With the People: Towards an Innovative, People-centric and Relevant Transport Policy Under the Impact of COVID-19

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Abstract

For years, a vast of Zimbabwe's innovative transport initiatives have lied lifeless in the implementation bed. Those that seem to be surviving are struggling to attain their goals. Although this problematic disorder can be blamed on a wide spectrum of variables, this article deliberately suggests that one of the dominant reasons for such an outcome is a top-down approach that has been religiously adopted by the government in some of its innovative transport policy processes. This has resulted in policies lacking citizen compliance despite the government's efforts to enforce them, even through coercive instruments. Given this background, the need for a people-centric approach, one that influences innovative transport policies from a citizen's perspective is inevitable. Therefore, this article seeks to expand key milestones towards embracing a people-centric innovative transport policy under the impact of COVID-19. Through an analysis of selected country experiences, the study captured these key issues highlighting the extent to which a people-centric approach improves or positively influences an innovative transport policy resulting in sustainable urban transport management in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: *innovation, policy, transport sector, pandemic, citizen participation*

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INTRODUCTION

It cannot be disputed that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought most radiant and ailing economies to a grinding halt. The transport system has not been spared. The need to modernise public transport systems to realise sustainable socio-economic development across the globe is intensifying. This is because public transport has been playing a crucial role in connecting people, transporting goods and services, and fostering sustainable development. Innovation cradles in public and private transport provision have regained the attention of policymakers in the 21st century. The position has been necessitated through the vital function that the transport system serves in enhancing sustainable socio-economic development.

Literature reveals that innovation is rising to the top of the public sector agenda because it offers an intelligent, cost-saving alternative to the blind, across-the-board cuts in times of dire fiscal constraints and because it helps to address wicked and unruly problems that can neither be solved, using existing standard solutions, nor by increasing public expenditure (Torfing, 2019). Innovative transport policies have therefore, with hindsight to experiences in the past decades and during the COVID-19 pandemic, emerged as an important element in every facet of development. Such innovative transport policies must be people-centric and aimed at mitigating the risks that come with inadequate transport infrastructure.

Tremendous challenges, compounded by the current COVID-19 pandemic, have been affecting effectual urban governance and urban productivity which are highly dependent on the efficiency of its transport system to move labour, consumers and freight between multiple origins and destinations. Transport governance has not been spared from the increased scalar shift for a responsive and sustainable transport service that takes into context the socio-economic needs of the people (Madigan *et al*, 2017). There is, therefore, an ongoing demand for the crafting of policies that respond to the development aspirations of the people while bringing innovation to the public transport system.

Despite that anticipation and excitement in the introduction of the responsive, sustainable, and effective public transport system, there is little understanding of what policy mechanisms should be in place to drive the realisation of this dream (Madigan *et al*, 2017; Caragliu and Chiara, 2019). Innovative solutions through policy and governance are a panacea for the challenges militating effective and efficient provision of transport systems that take into consideration the needs and demands of the people. This study aims to discuss in detail the desire for an innovative public transport policy that is pro-people and with the people.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The dawn of globalisation ushered in changes in various policy fields. Among these was a change towards sustainable transport policy and public service delivery. Innovation then came into play in the early 1900s as an issue of industrialisation and development (Redding and Turner, 2014). With the way COVID-19 has spread across the world, it is clear that the world has become a global village (World Bank, 2020). Important to note is the role that is played by innovative transport policy to meet the demands of people during the pandemic. Public policies should, therefore, be formulated and implemented in line with this agenda for any country to survive and grow amid the growing challenges in transport systems. The need to innovate the transport system has become an interesting one as those countries with advanced technologies in the transport system have been able to operate during the pandemic, while those countries with less or little technologies in the sector have been grappling to meet the demands of every citizen. Innovative transport policy can stimulate economic growth and development.

Historically, transport policies have gained a reputation in the 1960s and 1970s, as an important feature for sound development. The second half of the 20th century saw the mushrooming of different modes of transport and innovative transport policy implemented globally and particularly in developing countries (Deng, 2013). An increasing trend can be observed in literature from about 75 countries working towards advancing their transport system in the 1990s and to every country in the 2000s and upwards modernising their transport systems to meet the demand of global trade challenges and climate change (Atkin and Donaldson, 2015).

Central to this proliferation was the realisation that the transport sector can be a catalyst for attaining economic growth and development as evidenced by China's and Israel's 'meteoric' economic rise and development 'miracle' (Zeng, 2016). Also, the desire for innovation in the transport sector was catapulted by factors, including the industrialisation agenda, the need to attract internationally mobile investment and also a response to the global changing economy and globalisation (Hummels, 2017). As a response to investment challenges, like dilapidated transport infrastructure, trade restrictions and failure to transport raw materials effectively, countries sought measures to promote development through innovation in public transport to harness development and growth opportunities (Buys, Deichmann and Wheeler, 2006; Hummels, 2017).

In addition, the 21st century's emphasis on sustainable development with specific emphasis on sustainable cities, communities and redesign implies that innovation in the transport policy does not address only the challenges associated with poor transport infrastructure, but also all the factors of sustainable development tripod (people/social, profit/economic, planet/environmental issues) (Anas and Xiong, 2018). Such emphasis on sustainable transport policy has seen the development of transport models in Israel and China, among other Asian economies (Kim, 2017; Anas and Xiong, 2018). It is against this background that the research will look into parameters and preconditions to ensure an innovative transport policy that is people-centric and takes into cognisance the 21st-century dynamics for it to be effective and sustainable under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Duranton (2015) argues that globally, the adoption of advanced technology automated transport systems is improving, enhancing the reliability and upgrading the performance of the transport system while reducing their operating costs. In developed countries, self-driving vehicles and drones are starting to be introduced (Faber, 2019). However, developing countries are still lagging when it comes to innovative transport policy. Citizens of most developing nations have been breathing fire during the COVID-19 pandemic as the transport systems are scarce and sometimes unavailable. This calls for developing countries to have innovative transport policies that are people-centric and

relevant under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, innovative transport policies have demonstrated that they can accelerate economic growth and every facet of development.

Zimbabwe is one of the African countries struggling to innovate its transport policy, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic as evidenced by the increase in transport challenges during the pandemic (Zvaraya, 2020). The absence of technological advancement and innovation also contributed to poor road infrastructure. Rail transport has been neglected, air transport is not effective and efficient due to corruption and administrative incapacities (Transparency International, 2020). The situation has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic that saw the need to have an innovative transport system that is people-centric and relevant during pandemics (Mugwara, 2020).

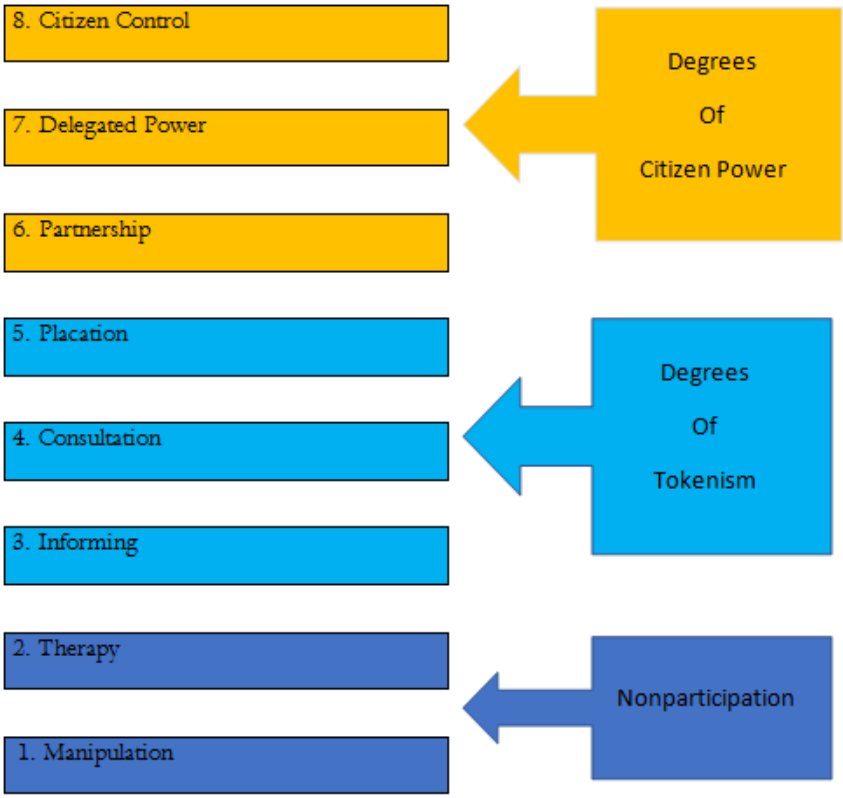
This study's justification is premised on the need to contribute to the policymakers on what needs to be done to have a sustainable transport system. Concerning public transport, the only available mode of public transport, the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) does not have the capacity to ferry people to and from their destinations and it is not reliable (Zvaraya, 2020). Zimbabwe is still lagging and a lot needs to be done to have an innovative transport policy in place that is people-centric and relevant during pandemics.

Although it can be generalised that the need for innovative transport policies that are people-centric has stood the test of time to be a global concern, it is imperative to note that there is no universally agreed mechanism that can be adopted to ensure citizen participation in innovation processes. As such, the question that has attracted attention in innovation circles in both discipline and in practice is on how to ensure citizen participation in innovation processes to attain sustainable and people-centric innovation. Given the myriad of responses to such a burning subject, this article suggests that there is merit in adopting Arnstein (1969)'s ladder of citizen participation as a tool for fostering citizen participation in innovation processes to ensure people-centric transport policies.

ARNSTEIN'S LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Arnstein (1969) advocated for real citizen participation to ensure citizen power and control. Gaber (2019) went on to argue that, "Arnstein's 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation' is the cornerstone for planners thinking about citizen participation". As such, this ladder approach can be adopted of ensure that innovative transport policies are people-centric and relevant under the impact of COVID-19. Figure 1 shows the rungs of the ladder of citizen participation and the classification of the rungs in their respective categories.

Figure 1: Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969)



For Arnstein (1969), types of participation and "non-participation" A typology of eight levels of participation may help in the analysis of this confusing issue. For illustrative purposes, the eight types are arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product (Figure 1.). The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some as a substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in the planning or conducting programmes, but to enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions, they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung 5 (Placation) is simply a higher-level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain the continued right to decide for the powerholders. Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power, (Arnstein, 1969).

CASE STUDIES

ISRAEL

Israel is one of the world's leading innovators in the mobility sector, having generated some $35 billion worth of innovations, such as technologies for self-driving cars (Dyduch and Olszewska, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has made Israel to modernise its transport network almost overnight.Before the pandemic, the transportation system was relying heavily on single-occupancy rides and inefficient, fragmented public transport, resulting in traffic jams and high levels of pollutions, and poor access (Fong *et al.*, 2020).

Israel faced a challenge as the commuter volume decreased after lockdown, and at the same time, Israel needed to move a large number of essential workers quickly and cost-effectively while allowing fewer people onto public transport to observe social distance rules. To facilitate efficient low-occupancy commutes during the pandemic, Israel led an ad-hoc initiative to leapfrog out of outdated transit services (Dyduch and Olszewska, 2020; Fong *et al*., 2020). It created a range of creative solutions, such as large scale- scale pilot to re-invent mass commuting with cutting-edge technology, combining pooled rides in private cars with on-demand transit services (Fong *et al*., 2020). The case of Israel shows that the change in the transport sector is possible to have a people-centric transport system that caters to everyone. This serves as a lesson to those cities that are congested, polluted, and works towards innovative transport policy with more equitable in future. With the right public-private partnerships in place, the Israel case demonstrated that it is possible to upgrade the transport systems.

NIGERIA

Nigeria is an emerging economy with its underlying economic challenges as it scopes with the COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2020). Nigeria has not been spared by the transport challenges haunting other African countries. The infrastructure in place is inadequate, mismanaged, and archaic and the country does not serve the transportation of its residents. Roads and rails systems are outdated and the country is working towards improving the infrastructure so as meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020).

Nigeria's public-owned transportation infrastructure is a major constraint to economic development. The COVID-19 pandemic unravelled the increased cost of transportation, shortage or lack of transportation mode, and traffic congestion (UNCTAD, 2020). Therefore, COVID-19 has brought about serious challenges to citizens. Because of the growing demand for public transport and less supply, bus fares increased. The disruption of transport services due to the pandemic had impacted the social activities of many in Nigeria. This calls for an innovative public

policy that is people-centric and be able to meet the needs and demands of every citizen during natural disasters.

JAPAN

In terms of advanced transport systems, Japan has an enviable reputation for effectively operating an incredibly complex road and rail system (Enoch and Nakamur, 2018). Like any other transport system, the transport policy in Japan faces several key challenges across all modes in the land passenger transport systems, in particular relating to the fragmented approach to policy development, implementation and operation and the growing role of the cars.

With technological advancement, the Government of Japan transformed its transport policy to meet the demands of the 21st century. This is the reason Japan is way ahead in terms of its transportation system as witnessed by how fast the country is in terms of innovation and industrialisation (*ibid.*). However, as compared to other developed countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Japan is relatively limited in terms of technological advancement in the transport sector. But it is way ahead when compared to developing countries in Africa and other parts of the world (African Union Commission (AUC, 2020).

The innovative transport policy system in Japan is people-centric and relevant during the pandemic as it appreciates the existence of private actors to take part in the transportation system (Gonokami and Nakanishi, 2020). This leaves more room for the citizens to choose a mode of transport they prefer to use. Scenarios suggest that in Japan, there were no transport challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic as their transport policy is relevant during pandemics.

SOUTH AFRICA

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the road transport sector has risen to the challenge of keeping essential goods flowing and the sudden outbreak has hugely impacted the industry (Fong *et al*., 2020). This called for the need to innovate the transport policy to cater to every citizen and continue to operate during times of pandemics as was the case

of Israel. South Africa's transport system is advanced as compared to other African countries (Waters, 2014).

The South Africa Department of Transport has developed a strategy to help guide, support and monitor municipalities in the implementation of innovative transport policy towards sustainable transport systems (UNCTAD, 2020). The transport system in South Africa caters for every citizen, but it is not enough as the transport operators experiencehuge shortfalls in their incomes and face severe threats to their business. This is evidenced by how the country has managed to cope with the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. To tackle this, an innovative transport policy that is people-centric and relevant under the COVID- 19 is the only way to go towards the national development of South Africa.

BARRIERS TO PEOPLE-CENTRIC INNOVATIVE TRANSPORT POLICIES

Citizensparticipating in innovative transportare exposed to challenges emanating from both internal and external environments. As such, the need to identify and proffer countermeasures to such barriers is a key towards the attainment of people-centric innovative transport policies. The European Union's Challenge (2013) identified six main barriers preventing effective participation and stakeholder engagement. These are:

- Aim and purpose of participation are unclear.
- Accessibility of participation.
- Public reluctance to engage in participation.
- Institutional barriers to participation.
- Limits of Participation.
- Dissatisfaction with the involvement process.

This section deliberates on the common barriers in participation processes, per Challenge (2013). An analysis of the identified barriers may lead to a conclusion that there are three main categories of barriers to citizen participation which are institutional related barriers, citizen related barriers and process related barriers. Institutional barriers are barriers fuelled by institutional arrangements and ingrained cultural practices. As such, this may stimulate institutional incapacity to embrace participation due to a lack of resources for participation. Institutional ingrained cultures

may also act as a barrier to participation if they place a low priority on participation. Therefore, there is a need to build capacity through securing resources and embracing a culture of prioritising participation.

Citizen challenges to participation are those challenges whose source can be traced to the dissatisfaction, misunderstanding and reluctance of the citizens to participate. Public reluctance to engage in participation and dissatisfaction in the engagement processes calls for public mobilisation and education mechanisms to raise awareness and zeal to engage in the participation process. Lastly, the process challenges are those that emanate from the complexities and loopholes of procedures and processes of citizen participation. As such, there is need to ensure simplicity, flexibility and convenience in the citizen participation processes to ensure accessibility by the majority of citizens which will result in people-centric innovations. Also, focus and emphasis must be on the positive aspects of participation, rather than on its limitations and weaknesses.

RESULTS

STATE OF THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN ZIMBABWE

Even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Zimbabwe's transport system had been constrained by multiple factors in the internal and external environment. The provision of public transportation in the era of the pandemic and its aftermath involves trade-offs between effectiveness, robustness and efficiency (Tirachini and Cats, 2020). Zimbabwe's transport system was negatively affected by the rising population and the collapse of conventional public transport. Also, the transport sector has been characterised by dilapidated and outdated infrastructure, disorder and inefficiency. This view was also supported by Mbara and Pisa, (2019). As such the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe, like in many other countries, forced the government to look for innovative ways to counter the changing environment by introducing transport policies that are currently relevant. Arnstein (1969) expresses the notion that "participation of the governed in their government is the cornerstone of democracy", which supports the view that governments must formulate policies that are reflective of the interests of the citizenry.

As a response to the demands of the pandemic, Zimbabwean policy-makers and implementers, through statutes, official statements, national addresses and policy documents, embarked on innovative policies. This saw the emergence of policies, such as the banning of private commuter omnibuses from operating and encouraging them to join the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) if they are to operate (Moyo, 2020), reducing the capacity and sitting layouts in public and private transport to ensure social distance, embracing social distance and quantity at public transport waiting points to 50 or fewer people maintaining a social distance of a minimum of one metre, closure of airports and all aerial transportation and prohibition of intracity and intercity travels (S.I.83 of 2020).

However, although these were innovative immediate responses to COVID-19, it is important to note that Zimbabwe's transport sector policies have been introduced in a top-down manner, hence they faced little to no citizen compliance. For instance, the Combined Harare Residents Association (2020) is of the view that the move by the government to ban private commuter omnibus operators was done without consultations with stakeholders. Moyo (2020) also noted that the ban of private-owned commuter omnibuses does not only lead to over-crowding in business centres due to transport shortages but also to the suffering of 'kombi' owners and their workers, some of whom even went on to convert their mini-buses into mobile shops for local trading to earn a living.

Barriers to People-centric Innovative Transport Policies in Zimbabwe

The article subjects that in the Zimbabwean context, the need to identify the barriers to people-centric innovative transport policies is a central concern to the attainment of relevant and innovative transport policies that are people-centric amidst the pandemic. One such barrier is gender imbalance and, as observed by the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) (1999), gender awareness is non-existent or underdeveloped among transport providers, planners and policy-makers. Mbara (2000) has also noted that although some organisations are integrating gender in rural development programmes,

they rarely address accessibility issues even when the target groups explicitly articulate these. Women are a special market that needs specific transport and marketing services. Transport planners and service providers have not acknowledged this.

Neglect and discrimination is another barrier to people-centric innovative transport policies during the COVID-19. In this pandemic, transport policies, although innovative, are reflecting a reputation in the country's historical trends of transport policies that neglect and discriminate minority groups in society, such as the disabled and the less privileged, hence raising questions on accessibility and affordability issues. Wheelchair users in Zimbabwe are sometimes charged double fares to accommodate them and their mobility aids (Jeffrey, 2014). This prejudices persons with disabilities who are often also financially and economically disadvantaged (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2013). Concerning the transport policies adopted in response to COVID-19, Ndebele (2020) has extended that in Zimbabwe, in particular, the deteriorating socio-economic situation has exposed the glaring insufficiencies of the public transport system. The expression that best describes this situation is neglect and discrimination.

Another barrier concerns the time factor. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, put policymakers and government officials under intense pressure to adjust all sectors of the economy to cope with the "new normal" such that they made reactive policies that did not have any input from citizens. This is supported by the World Health Organisation (2020) which observed that policymakers were in a peculiar situation that needed an immediate response and could not afford to go through normal processes. For example, the move by the government to ban all private commuter omnibuses without adequate consultations with all stakeholders, was deemed a timely intervention to foster order and maintain COVID-19 regulations. As such, time constraints may lead policymakers to exercise discretion in determining the public interest that might not always produce people-centric results.

The crafting of people-centric innovative transport policies in Zimbabwe during the times of COVID-19 is also hindered by a conformist

behaviour that has been adopted by policy-makers and implementers in the name of drawing lessons from other countries and complying with World Health Organization prescriptions and recommendations. With the way the COVID-19 has spread across the world, it is clear that the world has become a global village (World Bank, 2020). Thus, this article also finds that globalisation is also a factor influencing policymaking. An example can be drawn from the imposition of a ban on inter-city travelling during the COVID pandemic as part of concerted efforts recommended by the World Health Organisation is a move to slow the spread of the virus. Hence lacking innovativeness and concern for citizen perspective.

The Centrality of Citizen Participation in Transport Policy Innovation

This study takes a cue from Li (2021) who describes innovation as a collaborative process that requires the contribution of all actors involved. As such, citizens are important stakeholders in the policy formulation cycle have a role to contribute to any policy initiative during its formulation and implementation phase. Callahan (2007) is of the view that citizens are an integral part of the policy-making process that is essential in coming up with policies that are responsive to the current needs of society. Thus, citizens have a crucial role in generating transport policies and innovations that address their contemporary needs.

According to Mackworth-Young *et al.* (2020), the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic extend beyond the direct health consequences to negative social, economic and wider health impacts. Integrating community engagement should be an integral pillar of national responses to strengthen countries' ability to mitigate these negative consequences.Research is extremely limited on how best to adapt the COVID-19 pandemic response to local settings in sub-Saharan Africa. Lessons from Ebola and HIV highlight the pivotal influence of community engagement in decision-making, design and implementation of locally affordable and effective responses to epidemics. However, too often this is taken seriously only after other epidemiological efforts have shown to be inadequate to stem infection rates. Efforts to address COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa must adopt community engagement as

an integral pillar within their response from the start, rather than an afterthought. This includes empowering urban and rural communities with accurate information and openness to feedback from the community, including through community leaders.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS TO INNOVATE THE TRANSPORT SECTOR IN THE COVID-19 ERA

The COVID pandemic altered the existing way of life and imposed a new order, thus it became essential to change every facet of life to suit the new reality. Quiros (2020) observes that although the transport sector all over the world was brought to a "screeching halt" by the pandemic, it has helped in accelerating innovation in the transport sector. As such, the Government of Zimbabwe, like other countries, undertook various measures in the transport sector to respond to the new demands of the environment in the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organisation (2020) observes that the Government of Zimbabwe adopted various measures to restrict the movement of citizens.

The government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by imposing a total ban on private commuter omnibuses '(kombis)'. According to *New Zimbabwe* (2020), the development was announced in March 2020 by the Local Government Minister, July Moyo who, in a statement,said that the ban was a call from the president as part of measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic claiming the 'kombi' operators were violating the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations. Registering their vehicles under the ZUPCO franchise was provided as an alternative to those 'kombi' operators who wished to continue operating in the COVID-19 environment. Throughout these interventions, it is clear that there is hardly any citizen participation. For instance, the Combined Harare Residents Association (2020) described the move to ban 'kombis' as a "unilateral and ill-conceived" move that must be resisted. Thus, government interventions in the COVID-19 era were mostly unilateral moves that were not people-centric as they lacked contributions from all stakeholders.

Another government intervention with a direct impact on the transport sector was prohibiting intra-city and inter-city travels. This came with

legal enforcement under section (4) of SI 83 of 2020. However, there was an exception on essentials, such as the carriage of sick persons to hospitals and other health care providers, the transport of water, food, fuel, basic goods, medical supplies needed to combat COVID-19 and other medical supplies, and the carriage of Police, Defence Forces personnel and other enforcement officers. Transport services, whether intra-city or inter-city, for the carriage of passengers, was also restricted to those provided by the ZUPCO, omnibuses and other passenger service vehicles operated by or on behalf of the Public Service Association, the Police Service, the Defence Forces and the Civil Protection Authorities, commuter omnibuses and other passenger service vehicles operated or chartered by local authorities for the carriage of staff for essential services, the carriage of sick persons to hospitals and other health care providers, and the transport of water, food, fuel, basic goods, medical supplies needed to combat.

At the peak point of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Zimbabwe resorted to the closure of airports and all air transportation. As extended according to section 7 of SI 83 of 2020, for the period of 21 days from the 30th March 2020, to the 19th April 2020, all airports and aerodromes were to be closed except for the Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport (Harare), the Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo International Airport (Bulawayo) and the Victoria Falls International Airport. All air transport services were prohibited except the operation of such services (whether commercial, private, chartered or scheduled) engaged in essential goods and services. All international air transport services were bound to abide by the health screening protocols prescribed by the authorities of the neighbouring State or other State of destination.

Maintaining small gatherings and the maintenance of social distance in the use of transport services was another government intervening strategy. Section 5(a) of SI 83 of 2020 emphasised that a gathering at a stopping point to use a transport service referred to in section 4, must ensure that not more than fifty (50) individuals at a time are gathered for that purpose and that every individual at the gathering complies with the social distancing rule. Also, individuals carried within a transport service vehicle,

must within that vehicle, abide by and comply with the social distancing rule.

DISCUSSION

Concerning the state of the transport system in Zimbabwe, the research findings did not reflect only top-down transport policy innovations, but also reflected a conformist habit in policy-making and implementation. As such, instead of the government crafting people-centric policies, it has simply played an intermediary role through drawing lessons and recommendations from other countries and organisations and deliver them to citizens. As such, it can be concluded that the transport sector in Zimbabwe is currently in a deplorable state, hence there is a need to introduce innovative policy measures to strengthen it. The transport sector has also not been spared by the collapse of the economy in Zimbabwe.This is also brought out by Mbara and Pisa (2019) who observe that the transport system in Zimbabwe has been marred by chaos, visible congestion, outdated infrastructure and pollution. Thus, Zimbabwe's transport sector has been in a state of chaos under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research also recognises the centrality of citizen participation in transport policy innovations and emphasises the importance of policy-makers and implementers listening to community perspectives and accounting for context-specific realities to design locally appropriate and effective responses to COVID-19. Although the research findings reflected an appreciation of the centrality of citizen engagement in transport innovation it has, however, remained a theoretical concept with little to no practical applicability. Without the involvement of users/citizens, the quality of public services is often compromised (Agyemanand Cheng, 2020).). COVID-19 has resulted in the shift in user preferences towards less crowded and more flexible transport solutions, hence, transport management policies must also be critically reviewed (Gutierrez *et al*., 2020). Therefore, the need to ensure citizen engagement in innovation processes is a basic need to the survival and success of transport policies (AUC, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that policy innovations, introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe, were made with little citizen involvement. This is because, while some of the policies had foreign roots (from other countries and organisation), those with local roots were skewed towards the government's needs and perspective. As such, these policies failed to gain citizen support and acceptance since they did not emerge out of consideration of their impact on the lives of citizens in different segments of society. For instance, the re-introduction of buses by the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) without providing facilities to accommodate people living with disabilities, shows social exclusion at the governmental level. Thus, most transport policies introduced in Zimbabwe under the impact of COVID-19 lacked citizen involvement that led to their failure.

This article proffers innovation governance as a strategy of enhancing citizen participation in transport policy innovations to ensure people-centric outcomes. It has been acknowledged that the success of public innovation is highly reliant on the degree to which it is competently governed. Therefore, a framework is needed to study how innovation networks are governed to contribute to making public governance more effective and innovative. Six different governance strategies can be adopted by meta-governors in spurring effective public innovation.These are participating/collaboration, developing frameworks, managing interactions, sponsoring resources, establishing visions, and diplomacy. This typology is ideal, and sometimes a meta-governor might apply several different strategies simultaneously. There is need for policymakers to do more to capacitate public sector transport systems in terms of resource allocation. This can be used as a strategy to modernise and innovate Zimbabwe's transport infrastructure and systems. This recommendation comes from an observation that the transport system in Zimbabwe is outdated and facing an overload because it failed to move in line with the changing environment. Thus, there is need to direct more resources towards improving the country's transport systems.

Further, there is need for the government to establish comprehensive frameworks to encourage greater citizen participation in the innovation of

the transport sector to formulate policies that are people-centric and are reflective of the needs of society at present time. These measures can be used to deal with the challenges of low citizen participation. As such, the study recommends multiple strategies to strengthen citizen participation including working closely with Civil society organisations, engaging citizens through social media and holding community discussions and debates, where possible. Thus, this article proposes setting up a framework to encourage citizen participation at all levels.

The article also recommends political commitment towards improve and innovate the country's mobility sector to be people-centred. Creating public value through collaborative innovation requires a special kind of leadership. In particular, leaders must act as sponsors, champions, catalyst, and implementers. There is need for total commitment by political and administrative leaders for the journey towards an innovative transport policy that is people-centric and relevant under the impact of COVID-19.

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