The Importance of Participation and Inclusion in African Urbanization

A focused look at Transport and Housing Projects

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Abstract

According to the World Bank (2015) Africa's urbanization rate has surpassed other parts of the world. It is believed that by 2030, over 50% of Africans will reside in Urban Centres. Kenya is among the African counties that has experienced a tremendous increase in her urban population. This is most visible in the capital, the primate city of Nairobi. The growth has led to increased pressure on basic needs like housing, transport, water, education and security. Coupled with unequal economic development and social benefits, the result has been the tremendous expansion of informal sectors across fields.

To respond to some of this pressure, the central government has vowed initiate large projects in housing, transport, water and others (Republic of Kenya, 2018). Newly enacted legislation also provides for the establishment of multi-sectoral urban boards to oversee the delivery of some services. Among the major projects coming up include Affordable Housing schemes and Mass Rapid Transport investments such as Bus Rapid Transit and expanded commuter rail systems.

However, experience from the past both in Nairobi and other Cities has taught us the importance of inclusion, empathy and participation in such projects. Recent times have shown that public projects tend to ignore these and other key elements leading to massive failure of investment.

The paper investigates case studies from similar projects in other parts of Africa, Bus Rapid Transit Projects in Lagos, Dar es Salaam and South African Cities; past Slum Upgrading and Housing Projects in Nairobi and other parts of the continent. The research methods also involve data collection on inclusion and participation from those who are affected directly by these proposed projects as well as the impacts that previous projects have had.

The results from the study show that without proper communication and participation there are several misunderstandings on liveable spaces in cities. These include misinterpretations of the challenge's citizens face, on the intentions of proposed solutions as well as the socio-economic decision-making process of citizens. The implication of this leaves an unhealthy competition between existing informal 'structures' in various sectors against the new government driven proposals. The results are that those meant to benefit end up not being the primary beneficiaries.

In conclusion, the role of putting people primarily as the centre objective of planning remains critical and key. For African planners, diverting from this will increase the existing inequalities and lead to further social divisions.

Keywords

Africa, Participation, Informal, Transport,

1. Introduction

Urban areas have grown and developed at an astronomically high rate over the last century. The United Nations estimates that at present 55% of the world's population lives in urban centres. This is expected to get to 64% by 2050.

Though Africa has the lowest level of urbanization, Sub-Saharan Africa's urbanization rate is the highest in the world (Mckinsey, 2016). Africa experienced an increase in her urban population growth rate from 3.52 (2005) to 3.61 (2005-2010) to 3.70 (2010-2015). This currently lies at 3.58 (2015-2020). The growth rate of African Cities and towns is currently unmatched with Asia's at 2.80 (2005) to 2.43 (2005-2010) to 2.61 (2010-2015) and 2.56 (2015-2020). Europe, which is highly urbanized has experienced a growth rate of 0.33 (2005) to 0.46 (2005-2010) to 0.35 (2010-2015) and is currently at 0.35 (2015-2020). United Nations Population data 2019).
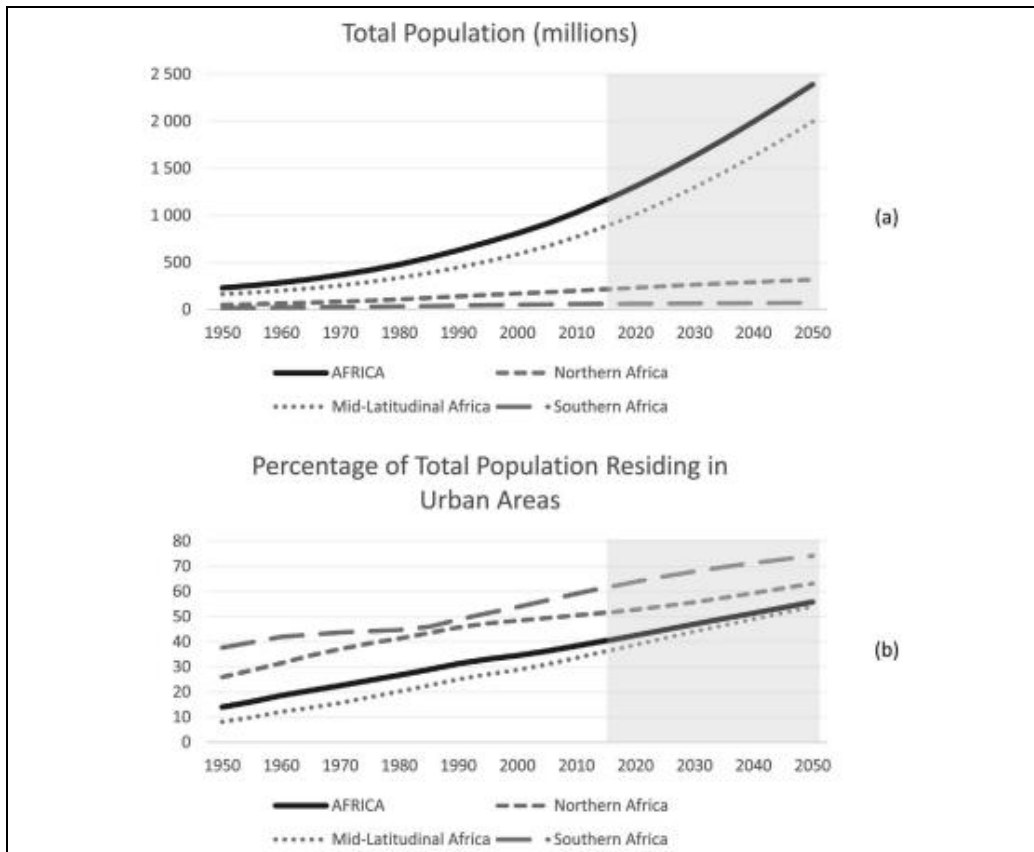

Figure 1: African population trends 1950-2050, Source: Guneralp

Rapid urbanization is seemed to be increasing the continent's productivity. Africa's urban population growth, however, has brought unique challenges and observers are questioning whether urban infrastructure, especially housing and transportation, can meet the needs of the ever-growing population (Anderson and Galatsidas, 2014). These challenges are coupled with high levels of unemployment, the growth of informality and various environmental risks and hazards. Traffic congestion, shortage of affordable housing, poor service delivery like

solid waste management and water supply environmental degradation through pollution are also evident.

The popular approach taken towards solving many of these challenges has been through engaging in bi-lateral agreements and more recently private-public partnerships. These are directed towards the development of mega-projects in affected fields. The transportation sector has seen a lot of focus on the development of highways and link roads. In housing, slum upgrading and multi storey affordable housing projects have been attempted. Bus Rapid Transit is currently being championed as a means of tackling transportation and congestion challenges. Multi-storey markets are being driven as possible solutions to the informal trading problems.

Inclusion, empathy and participation are important factors to be considered in urban development projects. Public participation is an action or a series of actions a person takes to involve themselves in affairs of government or community (Uraia, 2016). The role of participation has increased though legislation in the Kenya Constitution 2010. Kenyan policymakers have put strong emphasis on transparency, participation and accountability in the new Constitution and legal framework (World Bank ,2013). Global experience, however, shows that it takes time for systems to be put in place and for legal requirements to be fully functional. Many times, participation is only applied as a formality to 'rubber-stamp' pre-determined projects. Views of citizens are rarely looked at substantially and projects are determined in board rooms, seminars and studios. The results have been catastrophic, with very little understanding of the social infrastructure and ecosystem of citizens lives.

2. Public Participation in Urban Planning and Development

2.1.   The Ladder of Public Participation

Participation can take different approaches as per the ladder of participation developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969. The lowest levels those of 'Manipulation' and 'Therapy' which fall under the sub context of 'Non-Participation.' The highest levels are those of 'Citizen Control, Delegation and Partnership' which fall under the sub contexts of 'Citizen Control.' The middle sub context is that of tokenism which covers placation, consultation and informing.
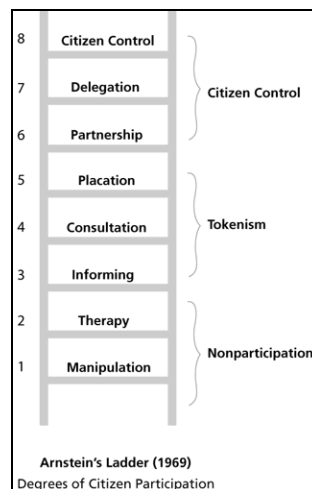

Figure 2: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

The importance and necessity Citizen Control levels of participation other than the more dominant non-participation and tokenism methods cannot be undervalued. This importance has been visible in the successes and failures of many development projects in cities. Repetition of the same brings about similar if not worse results.

Some key necessities for good public participation include timely access to information; Reasonable access to the process of formulating and implementing policies, laws, and regulations; Protection and promotion of the interest and rights of minorities; Providing multiple opportunities for public participation; Legal standing of those interested or affected and Reasonable balance in the roles and obligations of county governance and non-state actors (Uraia, 2016).

2.2. Legal Framework for Participation

Under the 2010 Constitution, Kenya opted towards decentralization of powers, changing the relationship between government and citizens. The 2010 Constitution and new legal framework place a strong emphasis on strengthening public participation. (World Bank 2015).

Under Article 1(1-4), The Constitution states that, all sovereign power belongs to the people of Kenya. It adds that that the people may exercise their sovereign power either directly or through their democratically elected representatives both at national and county level. Article 33 points out that public participation should respect the freedom of expression of all participants while Article 35 guarantees citizens the right to access information.

Participation is important in governance and development because it enables 1. Increased trust between public officials and the community. 2. Citizens have a sense of belonging and trust in their community leaders. 3. There are diverse views from a greater citizenry, 4. Citizens are better informed on various developmental projects and government initiatives. 5. Community concerns are more focused and prioritized for public officials to address comprehensively. 6. Citizens' diverse and unique skills are revealed to government officials and to the community. 7. It contributes in setting the priorities of the community and better decision making. 8. The citizens is more aware of community concerns and can effectively judge government responses on issues affecting the community. 9. Public officials get a better understanding of community needs and are able respond effectively (Uraia, 2016)

2.3. Participation in Urban Development

Beazley (1994) states that for public participation in urban planning to be effective it ought to be equitable and efficient. Public participation is a critical aspect of the success of public infrastructure megaprojects (PIMs), in which ineffectiveness is a constant problem (Wu, 2019). Urban Mega projects have significant impacts on cities, on the way we practice planning and the way we involve the community in decision making processes (Beazley, 1994). Community members are constantly asking themselves how much influence they can have on the nature and shape of such projects.

Public participation is also important for the proper achievement and execution of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Goal Number 11 that SDG11 talks of inclusive, safe, resilient, just and democratic cities (UN Habitat, 2016). The New Urban Agenda, which was signed by several in 2016 represents a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future (UNHabitat, 2016). It describes how when well-planned and well-managed, urbanization can be a powerful tool for sustainable development. It covers key

thematic areas which include: Social Cohesion and Equity (Liveable Cities), Spatial Development, Urban Ecology and Environment, Urban Economy, Urban Frameworks, Urban Housing and Basic Services. This is not possible to achieve without proper participation, which according to Maceratini (2018), gives the greatest opportunity is to create trust between government and communities.

In urban development and planning projects there are several key factors that should be handled when attempting good and effective public participation. Maceratini identifies five as key and these include: 1. Every step in the decision-making process is taken involving the community, 2. Having a multi-dimensional perspective, listening to all voices 3. Involving all people, no matter what the rank or position in society (Engagement) 4. Space for dialogue between stakeholders 3. Social inclusion

Likewise, there are five challenges that emerge when one wants to have good public participation. These are: 1. Identifying key stakeholders, 2. Involving them throughout the process and keeping their trust 3. Making stakeholders communicate and sharing what they know 4. Understanding territory and enduring that the project transforms projects into opportunities and 5. Ensuring that the result is adopted by everyone.

3. Metropolitan Transportation Projects

3.1. Bus Rapid Transit in Lagos, Nigeria

The Lagos Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was launched in 2008. It is a 22 Km segregated lane with 3 terminals and 26 stops. The private sector provides rolling-stock, recruits and trains crew and manages operations. The route was selected based on Gateway corridor High traffic demand Less Resettlement Action Plan. This BRT system is the first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa and is the only example of a comprehensive and integrated approach to improving public transport. (Mobereola, 2009)

Mobereola (2009) states that there was an intentional attempt to involve stakeholders from the start and this was done through Study tours with union executives, a Series of high-level meetings with Union members, the involvement of senior politicians and the inauguration of BRT implementation committee. BRT officials were constantly engaged the public and promoted the new system. Negative comments primarily revolved around the need for more routes and buses.

The BRT development process included the formation of a Cooperative comprising Union members on the BRT corridor. A steering committee comprising Lagos Metropolitan Transport Authority (LAMATA) and the funding bank which provide professional advice on the management of the cooperative and BRT operations was also established.

In order to protect union members interests, a transparent cash slow process was designed. An interesting development was the Bi -lateral operation where Danfoes (Mini and Midi buses) and Molues (big yellow buses) operate on the service lane while BRT buses operate on the BRT lane.

This new form of the BRT scheme aimed at delivering a transport system that would meet the needs of local users, while improving citizens' quality of life, economic efficiency, and safety. Its success stems not solely from its infrastructure but from a holistic approach that has included reorganizing the bus industry, financing new buses, creating a new institutional

structure and regulatory framework to support it. It also involved training the personnel needed to drive, maintain, enforce, and manage it (Mobereola, 2009). An evaluation in 2009 pointed that over 200,000 commuters used the bus system daily. Passengers enjoyed a reduction of 30 percent in average fares and a saving of 40 percent in journey time. Public transport waiting time was also reduced by 35 percent (brtdata, 2019). The project is deemed to have met and exceeded its development objectives, proof that there is no substitute for a well-conceived project managed by a competent implementing agency (Gorgam et al, 2017).

3.2.   Reya Vaya Bus Rapid Transit, Johannesburg, South Africa

Johannesburg has a Bus Rapid Transport system called Reya Vaya. Studies indicate that it has lower passenger demand, poorer financial performance and higher subsidy requirements than initially hoped (Venter, 2016). In 2016, it catered for only 1100 daily boarding's per kilometre as compared to the minimum of 8000 in other cities.

The South African government recently admitted that it had been a mammoth flop. Commuters have shunning the system in favour of taxis and ordinary buses. One major setback has been its low area coverage which makes informal taxis more favourable (Mabena, 2017). This has forced the government to highly subsidize the service as the fare revenue is not enough to sustain it (Venter G, Hays C, 2017).

Findings from a study done with a local community revealed that little community participation was conducted prior to the implementation of the transportation project. The interviewed participants stated that they were not involved in the determination of the routes that Rea Vaya would take (Venter, 2016). This left many wondering who the development is for: the government's or the community's? The project was also rushed in order to be ready in time for the FIFA World Cup in 2010.

The lack of or poor participation is seen as one of the reasons why those implementing the project failed to realize what Venter (2016) pointed out from his research: that distinct market segments had different needs e.g. Choice passengers have a very limited willingness to pay for the travel time savings procured with dedicated trunk lanes, but place much higher value on good access, higher frequencies, and, above all, the overall service quality.

3.3.   Dar es Salaam Bus Rapid Transit (DART)

For more than fifty years, residents of Dar-es-Salaam city faced public transport problems which were seen through traffic congestion and several fatal vehicle accidents. A Bus Rapid Transport system was proposed as a possible solution to these challenges.

A study done in Dar es Salaam prior to the development of the BRT system stated that though many were of the perception that it would be helpful in reducing travel time, it was perceived to benefit specific groups of people, particularly professional workers or a 'higher class' (Joseph, 2018). Based on the physical location of the DART line, the number of transfers for individuals commuting from peri-urban area to the CBD changed from one (direct route) to two transfers. However, since the BRT system started its operation in 2016, it has been found to be an effective solution for urban transport problems in the city. The benefits of the system have been recognized though improved mobility and satisfaction with public transport (Chengula and Kombe, 2017).

Matteo R (2015), discredited "win-win" narratives by showing what some Tanzanian actors stood to lose from the implementation of the Dar es Salaam Rapid Transit scheme. He points out that there was slow implementation of the transport system due to the tepid commitment to the project by the Tanzanian government. This was due to domestic politics, and the government's attempt to respond to the priorities of the World Bank without alienating local actors. Some of these actors wield considerable electoral power.

The urban poor and vulnerable also face access constraints. It has also been noted several the stations are not aligned with stops, stands, and stations of other modes. Consequently, most passengers spent up to 20 minutes to walk to the DBRT stations/terminals (Chengula and Kombe, 2017). There are also concerns about fares, which are 55% more than *daladala's (informal transport minibuses).* This is despite an initial pledge from DART officials that they would be comparable (Matteo, 2019). These high fares have forced many of the poor to use informal transport systems which run parallel to the BRT but in normal traffic. The higher fares given benefit to those who can afford to travel without any worry of traffic congestion. For the service to be more inclusive, some form of government subsidy will be necessary (The Citizen, 2016).

From a technical perspective, Chengula and Kombe, (2017) state that for the DBRT system to be viable life cycle cost and sustainable project there should be connections between DBRT truck roads and arterial roads and coverage of remote areas. In this regard, informal public transport is still key to taking people to work, school, shopping and social matters. Time efficiency, flexibility, mode availability, and access to high- and low-density unplanned areas are some of its key features that BRT system is unable to fully replicate. (Joseph L, et al, 2018).

4. Metropolitan Housing Development Projects

Housing remains a visible symptom of the vast poverty affecting the poor in Africa's cities. The development of informal settlements in sub Saharan Africa has been one of the highlights of its urbanization process over the last 50 years. Governments are also unable to keep up with and provide social housing for the urban poor. A more recent trend has been to 'formalize the informal' through slum upgrading projects. These have been done in several cities with varying levels of success. Affordability, however, remains a challenge in the formal housing market for low income households. *In Situ* upgrades through community participation have become more common recently and are being considered as global best practice (Williams, 2006).

4.1.   Lagos Metropolitan Development and Governance Project (LMDGP)

Lagos is one of the largest cities on the continent and experiences a massive housing shortage. 60-80 percent of urban Nigerians are estimated to live in slums and informal/squatter settlements. The World Bank financed the Lagos Metropolitan Development and Governance Project (LMDGP) as an attempt to improve living conditions of slum dwellers by enhancing their access to infrastructure and services. The project started with a demolition with only a 24-hour notice (without written notification). This completely undermined essence of consultation and participation. In what could be an attempt to cover face by some, extensive consultation was conducted throughout the preparation and implementation of the Relocation Action Plan (RAP) for the 2,296 displaced households in

Badia East. This included at least nine consultative meetings. The RAP uploaded on the website of the Lagos State Government, advertised through three national newspapers, and four hard copies were made available for 21 days in the Apapa-Iganmu Local Council Development Area (LCDA) (World Bank, 2015). The bank stated that the full extent of the risks associated with involuntary resettlement as a result of the LMDGP's slum upgrading and other activities was not have been fully apparent at the beginning of the project, especially considering the complex political economic dynamics. A report on the project added that the promoting if comprehensive and integrated urban planning approaches was necessary (World Bank, 2015).

World Bank policies require the engagement of communities in any project that might involve displacement. In Badia East, these requirements were ignored (Pereras, 2016). Sinani, (2014), in his article *'The World Bank Just Made Lagos Poorest Poorer'* states that Badia communities are demanding justice. He points out that 'The least the World Bank can do is implement its own policies.'

4.2.   Kenya Slum Upgrading Project (KENSUP), Nairobi

The Kenya Slum Upgrading Project was established by the Government of Kenya and UNHabitat to construct and resettle residents of Kibera's Soweto East Village in more decent and sustainable housing. Approximately 6299 residents who lived in 976 structures were affected. The residents were moved to reside at a 'decanting' site as the new high-rise structures were constructed. According to (Komollo, 2017), very little participation was done, and stakeholders did not have access to maps and drawings of the proposed project. On the ground, most dwellers also claimed that they were not consulted (Good Fortune, 2009).

There was also little information on the financing structure for the residents. This was worrying as many predicted that they would be requested to pay more that the rents that they had been paying at the slums.

Eventually, when the time to relocate came there were several hitches as some houses had already been allocated to outsiders. Some tenants who were awarded houses ended up losing them due to inability to pay up. Others rented the houses out and moved back to the informal settlement. They cited various reasons for doing this. Amongst them was the inability to support themselves in the new neighbourhood and inability to access infrastructural services because of distance and high rent rates (Mureithi 2016).

To date the decanting site remains occupied while the houses are fully occupied. But about half of those who officially received houses in the new apartments in Soweto East no longer reside there. These units have either been given away, sold or rented out (Higgins, 2013).

The project was deemed to be an extension of earlier top-down interventions in the settlement. This was the typical case where state actors shift the boundaries of the formal and the informal and at the same time acting inside and outside these shifting boundaries (Flink, 2016). The discontent caused among the dwellers led to more problems. Adegun (2018) suggests that this is an indication on how Kenya's government is ignoring social and economic factors when relocating people from slums.

4.3. Zwelisha Slum Upgrading Project, Durban

In South Africa, the proliferation of informal settlements has deepened poverty and unemployment levels, prevented empowerment and increasing inequality. (Mbutu, 2014)

Patel, (2013) points out Zwelisha, an upgraded settlement north of Durban, South Africa, as an example of a successful slum upgrade. He uses data from an ethnographic study to show that successful outcomes are intrinsically tied to the way the upgrade process is implemented. He explains the importance of the continued and consolidated power and influence of the local community development committee (CDC) following upgrade. The residents agree that the upgrading was a success citing the improved quality of life they now have.

The CDC led the residents through the entire process of applying for the housing subsidy, depending on whether they were eligible (Mureithi, 2016). However, there ought to be caution of how the state's approach to community participation in slum upgrades may consolidate and legitimise informal power relations that may not be necessarily benevolent (Patel 2013).

In this case, formal changes in the settlement that led to improved security of tenure and improved quality of life (defined by residents lived realities) depended upon informal continuities.

5. Results, Insights and Findings from this Study

Lind (2011) states that Urban planning with public participation has not always been deemed necessary. As recent as 50 years ago, planners were considered 'demigods' who had transformed cities to be beautiful, healthier, cleaner, and more stable places. Planners had come to be trusted by the people. However, recent experience has led to Gorham et al, (2017) to point out that urban transport projects can only be successful if they are cooperative, involving all stakeholders. Flick (2016) defines stakeholders as the individuals, groups, or organisation, who may affect, or be affected, by a decision, activity, or outcome of a project. He explained that it is important for every stakeholder to be considered and considered in order to provide successful projects. This requires a solid communications plan and proper stakeholder analysis. General stakeholder management process consists of stakeholder identification and gathering relevant information, analyse stakeholders and their potential impact, and at last, developing adequate management strategies. (Flick, 2016).

Although studies have focused on public participation, a method that can measure and improve its effectiveness is lacking. (Wu, 2019). Up to date, the urban development process of Nairobi is still dominated by public interventions permeated by non-participatory technocratic instruments of urban space production (Omenya and Huchzermeyer 2006; Oyugi and Owiti 2007). There is new hope however to improve urban governance through citizen participation in planning given the recently enacted urban policies. (Mwaniki et al, 2015). A Study done in Nairobi Central Ward by University of Nairobi revealed that there was a very weak relationship between public awareness and participation in urban planning projects but there was no relationship between degree of accessibility and public participation in urban planning projects. It was also established that there exists a weak

positive correlation between a person's financial situation (income, expenditure and savings) and their participation in urban planning projects.

The success and failures of the projects above depict the importance of some of the key necessities of good public participation as listed earlier. A simple analysis can showcase how the success can be measured against the parameters given.

Principle	Lagos BRT	Reya Vaya	Dar BRT	Lagos Slum Upgrade	Durban Slum Upgrade	KENSUP
Access to information	Good	Poor	Average	Poor	Good	Poor
Access to policy formulation process;	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good	Poor
Protection minority rights	Good	Poor	Average	Very Poor	Good	Very Poor
Opportunities for public participation;	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good	Poor
Legal standing of those interested or affected;	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Good	Poor
Balance in the roles of various actors	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Good	Poor

Figure 3: Estimated Levels of success of participation per project   Source: Study

From the information collected and looking at the table above can give a general overview of what levels of public participation were experienced at the different projects. The levels of participation are also an indication on how empathetic those behind the projects were as well as how well the projects were communicated to stakeholders.

Lagos BRT	Reya Vaya	Dar BRT	Lagos Slum Upgrade	Durban Slum Upgrade	KENSUP
Citizen Control	Tokenism	Tokenism	Non-Participation	Citizen Control	Non-Participation

Figure 4: Participation Levels taken at each project Source: Study

It is quite noticeable that there is a relation between the success levels of urban development projects and the levels of participation. Rucker (2011), stated that If the people who live around a proposed development oppose a development, chances are those people know something that is important to the health of their neighbourhood and the larger community. He views them as the source of its collective intelligence. At lower levels of participation, at times seen as 'conventional' participation or 'rubber-stamping' as is known in Kenya, it makes the mistake of privileging a few. Different project will affect different actors where their specific interests will vary depending on project type but also throughout the project's execution. (Flick, 2016). Participatory planning cannot be a paper commitment that is confined to policy documents, theoretical debates and municipal business plans.

There is therefore a need to identify ways to make this concept a reality, particularly in addressing developmental needs (Mbutu,2014).

Klopp et al (2019), point out that a key problem is that the focus on BRT as a "project" to displace and modernize the existing transport system. Additionally, in areas of transport governance in Africa there are low levels of transparency, information sharing and public participation in decision-making. Consultants are also well known to invite the public for participation meetings with little intention of making any changes to their proposed projects.

Planning professionals' failure to engage with communities in an integrated and inclusionary manner has made things even worse when it comes to community empowerment initiatives (Mbutu, 2014).Even though locals can share their socio-economic and cultural perspectives to make projects successful, professionals continue to assume their own perspective of the different fields to be correct. Residents have a level of detail and a critical perspective that can make the difference between whether a proposed project supports the health of the community or creates a new burden (Rucker,2011).

6. Conclusion

The necessity to put people at the centre of all planning and development activities cannot be ignored. This starts with proper identification of stakeholders and understanding how project will impact and influence their lives. Their participation in the planning process can help prevent 'white elephant' projects and ensure that social justice takes place accordingly. A lot of wastage in both time, money and other resources can be avoided when and extra effort is put into this.

Citizens are also more aware of their right to be consulted and the failures of 'top-bottom' projects have raised many concerns. Unfortunately, we still see many public agencies and private consultants approaching participation merely to approve projects without looking the potential long-term challenges that this brings.

These are lessons for the Kenyan government as they approach the Affordable Housing projects under the Big 4 Agenda as well as Nairobi Regeneration Strategy. This will enable them to ensure that further socio-economic divisions are not created from projects that aim at serving the urban poor.

Understanding the real reasons why people oppose a project requires the willingness to do so, the humility to listen, and the internal fortitude and self-assurance to admit that possibly, we don't know everything that there is to know. That is the real mark of wisdom. (Rucker, 2011)

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