Full Length Research

Citizen Participation, Mobilisation and Contested Participatory Spaces

Jephias Mapuva

Bindura University of Science Education, Department of Geography (Development Studies stream)
Astra Campus, P.O. Box 1020, Bindura-ZIMBABWE. Email: mapuva@gmail.com

Mobilisation of public opinion and citizen participation in contested spaces has created controversy within the participatory paradigm. Where there is no consensus, mobilization can take the form of contestation. Contestation in public spaces usually court controversy or protestation. Constitutions and attendant policy and regulatory frameworks have sought to incorporate public opinion on issues that affect public affairs. However, citizens have, through local initiatives, created space for their own participation, especially in governance processes. Contested spaces of participation such as 'invented' spaces are identified as necessary initiatives prompting participation. This paper provides a normative framework for enhanced participation and explores alternative avenues or spaces for participation.

Key Word: Citizens, Participation, Mobilisation, Contested, Public Spaces, Invented Spaces, Invited Spaces.

Cite This Article As: Mapuva J (2015). Citizen Participation, Mobilisation and Contested Participatory Spaces. Inter. J. Polit. Sci. Develop. 3(10): 405-415.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the synergy between citizen participation and mobilization as well as the various avenues that exhort citizens to participate. Various scholars (Gaventa, 2004; Ramjee & van Donk, 2011) have grappled with the concept and practice of participation as they sought to establish the extent to which citizens benefit from taking part in decision-making processes. In some cases, ruling elites have taken advantage of the prevailing socio-economic and political environments to promote a semblance of legitimacy. Consequently different scenarios for participation have culminated in the use of special terms such as 'invited' and 'invented' participatory spaces. These terms and platforms have been coined to display opportunities created by government through enabling legislation, or where citizens take the law into their own hands to 'invent' or 'create' their own spaces, usually in defiance of existing laws, through protests, demonstrations and strikes (Gaventa, 2004:44; Ramjee & van Donk,

2011:12). Current debates on the deepening and consolidation of democracy have a distinct bias towards the introduction of participatory approaches that enables citizens to take up their citizenship rights (Esau, 2006:1). Esau further maintains that this process requires that citizens become more engaged with the state to enhance state responsiveness, ensure watchfulness and accountability and influence policy that affects their livelihood (Esau, 2006:2).

The Early Roots of Citizen Participation

Citizen participation in community decision-making can be traced back to Plato's *Republic*[1]. Plato's concepts of

---

1 *The Republic* by Plato, is a genre of prose literary works developed in Greece in about 360 BC, and is one of the most

freedom of speech, assembly, voting, and equal representation have evolved through the years to form basic pillars upon which established democracies such as the United States were established. Jackson (1962) and Billington (1974) in Shah (2007:249) contend that the freedom and the right to make decisions on the early American frontier was the shaping force in grass roots democracy, i.e., people's right to participate. Citizen participation was first applied in the American towns of Plymouth and Jamestown, but soon spread west as new settlements were established (Pollak, 1985). In time, many of these frontier villages began to grow and expand, both numerically and economically (Mize, 1972). This made it increasingly difficult for every citizen to actively participate in all community decisions. People began to delegate their involvement to representatives, either directly or through community groups. This resulted in the establishment of systems of selecting officials by public elections[2]. In the USA, requirements for private citizen involvement in the local implementation of federal programmes have existed since then, where in urban planning programmes; a role for *citizen participation* was formalized since the Housing Act of 1954[3]. From the mid-1950s, citizen participation in civic affairs have gained in prominence and requirements for citizen participation have been incorporated in programs of a number of other federal agencies as well (Pollak, 1985). A citizen participates in community affairs varies, ranging from when one's willingness to pay taxes, obeys the law or through getting involved in the electoral processes where the individual contributes to the decision making process (Mize, 1972). The practice then spread to other cities and towns across the USA, and later became common practice since its recognition by international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank which have since made it mandatory and a condition for securing financial aid. Additionally, NGOs have adopted the participatory approach as an emerging paradigm, especially in their engagement with communities.

Debates Around Citizen Participation and Good Governance

It has been noted that governance orthodoxies divide the

influential works of philosophy and political theory, and perhaps Plato's best known work.

1http://nvs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/14/1/16 (Accessed 26 February 2008)

[3] Patricia Baron Pollak (1985).Does Citizen Participation Matter?: Toward the Development of Theory, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly.1985; 14: 16-29.*

world into 'effective' and 'fragile' states. Effective and fragile governance discourses have manifested themselves into good and bad governance. Jean-Francois Bayart (1993) has argued that bad governance is symptom of corruption, mismanagement, or simply the absence of any statutory service provision to large swathes of the population. A democratic framework consisting of a plethora of democratic tenets or principles such as *participation, responsiveness, accountability, transparency, consensus, rule of law and effectiveness,* have since been coined by the UNESCAP-Good Governance to propel governments to consider and apply these principles in their governance styles. In democratic environments individuals and/or groups contest for political space as a manifestation of the desire to participate. The Election Institute of Southern Africa[4] (EISA) (2007) asserts that"… democracy is nurtured from within societies". Citizen participation provides private individuals with an opportunity to influence and hold ownership of public decisions (Cogan & Sharpe, 1986:283). Spiegel (1998) portrays citizen participation as having the propensity to meaningfully tie programmes to people. However, Mize (1972) reveals that the term "citizen participation" and it's relationship to public decision-making has evolved without a general consensus regarding either it's meaning nor its consequences.

Similary, Knight, Chigudu &Tandon (2002) have noted that;

> *If citizens are cut off from, or subordinate to, the authorities [who] make critical decisions affecting their lives;[and] the available means for getting redress are distant and effective …[then]this means that government is a power over the people rather than a means through which people exercise their sovereign authority.*

On a more practical note, Cohen and Arato (1992) cited in Knight et al (2002:158) have argued that governments tend to become corrupt when pursuing a narrowly private agenda, rather than acting in the public benefit, with calls for reforms going unheeded. Popular participation connotes the process by which the efforts of the masses themselves are combined with those of central government (Mandaza, 1998:102). From a developmental viewpoint people are the means and end of development and "…the centrality of participation and decentralisation arises from a realization that

[4] The Election Institute of Southern Africa [EISA] attempts to promote a culture of transparency in electoral process in the Southern African region through the provision of research.

development in Third World states cannot be achieved by bureaucratic means alone (World Bank, 1997:110). Consequently, participation by all people involved becomes a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could either be direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives, and needs to be informed and organized (Hyden, & Braton, 1993:27). This calls for freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand.

Dahl (1989), cited in Esau, (2006:1), aligns the definition of citizen participation to the freedom of expression, associational freedom and access to information. This perspective put citizens' rights on the forefront of participation. Kabeer (2004:5) adopts a generic view of citizen participation to mean "…people's ability to exercise some degree of control over their own lives". Kabeer's contextualization of the concept of citizen participation does not take into cognizance the degree of citizen involvement, whether the involvement should be in the planning or implementation of decision-making. Jones and Weale (1999:90) on the other hand, acquaint direct citizen participation to decision making through representatives. By this, Jones and Weale indicate that a citizen should be actively involved in matters that affect him by demanding accountability from the state ensuring government's responsiveness to service delivery and other societal needs. This argument makes citizens partners in the decision-making process. Gaventa (2004) concurs with Jones and Weale by pointing out that citizens and the state should work together for the common good. Gaventa (2004:25) maintains that there should be a reconstruction of new relationships between state and citizens where decision-making is a collaborative process. Box (1998:3) upgrades the status of the citizen to that of government by defining citizen participation as the power of citizens to govern. This argument is further referred to by Cook (1975) who notes that "…citizen participation can legitimize a programme, its plans, actions and leadership". Cook (1975) further implies that political leaders should base on the support of citizens for the success of programmes in their constituencies, and without the support of the public, such programmes are likely to fail. From the above deliberations, I can be deduced that citizen participation has a place in governance processes.

The Place of Participation in Governance Processes

Graham *et al*, (2003:53) have identified eight components of good governance which are that it is: participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law; in addition, that it minimises corruption and takes the views of the minorities into

account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society (Graham, 2003:53). Figure 1

Of these aspects of good governance the dissertation seeks to establish the extent to which participation has been practiced by the state and enhanced by civil society through their activities.

Not all scholars have been in total agreement on the application of the practice and principle of good governance. Fawar (2002) cited in Folscher (2007:249) casts doubts on the legitimacy of good governance noting that 'the promotion of good governance based on notions of representivity, transparency, accountability and participation fails to take account of the reality of ethnic and religious divisions in some states'. However more could be done to make the practice of good governance all-inclusive and tenable. Similarly, Mafeje (1998:12) has denigrated 'good governance' as an invitation to authoritarianism and a negation of prospects for social democracy (Mafeje, 1998:12). This accusation has further been upheld by Okafor (1997:37) who has expressed the view that the practice and requirements for 'good governance' have been used to legitimise rogue regimes at the expense of minority social groups and different religious groupings. The World Bank (1992; 1994) has presented the African continent as one riddled with corruption, violence and undemocratic institutions of governance and consequently not prepared for good governance. In much of Africa, 'good governance, has been epitomised by predictable, open, and enlightened policymaking, a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos, an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law' is difficult to implement because most (if not) all these prerequisites are absent (World Bank, 1994).

On the flip side of good governance is 'bad governance' which according to Mandaza, (1991:11) is no governance and signifies the end of government and a threatened or total collapse, as is happening now in many African states. Mafeje (1998:9) deplores the behaviour of industrialised nations and donor agencies that have gone to the extent of propping up authoritarian regimes, and '…discrediting African governments with no legitimacy [since these] should not be given respectability and a longer lease of life, as the leading imperialist countries and donor agencies have been doing so far covertly or overtly'. Mafeje (1998:12) sums up the quagmire facing African scholars by stating that '"good governance" is neither meaningful nor implementable, outside the fundamental issue of social democracy in Africa and elsewhere; where the "popular democratic movement" in Africa has already given the correct verdict but not the correct implementation'
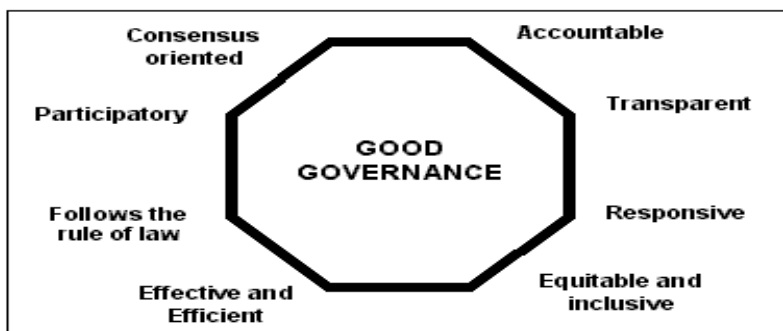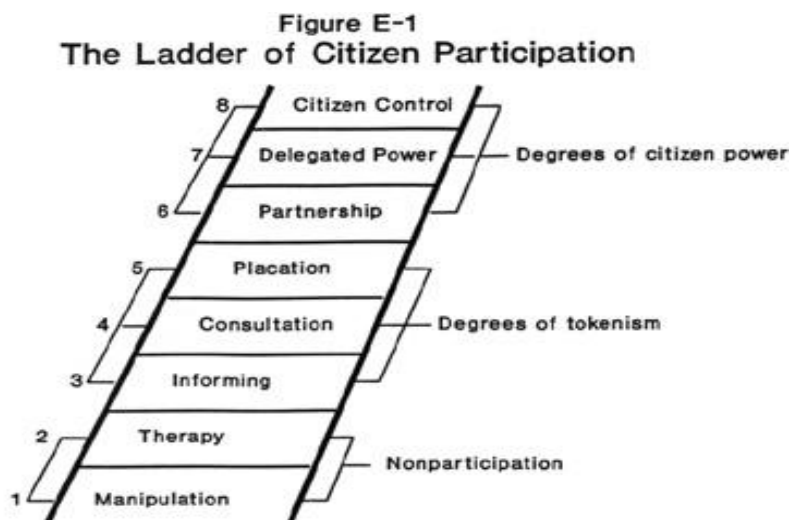
Figure 1. Adapted from UNESCAP-Good Governance

Figure E-1. *Adopted from Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1971).*

Arnstein" Ladder of Participation

One of the most enduring participation frameworks has been Arnstein's Ladder of Participation. In this framework Arnstein presents citizen participation in hierarchical order and as existing in degrees of development as follows (Figure E-1):

Arnstein (1971:32) portrays participation as existing in three tiers. At the bottom of the ladder is *nonparticipation* where decisions are made from the top and handed down to citizens. On the second tier, the quality of participation is through informing and consulting citizens without giving assurances that their contributions will be considered for decision-making purposes. The third tier consists of a wholesome involvement of citizens in the public decision-making process where citizens become partners in making decisions can directly influence policy formulation and implementation. Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation* is going to help the author of this article to determine the level of participation that is envisaged or suggested in existing legislation.

The bottom-line presented by the Arnstein's Ladder of Participation is that in a democracy, citizen participation is the prime political practice which every democratically-elected government should strive to achieve both in principle and in practice. The ladder put citizens at the epi-centre of decision making processes. On the contrary the failure by the state to give citizens the right to free political choices and decision making powers presents an unacceptable form of a governmental dispensation. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation encompasses these arguments by consolidating the various arguments into three core values that inform citizen participation or lack of it thereof. According to the Arnstein (1969) in a political dispensation, there is no participation at all; participation comes in the form of tokenism or there is citizen power. Under non-participation, the political practice is characterised by manipulation of citizens by

the ruling elites. Under the tokenism stage, citizens are merely informed by the government of what programmes the government intends to undertaking without seeking public opinion. Under citizen power, communities are given the opportunity by legislation to contribute or influence decision-making processes.

All these governance processes exist within a legislative context which provides for a regulatory framework that govern citizens' behaviour. The legislative regime can either be restrictive and prohibitive or contribute to the creation of an enabling political environment. In practice most of Africa's political leadership that stay in power for prolonged periods of time manage to do so through the adoption of 'tokenism' as a way of participation of citizens. Such ruling elites avoid the brazen non-participatory approach as this would raise eyebrows from proponents of democracy. The same elites cannot not contend with the requirements of citizen power as this would entail having to relinquish power to popular vote. Subsequently they settle for the middle-of-the-road approach of keeping citizens informed of political and socio-economic development, pretending to engage and consult citizens to keep them placated. They cannot contend with sharing power with citizens or delegate power to citizens or allow citizen control of State resources and reins of power. This restricted political environment provides civil society with an opportunity to intervene and mobilise citizens to engage the State and in most cases, culminates in protest action by citizens.

Alternative Forms of Participatory Spaces

A number of debates have emerged on the creation of formal and informal participatory spaces and the deepening of democracy. Studies have shown that a wealth of spaces for participation now exist, ranging from community and user groups and participatory consultation exercise of various kinds (Fung and Wright, 2003), to participatory sectoral councils, participatory budgeting and participatory planning (Heller, 2001; Avritzer, 2006). These 'new democratic spaces' are alternatives envisaged as sites in which citizens are invited to 'empower' themselves through participation and in which new meanings and practices of citizenship emerge through engagement (Cornwall, 2007). These alternative spaces can either be formal or informal. Formal spaces are created by legislation, while informal spaces are those initiatives that individuals or organizations embark upon, e.g civil disobedience and protest action. Both formal and informal participatory spaces are necessary to attract the attention of government to a social need and to initiate or deepen interaction between government and individuals or organizations State and non-state actors have made

deliberate attempts to deepening democracy through creating participatory spaces. Cornwall and Coelho (2006:8) explores the normative underpinnings of participation which envisages the creation of '*invented'* spaces and '*created'* participatory spaces through which citizens can participate in public policy formulation and decision-making processes. '*Created'* spaces come through mobilization, advocacy and persuasion by civil society to its membership, while '*invited'* spaces come as a result of legal provisions specifically enacted to enable citizens to participate in public programmes (Archarya et al, 2004:41).

Mobilization for Democracy Through Social Movements

Tarrow (1994) and Tilly (1997) have provided an elaborate dispatch of the Social Movement Theory which they concur enables citizens to organize themselves to push for social change. The social organisations so formed, helps in mobilizing citizens to speak in unison and make a concerted effort to push for the desired social change. Mobilisation plays a critical role enabling citizens to partake in public affairs. Citizens can either mobilise through their own initiatives or space can be created of invented for then to participate. Additionally, attendant and enabling legislation can create room for participation by providing fertile ground for citizens to be involved in public affairs through demanding stipulated entitlements. Social movements exist as a conduit through which mobilization and citizen participation can take place. State and non-state actors have made deliberate attempts to deepening democracy through creating participatory spaces. Discourses of participation have applied spatial metaphors involving "*opening up'* widening' or '*broadening'* opportunities for citizen engagement, with some referring to '*deepening'* democratic practice (Gaventa,2006:7). These proponents of participation have talked about "arenas" of governance and even "political space' reference to something which can be taken up, assumed and/or occupied, but can also be *created*, *opened*, invented or even *reshaped* (Gaventa, 2006:8).

Feminist and alternative development discourses portray this as a process through which oppressed people recognize and begin to manipulate and use their agency; 'creating new spaces, occupying existing spaces, or revalorizing negatively labeled spaces (Price-Chalita, 1994:239). Proponents of participatory spaces have however expressed the view that there are marginalized members of society who do not have the means to demanding or 'create' their own spaces. Cornwall and Coelho (2006:8) explores the normative underpinnings of participation where they indicate the creation of '*invented'* spaces and '*created'* participatory

spaces through which citizens can participate in public policy formulation and decision-making processes. '*Created*' spaces come through mobilization, advocacy and persuasion by civil society to its membership, while '*invited*' spaces come as a result of legal provisions specifically enacted to enable citizens to participate in public programmes (Archarya et al, 2004:41). 'Created' spaces can assume a number of forms ranging from mobilization, advocacy, persuasion and protest participation[5] where civic groups entice their members to engage government through unorthodox means. Tapscott (2007:89) concurs that "citizens [can] create their own popular mode of participation, which entails mass protest, often with violent overtones". Political contestation within 'invited spaces' could produce a variety of different strategies and can become sites of challenges, especially in instances when these invited spaces are viewed as having been 'claimed' back from government as conquered spaces (Cornwall and Coelho, 2006:6-8, in Thompson, 2007:97).

There are numerous mobilization strategies that have been employed by the civil society movements in different African countries, but the most prevalent have been those eclectically drawn from and informed by the feminist and social movement theories. These mainly involve unorthodox means of engaging government, such as protest participation, demonstration and passive resistance as a way of demanding the adoption of democratic principles, the observance of human rights and citizen participation in governance processes.

It has been argued that mobilization can be a more effective form of participation than formal participatory processes (Bond, 2002, in Thompson, 2007:98), and is sufficient to lure interest groups to pursue more than one participatory strategy, sometimes simultaneously. In such instances, citizens have often created their own popular mode of participation (herein referred to as protest participation) which entails mass protest, often with

---

[5] Protest participation is first cited in the Women's Rights Convention of 1848 in which a feminist activists Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Lucretia Mott wrote the *Declaration of Sentiments* for the 1848 Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, deliberately modeling it on the Declaration of Independence. They wrote that "whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government" an insinuation that protest participation is the only route where citizens' interests are not addressed by those in power. *Available on http://womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrage1848/a/seneca_dec lartn.htm*

violent overtones (Thompson, 2007:89). In such cases, communities have reverted to forms of engagement with the state which characterize a move from adopting formal channels of engagement to utilizing created spaces which are citizen initiatives created on their own and which they think would draw government attention. Such action would take the form of any one or more of the following; demonstrations, strikes (including hunger strikes if in prison for unlawful detention/arrest), industrial action, civil disobedience, defiance campaigns, petitioning the government to take corrective measures to address an existing problem, issuing out ultimatum, protests and protest marches, hunger strikes, boycotting, as well as lobbying which can take place outside the formal spaces created by government. This is how civil society groupings, in particular the poor and excluded, become meaningfully involved in informal institutional spaces. Much of civil society has been effective in mobilizing citizens and according to Van Lieres (2007:70) "…despite the paucity of opportunities for citizen participation, there is now evidence of grass-roots initiatives creating new interfaces between marginalized people and the institutions that affect their lives, particularly those of the state". This interaction has been enhanced by civil society mobilization of the citizens.

Mobilisation theory focuses on the social processes of collective action. Notably this involves how interests come to be defined as common or oppositional, the processes by which groups gain the capacity to act collectively, and the organisation and opportunity requirements for collective action (Kelly, 1998:35). Mobilisation theory explores how people come to see their interests as a common concern and generate within a group, a feeling of injustice, which is powerful enough to move an individual reaction or attitude to a collective response (Fosh, & Heery, 1990:45). Various elements of relationships and social interactions are seen as important in generating this sense of injustice and persuading people to come together in collective action in the trade union context. In particular, the actions of key activists or union leaders are seen as crucial in promoting group cohesion and identity, persuading members of the costs and benefits of collective action and defending the collective action taken in the face of counter-mobilisation (Kelly, 1998:36). Mobilisation theory is useful in its focus on social processes and in highlighting the multi-faceted nature of participation and activism in civil society organisations. In mobilisation theory, Bacon and Storey, (1996:24) emphasise the need to try and gauge the extent to which members identify with the union organisation and the degree of interaction, or density of social networks amongst members (Tilly, 1997:67). Through demonstrations, boycotting, embarking on strike (industrial) action, defiance campaigns, protest marches, writing petitions and when the situation gets out of hand, and civil disobedience to make the state ungovernable

civil society organisations can draw public attention.

This paper eclectically draws from Social Movement Theory whose central argument is premised on the fact that social movements are a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people made collective claims on others (Tilly, 2004:5). Social movements are grassroots organizations which operate informal structures. The social movement theory generally seeks to explain why social mobilization occurs, the forms under which it manifests, as well as potential social, cultural, and political consequences[6]. Tarrow (1994:24) notes that social movements are an organized collection of people who seek to influence political decisions and who present a collective challenge to elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes. Social movements play a vital role with their focus on social and political change, and framing issues to make them resonate with the public; they help to mobilize the necessary structures and resources; seek to open up political structures to help accommodate the envisioned changes and generate consensus about social problems and possible solutions (Clark, et al.1998:192). As agents for change, they provide the networks of social relations necessary for action, the resources, the information, and the ideas to mobilize people for movement goals, as well as the norms and values about participating in policy-making and implementation, given that most people lack the confidence that they have the power to make a difference.

Citizen Participation and government decision-making process

One elected into office, political leaders (at various levels of the political hierarchy) take it upon themselves to making decisions on behalf of the electorate. However, Becker & Gill (2003:48) point out that the existence of democracy does not necessarily mean that citizens always participate in the decision-making processes. They argue that in renowned democracies like "... the U.S. (which likes to be thought of as the leader of Western democracies) has no citizen's initiatives at the national level; the reason being that the founding fathers deeply distrusted the citizens and gave as little power to them as they could in order to get their new form of government ratified". They maintain that the US does not have national referenda where the national legislature decides to let citizens vote on a major issue of national concern (ibid). Becker and Gill indicate that in countries

---

[6]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_movement_theory

like Italy, Austria, Norway, Australia and Britain, citizen participation in issues of national concern "…where big issues are decided directly by the people" (2003:48). Cohen and Arato (1992:87) concur with the involvement of citizens in national issues by citing that:

"…in recent years, citizens of Italy, Austria, and Sweden have voted to ban nuclear power in their countries; the people of Ireland voted to permit abortion in certain instances; those of Norway voted not to belong to the European Union; and the Australians voted to maintain their connection to the British monarchy; the French voted to cut the term of office of their president to five years, and in the near future, a national referendum will be tabled before the people of Great Britain decide whether to replace the pound with the Euro".

So what should citizen participation entail?

Ideally, citizen participation should be beneficial to citizens. This argument is supported by Cahn and Camper (1968) in Smith (1990:3) who maintain that citizen participation"…promotes dignity and self-sufficiency within the individual, taps the energies and resources of individual citizens and provides a source of special insight, information, knowledge, and experience, which contributes to the soundness of community solutions". Citizen participation can be encouraged by stressing the benefits to be gained provided (Rajan, 2002). Citizen participation can be facilitated if there is an appropriate organizational structure for expressing interest. This may require organizing a more neutral group than may be in existence in a community. Situation judgment is required by persons with appropriate experience and competency (Kelbert 2000). Stressing the commitment or obligation each individual has towards improving the community can also facilitate citizen participation (Passewitz and Donnermeyer, 1989). However, people will not continue to participate unless the experience is rewarding or at least not too distasteful (ibid). Crisis situations have long been successfully used as a basis for gaining citizen participation. Cogan and Sharpe, (1986:88) argue that crises should not be invented but, if they exist, they become powerful motivation for citizen participation to find solutions to prevailing problems.

Purposeful citizen participation "…should be a trickle-down process that ensures that benefits so derived would gradually improve the lot of the poor (Rajan, 2002:253). Cogan and Sharpe (1986: 284) identify five benefits of citizen participation to the planning process, which are: the availability of information and ideas on public issues;

public support for planning decisions; avoidance of protracted conflicts and costly delays; reservoir of good will which can carry over to future decisions; and spirit of cooperation and trust between the agency and the public.

Citizen participation in community betterment organizations is a deliberate process that involves communities (Tandon, 2006). Healthy citizen participation is one that is not coercive, but voluntary and happens because certain principles of organization are observed at an acceptable level to the participants (Cohen and Arato, 1992). Citizens will voluntarily participate in a community activity when they see positive benefits to be gained and an appropriate organizational structure is available to them for expressing their interests (ibid). People can feel obliged to participate in an operation when some aspect of their way-of-life threatened and they feel committed to be supportive of the activity (Knight, Chigudu &Tandon (2002). Citizens should also be encouraged to participate in programmes when they have better knowledge of an issue or situation at hand feel comfortable in the group. Citizens will voluntarily participate in a community activity when they feel comfortable in the group (Defee et al, 1987).

Looking at it from the perspective of citizen participation of community development groups, organizations should be there to provide the structure for citizens to become involved in community betterment activities; citizens feel that they have an obligation to both their communities and to future generations. Citizens frequently participate because they feel an obligation/commitment to respond (Babchuk and Booth, (1969); Kreps and Donnermeyer, (1987); Dresbach (1992). Passewitz and Donnermeyer (1989) argue that "altruism is rarely sufficient by itself to sustain motivation for joining and remaining involved in volunteer associations." Their personal values compel them to support a particular activity.

Local governance offers citizens the most craved for opportunity to elect ct local official who are both accessible and within reach of the electorate. Saltstein (2003) explores citizen participation from a local government point of view and suggests that "…local government has the best opportunity to promote face-to-face interaction between the elected officials and the populace, and this fosters a strong tradition of citizen involvement in local political decision-making". Irvin and Stansbury (2006:58) utilize citizen participation as a barometer to measure public opinion arguing that "…citizen participation in policy formation is useful for informing regulators of exactly where volatile public backlash is likely to occur and for winning the sympathies of a few influential citizens…".Folscher (2007:243) views citizen participation from both a local government and a national viewpoint. He notes that "Civic engagement in public affairs can increase state effectiveness when citizens are given the opportunity to make their needs known and hold public institutions to account, public

resources `are likely to be used more efficiently and to deliver public goods and services that are better aligned with citizens' needs". He further argues that local communities have the best knowledge of their needs and preferences and of local conditions and usually public policy and advocacy organizations outside of the state often give voice to needs and preferences that are not heard in closed budgetary processes (ibid). Folscher (2007:243) further asserts that citizen participation in decision-making "…reduces the information gap between citizens and the state …."

Vincent (2004:110-111) views citizen participation from a developmental point of view by asserting that participatory development requires that citizens "…take time and energy in [to] establish[ing] the basis for, plan[ning],carry[ing]   out   and/or   evaluate[ing]some activity[ies] that will bring about change in their lives". Mandaza (1998; 102) maintains that popular participation connotes the process by which the efforts of the masses themselves are combined with those of central government. On the significance of citizen participation, the World Bank (1997:110) maintains that people are the means and end of development. The World Bank further points out that "…the centrality of participation and decentalisation arises from a realization that development in Third World states cannot be achieved by bureaucratic means alone (Mandaza 1998:102). This view calls for a deeper involvement of citizens in the decision-making processes of developmental issues that directly affect the citizens' livelihoods.

Saltstein (2003) explores citizen participation from a local government point of view and suggests that "…local government has the best opportunity to promote face-to-face interaction between the elected officials and the populace, and this fosters a strong tradition of citizen involvement in local political decision-making". Irvin and Stansbury (2006:58) utilize citizen participation as a barometer to measure public opinion arguing that "…citizen participation in policy formation is useful for informing regulators of exactly where volatile public backlash is likely to occur and for winning the sympathies of a few influential citizens…".Folscher (2006) in Shah (2007:243) views citizen participation from both a local government and a national view. He notes that "Civic engagement in public affairs can increase state effectiveness when citizens are given the opportunity to make their needs known and hold public institutions to account, public resources are likely to be used more efficiently and to deliver public goods and services that are better aligned with citizens' needs". He further argues that local communities have the best knowledge of their needs and preferences and of local conditions and usually public policy and advocacy organizations outside of the state often give voice to needs and preferences that are not heard in closed budgetary processes (ibid). Folscher (2006) in Shah (2007:243) further asserts that

citizen participation in decision-making "…reduces the information gap between citizens and the state".

Citizen Participation a practicality or is it a rigmarole?

There has been increasing disgruntlement on the application of the concept of citizen participation in recent times. A number of antagonists of citizen participation have expressed dissatisfaction at the nature and level of citizen involvement in decision-making processes. Lynn, 2002, cited in Shah (2007:59) argues that participation undermines institutions of representative government, and should therefore be left to government officials to make public decisions. Opponents of citizen participation suggest that political systems that have a record of poor governance may decide to foster participatory forums in order to increase the government's legitimacy (Moynihan, 2003; Olivo 1998, in World Bank 2007:59).

Demeaning the role of citizen participation, Navarro (1998), cited in Shah (2007:59) argues that "…even where participation is fostered, citizens may focus only on narrow issues that affect them directly and may be unwilling to make trade-offs and determined to exclude some groups". Andrew, 2004, cited in World Bank (2007:64), maintains that "… officials claim that participation efforts are consistent with tradition of public consultation, but are actually characterized by a bias toward including groups with technical or financial backgrounds and strong connections to government". This suggestion excludes the grassroots people in decision-making processes. The practical case of disputed electoral processes as well as the subsequent formation of Governments of National Unity (GNUs) as was the case of Kenya (2007) and Zimbabwe (2009) are food for thought on the extent to which the voice of the people prevailed. Additionally, such scenarios brings into question the genuineness and legitimacy of citizen participation in the election of political leadership of their own choice.

It can therefore be argued that social movement activity is lacking in Zimbabwe because of restricted political space and the attendant obstructive legislation. Masunungure (2004) in Raftopolous (2006:7) notes that the development of social movements have been hindered by "…a combination of obstacles of an authoritarian nationalist state constructed through the legitimacy of the liberation struggle in a rapidly shrinking economy that has comprehensively undermined the structural basis for the reproduction of social forces in the country". Makumbe (2000:23) argues that in late 1990s, "…sections of civil society community had begun to depart from the strategy of linkages with government and to move into a more confrontational mod in the context of a broader social movement". The use of the social

movement theory in this paper helps to understand the different mobilization strategies that the selected civil society organizations have utilized in mobilizing their membership towards engaging government for the restoration of democracy in the country and how these mobilization strategies have added up to the broader action of enhancing citizen participation in governance processes in Zimbabwe. Citizen participation in electoral processes is deliberated above.

CONCLUSION

From the deliberations and arguments about participation, it can be noted that the concept and practice of citizen participation is both elaborate and involving. It has also emerged that mobilization of citizens to participate in affairs that involve them can come in a variety of ways. It can be through legislative provisions, herein invited spaces. Citizens can also take the initiative to engage authorities, either peacefully or by way of protest action. This is the essence behind mobilization theory. In the latter state, contestation for space usually ensues. However, Arnstein's Ladder of Participation has roundly provided the different facets of citizen participation. Notwithstanding the various arguments pertaining to citizen participation in governance processes, a plethora of situations have availed themselves to justify the validity of citizen participation. It has become prevalent for the concept of citizen participation to be manipulated, especially by politicians 'to legitimise' their stay in power, resulting in unpopular regimes being 'elected' or 'retained' through controversial electoral processes. This, in turn, has resulted in political leaders engaging unorthodox means (such as vote buying and electoral rigging) to get 'elected' into office on the pretext that they are the sole choice of the electorate or that their positions are uncontested. Citizen participation has therefore brought about a precedence where every political process is done in the name of the popular participation.

REFERENCES

Acharya, A.; Houtzager, P. P. & Gurza, L. A. (2004). Civil Society representation in the participatory budget and deliberative councils of Sao Paulo, Brazil.IDS Bulletin, 35 (2):40-48

Arnstein, S. R. (1971). "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Planning* Association, 35 (4)216-224; July 1971

Cogan and Sharpe (1986)"The Theory of Citizen Involvement" in Planning Analysis: The Theory of Citizen Participation, University of Oregon (www.uoregon.edu/~rgp/PPPM613/class10theory.htm)

Cogan, C & Sharpe, G. (1986). Planning Analysis: The Theory of Citizen Involvement, Available on http://pages.uoregon.edu/rgp/PPPM613/class10theory.htm [Accessed 12 December 2010]

Cook, J. B(1975)., *Citizen Participation: A Concepts Battery*. Columbia: University of Missouri, Department of Regional and Community Affairs, 1999.

Cornwall, A & Coelho, V.S. (eds) (2010). Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas, London, Zed Books

Cornwall, A. (2002a). Making Spaces, Changing Places: Situating Participation in Development. *IDS Working Paper 170*. IDS, University of Sussex

Cornwall, A. (2002b). Locating citizen participation, *IDS Bulletin* 33 (2002) (2) 49–58

Cornwall, A. (2007). Whose Voices? Whose Choices? Reflections of Gender and Participatory Development, *World Development*, 3 (18), 1325-1342

Dahl, R (2006),Democracy and its Critics. Yale University Press; New Haven

EISA, (2008). "Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa: Zimbabwe: Civil society actors" **Extracted from**: Susan Booysen and Lucien Toulou 2009 "Chapter 15: Zimbabwe" In Denis Kadima and Susan Booysen (eds) Compendium of Elections in Southern Africa 1989-2009: 20 Years of Multiparty Democracy, EISA, Johannesburg, 642. Available on http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/zimcso.htm

Esau, M.V (2006). "Citizen Participation and the poor: A participatory approach to achieving political, social and economic freedom". *Politikon*, 34 (2) 187-203

Folscher, W (2003) in World Bank Report, (2007). "Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth", Washington: World Bank, p xii, 6-61.

Fung, A. & Wright, E.O. (2003). "Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance",*Politics and Society,* 29 (1) 5-41

Gaventa,J (2004),"Towards participatory governance: assessing the transformative possibilities", in (eds) Hickey,S.& Mohan,G. Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation? Zed Books: London

Hyden, G and Braton, M (eds) (1993): Governance and Politics in Africa, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado.

Jackson (1962) and Billington (1974) "Citizen Participation In Community Development" in Community Development, Ohio State University. Columbus.

Kabeer, N. (2004). Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought. New York,Verso

Knight, B.; Chigudu, H & Tandon, R. (2002). Reviving democracy: citizens at the heart of governance London: Earthscan

Linington, G. (2009). "Chapter 6- *Illegality & Zimbabwe's 2008 Presidential Elections"* in Masunungure, E.V (2009) (ed), Defying the Winds of Change, Konrad Publishers, Harare, Zimbabwe, pp 98-118

Mafeje, A. (1998). "Theory of Democracy and the African discourse" in E.Chole and J. Ibrahim (eds), Democratization Processes in Africa: Problems and Prospects. Dakar, CODESRIA Book Series

Makumbe, J. (2000). 'Is there a civil society in Africa?' *International Affairs* 74 (2) 305-317

Mandaza, I. (1991). Southern Africa Political Economic Monthly (SAPEM), Volume 6, No.2 (1996), Harare (Zimbabwe), SAPES Books

Masunungure, E.V. (2009). "*A Militarized Election: The 27 June Presidential Run-off*", Chapter 5 in Masunungure, Eldred. V (2009), Defying the Wings of Change, Harare; Konrad Publications

Masunungure, E.V.(2004). 'Travails of Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe since Independence,' in D. Harold-Barry (ed), *Zimbabwe: The Past is the Future* (Harare: Weaver Press, pp. 147-192.

Okafor, O. C. (1997). "The Concept of Legitimate Governance in the Contemporary International Legal System" *in Netherlands International Law Review,* 44 (1) 33-60; T.M.C. Asser Press 1997

Pollak,P.B (1985).Does Citizen Participation Matter?: Toward the Development of Theory, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly.1985; 14: 16-29*

Price-Chalita, P. (1994). "Spatial Metaphor and the politics of empowerment: mapping a place for feminism and postmodernism in geography' *Antipode*, 26 (3) 236-254

Raftopoulos, B. (2000). NGOs, the State and Politics in Zimbabwe: Baobab Books. Harare

Rajan, V (2002) "NGOs as Partners in the Process of 'Reform': Are they the Yogis or the Bhogis of Development",in NGOs as Partners of 'Reform'. MacMillan, New Delhi

Ramjee, Meera and van Donk, Mirjam (2011), "Recognising Community voice and Dissatisfaction A Civil Society Perspective on Local Governance in South Africa" GGLN and Isandla Institute, Cape Town

Shah,A (2007).Participatory Budgeting Public Sector Governance and Accountability series. World Bank; Washington,D.C

Spiegel H.B.C. (1998); *Citizen Participation in Urban Development;.* Washington, D.C.: N&L Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, 1968.

Tarrow, S. (1998). Struggle, Politics, and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest. Available on http://culturalpolitics.net/social_movements/glossary

Tarrow, S.G. (1994). Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 288 pages

The Election Institute of Southern Africa [EISA] (EISA) (2007)

Thompson, L. (ed) 2007. *Participatory Governance? Citizens and the State in South Africa. Cape Town:* Monograph. African Centre for Citizenship and

Democracy, University of the Western Cape

Tilly, C. (1997). From mobilization to revolution, New York: Mcgraw Hill

Tilly, C. (2003). "When Do (and Don't) Social Movements Promote Democratisation?" in P.Ibarra (ed), *Social Movements and Democracy*, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan

Tilly, C. (2004). Social Movements, 1768-2004, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, CO, 262 pages.

Vincent (2004), "Towards participatory governance: assessing the transformative possibilities", in (eds) Hickey,S.& Mohan,G. Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation? Zed Books: London

World Bank (2003).Better Governance for Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Enhancing Inclusiveness and Accountability (MENA Development Report).Washington, D.C.