban space, governance, policy, management*

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## INTRODUCTION

There is a long history of engaging citizens in urban planning and development processes and the intention is to include all citizens in the development of city for the common good of that city. The traditional planning approach of master plans and local plans have failed to create a solid city where all citizens have equal chances of contributing to the development of the city. The planning approach is biased more towards planning by experts thereby side-lining locals who hold very critical information for the success of development interventions and the creation of resilient cities. Today's cities have become so diverse that one size fits allkind of planning is no longer tenable. The city's multi-faceted problems of high migration, increasing city population, climate change, high unemployment and a poorly performing economy are the main challenges that call for a multifaceted approach to planning, where diverse ideas are included for the benefit of all in the city.

These challenges can be tackled by defining and adopting resilient urbanity solutions at local and community levels where citizens participate in the development of the city. This will reduce the fragmentation of the city by designing projects and programmes focused on and driven by citizens. Citizen engagement will increase project or programme outcomes (Nam and Pardo, 2011). In addition, engaging partners rests on the assumption that when citizens are involved at the inception of the planning process, a plan or a decision will be widely accepted by its future users and also implementation will become much easier (Burby, 2003). It creates networks during engagements, creating solid communities that, in turn, create resilient cities.

 "Resilient Urbanity" is often conflated with efficiency (Schneider *et al.,* 2014) resulting in distortions in the selection and listing of stakeholder's preferences and priorities. The preference of stakeholders with greater financial capabilities, resources, technical knowledge and competencies often distorts effective engagements as people who are directly affected are usually left out. This may not necessarily include everyone who is affected. Gohari *et al. (*2020) argue that in complex issues, it is challenging to include all affected people in deliberation and decision-making. Given that

situation, people are not equally able to make themselves heard due to unequal power, competence and resources they have. This approach fragments the city along technical lines, where the common people are not included and this is usually a prescription for resistance and antagonism that might derail the concept of resilient urbanity.

The ideal of equal opportunities for all cannot be achieved in the resilient urbanity concept, but rather it can only be approached. Public involvement is of paramount importance for urban planners and the challenge most planners face is how best to involve the public, given many difficulties inherent in the public involvement process (Brabham, 2009; Wilson *et al.,* 2019). Citizen participation is a vital process for democratic decision-making (Archer, 2009, Livengood and Kunte, 2012; Levenda *et al.,* 2020). Livengood and Kunte (2012) further argue that citizen participation is a way of extending the democratic horizons of cities. At the same time, it has been criticised as tokenism that merely placates the public. This has been supported by Arnstein (1969), who argues that citizen involvement in planning processes is very low and ineffective in the United States.

Using the ladder of citizen participation, Arnstein (1969) hasshown that participation ranges from high to low. The ladder has been a guide to see who has power when important decisions are being made in public engagements. This article, therefore, examines citizen engagement in cities of Zimbabwe for inclusive and resilient urbanity. It assessed structures and processes for citizen engagements. It further examined the efficacy of these structures and processes in providing cohesive and resilient cities. The structure of the article is as follows: after the introduction, there is the literature review, where scholarly works on citizen participation are examined and synthesised, then followed by a presentation and discussion of results, and, lastly, conclusions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Baum (2001), citizen participation refers to the involvement of city inhabitants, especially those entitled to the rights of free man, in public decision-making. These citizens may be either individuals or

organised communities. Citizen participation is a very critical component of development as it helps to identify challenges and possible opportunities that are involved in development projects (Newig and Koontz, 2014). It helps to create networks in the development process that will lead to a shared vision in the development of the city. This shared vision helps to develop solidarity in development that is critical for creating cohesive and resilient cities. Citizen engagement also encourages the building of relationships in development that will lead to the success of development projects (Wadaningsih and Moment, 2007; Spyra *et al.,* 2018). It also helps in creating inclusive cities as it allows citizens to contribute to the development of their cities. This engagement provides all city inhabitants with the right to shape the city according to the desires of their hearts (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2008, 2012). Spyra *et al. (*2018) adds that citizen participation is a platform for creating understanding among development partners as it allows knowledge sharing among stakeholders. Lack of citizen engagement creates knowledge gaps that will affect the development plans (Rakotonahazo *et al.,* 2019; Baker *et al.,* 2007).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
Citizen's involvement can be classified into three main categories that are passive, active, or standby/monitors (Carreira *et al.,* 2016). Active citizen participation promotes strong communities as it brings cohesion and generates community empowerment (Amna and Ekman, 2014; Rizzi and Porebska, 2020). When citizens actively participate in the city's development, it will help to develop an interest in development projects that will lead to the success of these projects (Cillier and Timmermans, 2014). However, when citizens passively participate in development, they are disempowered and it results in alienation and disappointment in public institutions (Nye, *et al.,* 1999; Suchman, 1995; Pharr and Putnam, 2000). If welldone, citizen participation can be a cornerstone of development as it reduces antagonism and creates solidarity for resilient cities.

Letters, voting, co-production teams and living labs can encourage citizen participation that can create solid societies for resilient cities (Desouza and Bhagwatwar, 2014). These techniques and methods of engagement can be

used to identify problems, solutions and development priorities that will help to sustain development in cities. It can also lead to the establishment of networks and cross-fertilisation of ideas that leads to solid and resilient urbanity. Co-production teams and living labs create a shared vision that will also sustain development (Sarkissian *et al.,* 2010; Frank, 2016). If individuals feel positive about their contribution to engagement processes, the level of participation will increase and this will lead to sustainable development that also leads to resilient cities (Archer 2009; Newig and Koontz 2014; French*et al.,* 2019; Lopes *et al.,* 2004).

Promoting citizen participation in planning processes assists in the development of fair and sustainable territories. However, the engagement processes should be on a level ground where stakeholders are acting on informed positions. This will allow the active participation of all citizens. To achieve this, power relations need to be well managed to create equal participation (Carreira *et al.,* 2016; Natarajan *et al.*, 2019; Parikh *et al.,* 2020). Natarajan *et al. (*2019) further argue that effective participation needs to address power relationships because, in many situations, citizen participation is done as a token, where local interests are not given space and priority but the interest of the private and government. This creates antagonism that fragments the city and destroys resilient urbanity.

Devine *et al. (*2002) argue that effective citizen participation is hinged on equal access to resources where all stakeholders have access to means of production. This will result in the breakdown of barriers between those who own the means of production and those who do not. This will in turn result in cohesion in the city. Roosen *et al. (*2020) add that effective citizen participation requires a departure from the belief in a culture of doing things to embrace diverse ideas that arise from the open exchange of knowledge. This inclusion is good as it brings all citizens intothe development and creates solid cities. Uneven power relationships usually lead to exclusion, conflicts and antagonism (Metendez and Parker 2019; Natarajan *et al.,* 2019).

Citizen engagement can result in participatory and deliberative democracy where people trade off their ideas, interests and arguments for the

development of the city (Lund, 2018; Jossatal, 2017). Such deliberations are essential in establishing common values and goods, in a pluralistic society, rather than relying on a homogeneous community, which usually works to fragment cities. Cities of today have become so diverse that it is no longer business as usual, but have to embrace diversity for the sustainability and resilience of cities. Therefore, meaningful citizen engagement should be integrated into the development of cities for resilient cities (Roosen *et al.,* 2020). City diversity requires flexible development approaches so that different situations are incorporated in the development process for the benefit of different people. Effective participation also hinges on responsiveness to citizen concerns. This will reduce antagonism and create cohesion in the city for good city governance (Scharpf, 1999; Lund, 2018). Citizen participation is a good measure for good governance because it allows for an extension of the city's democracy, which will result in solidarity and cohesion of the city.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was done in a purely qualitative inquiry, where in-depth interviews and document analysis was used. Interviews were done with key informants purposively selected in cities of Zimbabwe. These informants included academics, practising planners and members of civic society. Information gathered in these interviews include information on available structures and processes for citizen participation in the development of cities in Zimbabwe and the efficacy of these structures and processes in giving citizen space in urban governance. Documents analysed included planning statutes, scholarly papers on citizen participation and other presentations on citizen participation in urban governance. Data collected was analysed qualitatively by arranging it into thematic areas around citizen participation and resilient cities to generate discussions on these areas.

## RESULTS

Urban centres in Zimbabwe are governed by two dominant instruments, the Regional Town and Country Planning Act (RTCPA) and the Urban Councils Act. The RTCPA provides for the development and

management of cities and regions in Zimbabwe. It outlines the formulation of regional development plans, master plans and local plans. The Urban Councils Act is an instrument that is used to govern cities. It outlines how urban local authorities are established for the effective running of cities. In addition to these instruments, cities also have by-laws that help to run their cities. All these instruments have space for citizen engagement. Despite the availability of these structures, the participation of citizens in the governance of cities remains marginalised and ineffective, creating fragmented urbanity.

According to the RTCPA, the Minister of Local Government and Urban Development has the right to establish planning authorities in cities and rural areas. These planning authorities have the right to develop plans for the development of these local authorities. The Minister can, therefore, establish municipalities and Town Councils. In this case, citizens are supposed to be represented in the council by elected councillors. However, to say that these councillors can represent the views of the general public is very questionable considering that the research by Afro-Barometer (2016) showed that more than 86% of citizens in urban areas of Zimbabwe have never got in contact with their elected councillors. One civic leader argued that the logic of using elected councillors was based on the fact that they represent their constituencies and ideally, they will collect ideas from them for presentation in public institutions. However, in most cases, they do not, and he notes that,

> …in normal cases, we would think that if councillors represent people, they will have collected all the ideas from the people …and also hope that after council deliberation they will relay back the resolutions from the meetings to their constituencies…however they usually don't come from the people and they also do not go back to the people….

Such kind of representation does not represent citizens because councillors donot come from the people and they also do not relay back to the people with resolutions made in council meetings.

The Minister also has the right to appoint a member into a planning authority to manage ecologically fragile or preserved areas, e.g. Lake Kariba planning authority, Great Zimbabwe Ruins planning authority. This is according to section 10 of RTCPA subsection (d) which states that,

> the authority established by the Minister, by statutory instrument, shall be the local planning authority for that area and shall consist of members appointed by the Minister who shall be representatives of the Ministry responsible for environment and tourism and such other persons as the minister see fit.

The appointed persons are seen as fit by the Minister. There is no space for the local citizen to be drafted into these planning authorities. For example, the Lake Kariba area was an area for Kalanga people but the act does not have space for the locals to be part of the Lake Kariba planning authority. The local planning authority, therefore, does not include locals who are important stakeholders in development initiatives in the area. The local can provide the planning authority with important information on local values and traditions. These local values are very important in the successful management of these ecologically fragile areas. However, people that are incorporated in these planning authorities are alien to local values and traditions. The inclusion of local citizens will allow information about the area to be told by people with knowledge about the area. These local people are reservoirs of social capital that is very important in the success of a development project (Collier and Timmerman, 2014).

If the planning authorities are composed of people who are all alien to local values, there will be little or no space for local citizens to participate in the proposed developments. This divides the city,with professionals being the ones that are allowed to define the form of the city and the locals relegated to mere consumers of their products. This marginalises the majority of the citizens in the decision-making process, which is not sustainable. According to Harvey (2012), every citizen has the right to shape the city according to the desires of their hearts. If the majority of the citizens are left out in the development of cities, it will result in antagonism, which is not good for resilient cities. If all the citizens are included in the decision-making process,it will result in solidarity in the

community, leading to resilient cities. The exclusion of locals in the development process is a recipe for resistance (French *et al.,* 2019). French *et al. (*2019) further argue that the inclusion of locals in development interventions improve community cohesion, solidarity and also reduces ethnic tensions caused by exclusion.

According to RTCPA, the Minister also has the right to add another member into the planning authority as he/she may see fit, but this option is reserved for people with certain expertise, not with local knowledge. This is according to section 10, subsection 4 that states that,"Minister shall (a) appoint to the local planning authority a person nominated by the Minister".

To ensure local citizens' participation in such development initiatives, locals should be given space to contribute to the development of their areas. They should be involved as decision-makers in the development process. According to Harvey (2012), every citizen has the right to shape a city according to the desires of their hearts. The local citizens are often regarded as information deficit, but these people are important reservoirs of information that will lead to the success of development projects. They hold important social information that will sustain development projects (Natarajan *et al.,* 2019) If citizens are involved in development projects, it will ensure an increased sense of belonging in cities and improved relationships, that will sustain development in cities and result in resilient cities (French *et al.,* 2019).

The exclusion of locals in the planning authority, therefore, means developments in their areas are devoid of local contributions. Simone (2005) argues that citizens have the right to demand their inclusion in development interventions. They should not be passive consumers of development initiatives. If citizens are engaged and their input is included in development interventions, it will help to develop relationships among stakeholders. These relationships are important components for resilient cities because such relationships foster city sustainability. The RTCPA also allows for the delegation of some of their operations. In the event that there is need for delegation of duties, the planning authority is limited

only to choose from those members nominated by the Minister, not the local citizens. This again shuts space for locals to be part of the planning authority. This means that this structure had no processes for local citizens to contribute to the development of their areas. All those in decision-making positions are aliens to local environments, hence local information and knowledge is not included in the development, which is a recipe for failure. Citizen participation in the decision-making body, therefore, remains dominated by professional while the locals are side-lined.

The instruments used in the development of cities as provided by section 14 subsection 3 of RTCPA are the master plans and local plans. Master plans outline the development trajectory of the areas under the jurisdiction of a planning authority. To produce a master plan, the local planning authority should make wide consultations with the people that are affected by this development proposal. Among the bodies that are statutorily required to be consulted are: neighbouring local planning authorities, local authorities and other institutions that can be affected by the master plan. The RTCPA states that,"…consult with neighbouring local planning authorities and local authorities and any other statutory or other body whose activities or plans may affect…."

Citizen participation is limited only to established institutions, not the citizens. This kind of citizen participation is not effective because these intuitions do not usually represent the people. This, therefore, means the general public can be left out in the production of development proposals that are included in the master plans. It, therefore, means these citizens are only allowed to consume whatever was contributed by established institutions. This kind of engagement homogenises the diverse urban population.

Developments in many urban centres in Zimbabwe show that these kinds of consultations do not effectively capture citizen needs and aspirations. For example, many urban centres in Zimbabwe have been championing development proposals that exclude urban informality (Chigwenya, 2020; Kamete, 2020; Matamanda, 2020). This exclusion does not show the realities that are in most cities, where urban informality has been the

major economic driver but is excluded in the development agenda of cities. Cities have, therefore, not included urban informality in their master or local plans, which is a serious omission caused by poor citizen participation in the development of these plans. A master plan is a broad instrument that shows the development proposals of the city and a local plan details the development of a particular area. In most of these plans, urban informality is excluded, which a serious disjuncture from the realities on the ground is caused by a lack of participation of urban informality in developing these plans. If citizens have no space to contribute to the definition of development in the city, it is a serious disenfranchisement of citizens' right to shape the development of the city (Harvey, 2008, 2012;Chigwenya, 2020).

The RTCPA further directs that after the compilation of the master and local plans they are supposed tobe displayed for public view and comments on the proposed developments. The choice for the places to display the master plans and local plans determines how citizens can effectively engage in the development of cities. The time given to inspect them also determines how many people will adequately inspect the documents. Usually, cities prefer to place the document at one central place, which is usually the civic centre. For effective participation, there should, therefore, be other means that will allow more people to access the documents. For example, local planning authorities can use information communication technologies (ICTs), like websites and Whatsapp groups to relay information to the citizens. Such networks are not available in most cities. As one of the experts said, "...there are so many Whatsapp groups among the citizens but there no Whatsapp group that network citizens with their local authorities..."

This lack of electronic structures that can be used by citizens, makes it difficult for them to make meaningful contributions to the development of their city. Technology assimilation in most local authorities in Zimbabwe is still in its infancy (Chigwenya and Wadzanai, 2020), stunting meaningful citizen engagement. If local planning authorities embrace ICTs, it is for citizens to participate. Calling citizens to come and inspect the master and local plans at a designated place does not allow

effective citizen participation, as many people will not afford to travel to town just to inspect a plan. To worsen the situation, citizens are allowed to inspect only a finished product, which they did not contribute to its production. Engaging citizens at this point will disadvantage them because they will have lost an important opportunity to learn different issues during the engagement process.

## DISCUSSION

Urban governance is an arena for disputes, coalitions and contests, where urban inhabitants fight to build cities according to the desires of their hearts. A city is a collective of artefacts of all city inhabitants, where all city inhabitants have the right to participate in shaping the city they live in (Lefebvre, 1969, 1991; Harvey, 2008, 2012,). Cities have, therefore, become so diverse that there is need to change their governance to include inclusive city governing systems. There is need to include all city inhabitants in the governance of cities for sustainable and inclusive cities. However, in Zimbabwean cities, there are glaring features of exclusion and marginalisation of other groups in the governance of the cities. Zimbabwean cities are, therefore, fragmented on various fronts, including the formal and informal, the professional and non-professional and the young and the old. These divisions are not good for an inclusive and sustainable city. Inclusive cities call for all city inhabitants to be given their right to shape the city (Harvey, 2008, 2012). A city needs to develop as a community where all citizens have been accorded equal and unencumbered right to contribute to the development of the city.

According to Harvey (*ibid.*), every citizen has the right to shape the city according to the desires of their hearts. This inclusion can be achieved only when citizens are engaged in drawing up development proposals for the city. Exclusion causes contestation and coalitions in cities.For example, the exclusion of urban informality in cities of Zimbabwe has caused friction between urban informality and local authorities (Chigwenya, 2020).In many cities, urban informality is fighting marginalisation because cities have been giving preference to the formal sector in their development plans. Citizen participation ensures that the needs of all city inhabitants are included. However, citizen participation is

not institutionalised in the consultations of master plans and local plans, which is not sustainable. When citizen engagement in the consultative stage is not institutionalised, development agents see no reason todoing it. This will lead to more contestations and coalitions which is not good for resilient urbanity. The institutionalised marginalisation of urban informality in many cities of Zimbabwe negatively affects city resiliency.

According to Chambers and Conway (2001), development efforts should target marginalised groups of society to achieve city sustainability and resilience (Fouche and Brent, 2020). It, therefore, calls for institutions to support citizen participation in the consultative stage, so that inputs of all citizens are included in the master plans and even local plans. This inclusion will see the development needs of all citizens being included in the development of cities and break divisions and fragmentations in cities, and lead to resilient cities (Devine *et al.,* 2002). Devine *et al. (ibid.)* further argue that when citizens are engaged in the development of cities, antagonism that exists between those who own the means of production and those who do not, is reduced, thereby removing the oppressions associated with such relationships.

During the consultative stage of master plans, teams are usually grouped into thematic areas, such as infrastructure development, population, services, etc. These thematic groups then go into the field to consult relevant institutions. Institutions closely linked to these thematic areas are consulted, while the common citizens are left out. This form of consultation is usually done in more formalised setups, which disadvantages other stakeholders. If citizens are engaged in formalised fora, they are limited to effectively interact with other stakeholders because of power gaps in such fora (Metendez and Parker, 2019; Akbar *et al.,* 2020). Such a formal setting favours the urban elite to participate (Akbar *et al.,* 2020). Akbar *et al. (ibid.)* further argue that formal forms of citizen participation do not promote lively participation of citizens because the elite usually monopolise decision-making processes. Such set-ups again divide the city along professional lines, where those who are consulting are regarded as all-knowing and the general citizens are regarded as information deficit and unknowing. This creates power imbalances which,in turn, fosters antagonism that derails development

interventions and this is not good for resilient cities. Effective citizen participation should lead to knowledge generation and skills development that will, in turn, lead to successful development that is important for resilient cities.

Effective citizen participation should, therefore, minimise power gaps among stakeholders so that they include all stakeholders and they should also be responsive to the different views of stakeholders (Metendez, 2019). When engagements are dominated by experts it minimises the participation of locals, which then excludes the local knowledge which is very important for project success (Natarajan *et al.,* 2019). Natarajan *et al. (ibid.)* further argue that local citizens are an important reservoir of information that is critical for project success. To tap this information, there is need for effective citizen engagement that is hinged on equal participation. Effective citizen engagement can be done through de-rolling, where experts put aside their expert knowledge and culture of doing work to allow new information from local citizens to inform their decision-making. It, therefore, calls for experts to regard local citizens as a source of important information that drives the development of cities.

Most of the formal engagements with citizens are done only to satisfy statutory requirements; hence citizen participation is done as mere tokenism without real citizen participation. There is very little flexibility in such engagements because it is done just to fulfil statutory requirements. Effective participation should use both formal and informal modes of engagement so that information is extracted for the success of development projects (Natarajan *et al.,ibid.*). Parikh *et al. (*2020) have added that effective citizen participation should prioritise citizens' needs and allow citizens to be directly involved in the development projects. Such kind of engagements can be strengthened by giving citizens chances to co-lead in decision-making on issues that directly affect them and also lead in the development projects.

If citizens are excluded in the decision-making process, it leads to serious information gaps that will result in project failures. Project failures will, in turn, affect city resilience and city sustainability. For example, the

exclusion of urban informality in city planning has led to failure to pick important dynamics associated with urban informality. As a result, information on the socio-economic well-being of urban informality has been left out, and leading to poor integration of urban informality in many cities (Parikh *et al.,* 2020). It is, therefore, imperative for cities to adopt co-development strategies where citizens are active participants in the development process for city resiliency (Tabor *et al.,* 2019; Parikh *et al.,* 2020; Ozedemir 2020). Ozedemir (2020) adds that effective citizen participation hinges on their active involvement in decision-making. Such kind of engagement helps to define the development priorities of citizens.

When the consultation for master plans and local plans is over, the local planning authority can produce master plans that provide detailed maps outlining the development proposals. The maps are accompanied by a written statement. The document is then put for public inspection at a place that the city chooses. It will then be open for the public to scrutinise its content. Citizens are, therefore, given the chance to go through the document and make submissions if there are issues they think need to be addressed. At this point, we again see procedural malpractice where citizens are allowed to inspect a finished product in which they did not make an input. Effective participation should allow citizens to be included at the onset of the development initiative (Spyra *et al.,* 2018; Ozedemir, 2019; Rakotomahazo *et.al.* 2019).

Spyra *et al. (*2018) further argue that citizen participation in any development project should be integrated into the development from inception. To achieve this, there is need for institutions that support citizen participation. Involving citizens at the last point, disempowers the local citizens' because they will have lost the chance to learn a lot of things through interaction with various development stakeholders (Archer, 2009). Livengood and Kent (2012) argue that citizen engagement in development programmes fosters involvement and capacity-building leading to sustainable development. Archer (2008) further argues that effective citizen participation goes beyond mere tokenism, where engagements are done to fulfil statutory requirements. Tokenism weakens local initiatives and subverts local authority, usually resulting in project failures. Effective citizen participation empowers locals to actively

participate in development projects, which will lead to sustainable development and resilient urbanity.

The inspection of master plans and local plans is done for a specified period, usually two months for master plans and two weeks for local plans, as provided by the RTCPA. This is the time needed for every citizen to come to the place where the master is deposited for inspection. This time is ordinarily short considering the number of people that must view the document. For example, the city of Masvingo with a population of 60,000, two months is too short a time for them to inspect the master plan. Inspecting the document at a place where it is placed, therefore, disadvantages citizens to contribute to the document. The display is also done hurriedly and in closed time as only two months are allowed for the whole city to inspect it. Speeding up and closing down undermines effective citizen engagement, which is likely to fuel antagonistic responses (Natarajan, 2019).

Active participation of citizens from the initial stages, allows citizens to interact with different stakeholders, thereby affording them the chance to learn a lot from this interaction. This active interaction should allow citizens to appropriate city space and become co-partners in the development process (Rizzi and Porebska, 2020; Parikh *et al.,* 2020). In their diversity,people in cities should be allowed a chance to contribute to the development of the city (Harvey, 2012; Rosen *et al.,* 2020). Rosen *et al. (ibid.)* further argue that effective citizen engagement requires open interaction, where people from different persuasions are engaged and contribute to the development of the city. This open engagement allows for the exchange of knowledge among stakeholders and this results not only in sustainable cities, but also inclusive and resilient cities (Rosen *et al.,* 2020; Akbar *et al.,* 2020).

Calling citizens to come and inspect a finished product which they did not contributeto does not constitute effective citizen engagement. There are so many complex systems involved in the production of master and local plans that should be explained to the citizens during the engagement process, but there is no one to do that at the deposit centres. Citizens are only allowed to read the document and make submissions on their

concerns. In addition to this, for the citizens to make meaningful contribution, they should be knowledgeable about the issues involved in the production of these documents. For example, there is need for enough knowledge to interpret the maps and features that appear in those maps so that they understand what exactly is involved. Without this knowledge, there are no meaningful contributions citizens can make (Fouche and Brent, 2020; Akbar *et al.,* 2020, Rizzi and Porebska, 2020). Fouche and Brent (2020) further argue that societal problems are very complex and this complexity should be ironed out during the engagement process. So, without engagement, it is very difficult for citizens to understand the master plans and local plans. Therefore, where there is no effective citizen participation, there are knowledge gaps that will affect the success of the development project and the resilience of cities (Rakotomahazo *et al.,* 2019; Akbar *et al.,* 2020).

A good understanding of what is involved in the production of plans and an understanding of the prevailing social systems leads to the production of sustainable development projects and this can only be achieved through effective citizen participation. Effective participation can also be achieved through the decentralisation of decision-making processes, where people at the grassroots are active participants in decision-making processes that affect them. In many development projects, decisions are centralised in central governments and the local public and this limits contributions of citizens in development projects (Natarajan, *et al,* 2019). This generates mistrust and antagonistic responses from citizens that in turn, derail development. Community solidarity is very important for the success of development projects and it will also lead to resilient cities because it empowers citizens to be actively involved in them. Decentralised decision-making processes allow for context-specific development plans to be formulated and this will lead to sustainable development and resilient urbanity (Krek, 2005; Archer, 2009; Cillier *et al.,*2014).

**CONCLUSION**
Citizen engagement is a very critical component in development as it results in co-development and shared knowledge that is very important for resilient and inclusive cities. However, in Zimbabwean cities, lack of

structures with processes for citizen participation is glaring. In the planning fraternity, some structures have no provision for effective citizen participation and this limits the participation of citizens. Planning authority for ecological management has no provision for effective citizen engagement because the local citizen has no space in the main decision-making body in local authorities. Only members nominated by the Minister of Local Government and Urban Development are eligible to form the planning authority, the decision-making body at the sub-national level.

The RTCPA has some space for citizen participation but this is limited mainly to established institutions, such as local authorities. However, in these structures, citizen participation is by way of representation through established institutions. Real citizens are not consulted and this is not good for resilient and inclusive cities. In some cases, citizen participation is done just as a token, where the selected elite are given the chance to contribute to what should be included in the master and local plans. Effective citizen participation should include all citizens but, in this case, only established institutions are chosen to make their presentations in those plans. All citizens are given the chance to inspect an already finished plan that is supposed to be displayed at some point for a given time. Calling for citizen engagement at the last point does not equate to effective citizen engagement. All citizens should be involved in the plan from inception to implementation and evaluation. The timing is also short as the whole city is supposed to inspect the whole plan document in two months if it is a master plan and two weeks for a local plan

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