THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION/DEMOCRACY DICHOTOMY

Jephias Mapuva
Bindura University of Science Education, Department of Geography (Development Studies),
Astra Campus, Bindura, Zimbabwe
Loveness Muyengwa-Mapuva
Midlands State University, Faculty of Law, Senga Road, Gweru, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

The concept of citizen participation has come to be closely associated with democracy. While the two concepts share a lot in common, there has been a tendency by those in power to manipulate the socially marginalized in the name of citizen participation and democracy. Electoral processes have produced disputed results because although citizens will have partaken in the electoral process, but in most cases they got the leadership that they do not deserve. This has resulted in the Government of National Unity [GNUs] formations in recent times, mostly popularized by incumbent political leaders who do not want to accept electoral defeat. Electoral processes have been instituted as a manifestation of citizen participation in the decision-making processes in efforts to decide who should preside over a state. Bureaucrats have manipulated the concept of citizen participation for their own political survival through enacting legislation that would render citizen involvement a formality where genuine participation would have yielded beneficial results for the people.

Key Words: Citizen participation, democracy, dichotomy, bureaucracy, electoral processes, Government of National Unity

Introduction

Democratic governance is characterized by the existence of a strong civil society that is able to both keep a check on government performance and input into policy and processes that will enhance good governance (ISS,2008). Many forums through which citizens could make a

contribution to debates on issues affecting their lives have been deliberately blocked by those entitled to ensure that citizens are incorporated in the decision-making structures of society. This has resulted in the current debates about the dire need to deepen democratic structures in various institutions to enable citizens to be involved in public affairs. Current debates on the deepening and consolidation of democracy have a distinct bias towards the introduction of participatory approaches that will enable citizens to take up their citizenship rights (Esau, 2006:1). Esau 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 (ibid).

Citizen Participation and the bureaucracy

According to Pankhurst,(1998:2) it is assumed that civil society [and citizen participation] are intermittently connected with democracy in some way, but whether as instrument or symptom, and how it is conceived and assessed, varies considerably". This brings to the fore the long standing relationship between citizen participation and democracy.

It is argued that governments are increasingly becoming less willing to use consultative policy-making procedures but political parties remain accessible and to a degree internally democratic (OSISA, 2006:3). Ake (2000:12) concurs with the foregoing assertion by arguing that "…democracy has in some degree been reduced to an ideological representation which is well internalized". This implies that it is only at political level that people are consulted on matters mainly affecting the party and to a lesser degree affecting the country as a whole. Ake further notes that even in countries which are considered advanced democracies, there is very little knowledge of what democracy is and a great deal of confusion" (ibid). Bureaucrats have justified lack or participation by arguing that participation undermines institutions of representative government, and should therefore be left to government officials to make public decisions (Lynn, 2002 cited in Shah (2007:59). 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).

However, on a more conciliatory tone, Vengroff and Magala (2001:130) in Mesfin,2008:2) contend that new democracies lack the pre-existence of a political culture of democracy the emergence and growth of which could, however, become possible as a result of institutional modifications independent of economic development.

Citizen participation has also been used to portray citizens as ignorant and therefore not worthy of consultation. 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". Excuses have also been put forward as a reason to exclude people at grassroots levels. Complaints have also been leveled against those who are involved with the bureaucracy, asserting that only those with expertise, access to resources and well-connected to government officials are given the chance to make inputs into the decision-making processes. Crick (2002:65) maintains that "…to participate politically and to become full citizens, people need resources". Arnstein (1969:3), through *The Ladder of Citizen Participation* noted that there are citizen participation variants from ranging nonparticipation, tokenism and total citizen control as follows:

Figure E-1
The Ladder of Citizen Participation
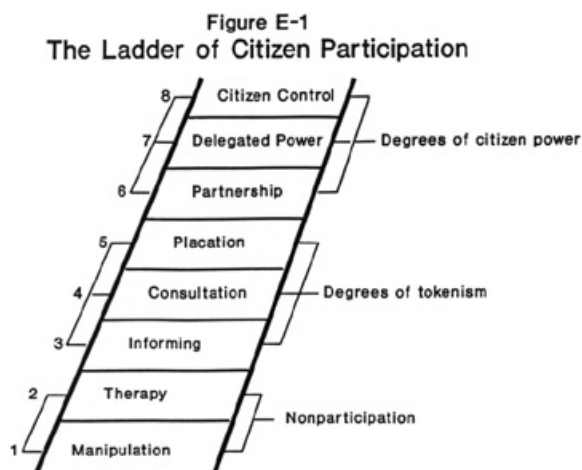
Source: Arnstien, 1969

Depriving people of resources is tantamount to incapacitating them when it comes to participation. In some cases, participation has been viewed as an attempt to deprive the marginalized members of society of equal access to resources and job opportunities. This is

confirmed by Andrew (2004) cited in World Bank (2007:64), who maintains that "… officials claim that participation efforts are consistent with tradition of public consultation, but are actually characterized by a bias towards groups with technical or financial backgrounds and strong connections to government".

Can citizen participation transform into democracy?

Few concepts are more central to the modern state and at the same time difficult to define than the concepts of democracy, elections and political parties (Mesfin, 2008:1). Unlike what is commonly assumed, a dividing line has emerged between citizen participation and democracy in recent times. A democratic political system in its essentials must include consistent application of the rule of law, respect of basic freedoms and regular equitable competitive elections (Osisa, 2006:3). DeSario and Langton, (1987:5) view democracy as citizen involvement activities in relation to government planning and policy-making. Becker and Gill indicate that in countries like Italy, Austria, Norway, Australia and Britain, citizens are consulted on issues of national concern "…where big issues are decided directly by the people". Cohen and Arato (1992:87) note that the involvement of citizens in national issues is of vital importance and cite 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 to decide whether to replace the pound with the Euro".*

However current debates about the tenet of democracy have emerged where suggestions have indicated that in a democracy, it is not every time that citizen is consulted**.** Makinda (1996:557) held that, generally, democracy can be seen 'as a way of government firmly rooted in the belief that people in any society should be free to determine their own political, economic, social, and cultural systems**.** Becker & Gill (2003:48) note 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"(ibid). 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). Wa Mutharika (1995:61) points out that even in a democracy, "…the masses can still be oppressed by the system or excluded from the decision-making processes by the same system that they will have installed and that human rights abuses can still take place even under plural democracy". Hyden (1992:26) on the other hand, argues that in the West, democracy is often associated with the assumption that decisions reflect the self-interest of the individual and that collectively the pursuit of self-interest. He proceeds by noting that democracy is a political system in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who can elect people to represent them. Given the negative and manipulative nature of many bureaucratic institutions, disillusionment has emerged among the electorate. Bratton concurs by the notion of disillusionment among the electorate by arguing that ('many [African] citizens are beginning to perceive that democracy has distinctive shortcomings including unruly political discourse, a poor record of service delivery, and new opportunities for corruption' (Bratton 2007:5).

Normative framework for citizen participation

Ideally, citizen participation should be beneficial to citizens and it should be voluntary. This is supported by Rajan, (2002) who maintains that citizen participation can be encouraged by stressing the benefits to be gained provided. Stressing the commitment or obligation each individual has towards improving the community can also facilitate citizen participation (Passewitz and Donnermeyer, 1989). Cahn and Camper (1968) in Smith (1990:3) note 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 facilitated if there is an appropriate organizational structure for expressing interest. This may require organizing a control group than may be in

existence in a community. However, people will not continue to participate unless the experience is rewarding or at least not too distasteful (ibid).

Purposeful citizen participation calls for citizen involvement, such as in referenda or elections and "…should be a trickle-down process that ensures that benefits so derived would gradually improve the lot of the poor (Rajan, 2002:253). 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.

Local governance offers citizens the most craved for opportunity to elect local official who are both accessible and within reach of the electorate. Saltstein (2003) 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". Such regular interactions between civic leaders are important to determine whether service delivery is to the satisfaction of residents or not. 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…".Through local government structures, central government can be able to establish whether resources are reaching out to the whole nation. This is supported by Folscher (2007:243) who argues 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 …"

The symbiotic relationship between governments and the electorate is a determining factor for citizen participation and democracy. 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. The World Bank (1997:110) points out that people are the means and end of development. The World Bank, in Mandaza (1998:102), 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. These endeavours to involve the people are a noble idea but it depends on the seriousness of the government and whether citizens stand to benefit form their involvement in the decision-making process.

The citizen participation and the electoral process

Mesfin (2008:4) have noted that founding pillars of any democratic political system, whether considered fragile or established, remain undoubtedly elections which can simply be taken as the most critical and visible means through which all citizens can peacefully choose or remove their leaders, and which are evidently costly affairs. Elections require the existence of a multiparty system so that citizens make a political decision by voting for the competing candidates fielded by various political parties holding divergent views and presenting different alternatives (Mesfin, 2008:7). The statement is indicative of the vital importance of the electoral process in the build up to democratic institutions in any polity. Arnstein (1969:4)'s assertion that citizen participation is citizen power is suggestive of the fact that people should be in control of their destiny, especially in electoral processes. It is only through abiding by electoral laws and other institutions that are supposed to oversee the conduct of a free and fair electoral process that meaningful results reflective of people's wishes can be attained. This is supported by Beetham (1994:91) who maintains that the degree of democracy of an election (and an electoral system) should be rated on the basis of a detailed scrutiny of all relevant administrative procedures and regulations. Beetham (1994:48) further notes that voting has been traditionally taken as the

prime indicator of democratic participation, and is the one political activity which is performed by the vast majority of the population.

However, on the contrary Ake (2000:17), maintains that the main thrust of the development has been towards its trivialization thereby downplaying citizen participation and reducing electoral processes to a mere formality. Barnet and Low (2004:21) concur with this argument and point out that "…democracy has been trivialized to the point at which it is no longer threatening to political elites around the world, who may now embrace democracy and enjoy democratic legitimacy without subjecting themselves to the notorious inconveniences of democratic practices" such as elections. On the same note, Besson &Marti (2006:35) point out that "…the practice of democracy, now largely reduced to multiparty electoral competition, tells rather little about satisfactory citizen participation.

The Election Institute of Southern Africa[1] (EISA) (2007) asserts that"… the notion of democracy must be nurtured from within societies" where "people are involved in situations which enhance their well-being (Cohen & Uphoff 1980:213). In an attempt to cling to power, many incumbent political leaders have resorted to constitutional amendments a move which has displeased many citizens. Wollack (2003: 185) notes that "whenever laws and policies are not equitable or just, and there is no hope for democracy within the framework of existing laws, "*civil disobedience*" is the only way to open the door to reason, justice, and morality [and] such circumstances require brave and heroic figures, willing to sacrifice themselves on democracy's behalf". Wollack (2003: 186) further notes that in such cases, these are democratic means [that] can empower people to remove despots without recourse to violence.

Citizen participation, Democracy and Government of National Unity (GNU)

Prevailing practice in much of post-colonial Africa has been dominated by rulers inclined to share power only with a very small coterie of collaborators (Beetham 1994:49). A government of national unity, if properly instituted is a form of democracy in which people of various political

---

[1] 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 findings and electoral observation teams.

parties are able to bury their political, ethnic and tribal differences and strive to build a democratic society where people enjoy freedoms and rights as enshrined in their constitution.

Budge & Keman (1990:37) concur with the notion of power-sharing arrangement and assert that generally this arrangement is reached when the ruling party's confidence and legitimacy are severely weakened even though it remains strong enough to exercise control over the most important institutions. In both cases of Kenya and [in future] Zimbabwe, the ruling parties have realized that they cannot go it alone due to the fact that the opposition was equally popular with the electorate.

Mesfin (2008:5) is in support of power-sharing arrangement and points out that "…creation of a power-sharing arrangement has the advantage of conferring some sort of legitimacy to the ruling party without discrediting the opposition, while at the same time reducing the ruling party's fear of losing everything and fear of future reprisals and allaying opposition's anxiety that the ruling party might have somehow rigged the elections. Ake (2000:7) concurs by pointing out that in recent times; democracy has become a unifying discourse which is supposed to tame national and international politics.

Legislation guiding electoral processes have been blamed for flawed electoral results. Under the Zimbabwean Constitution Section 3 of the Electoral Act [Zimbabwean Constitution] sets out that:

(a) *the authority to govern derives from the will of the people demonstrated through elections that are conducted efficiently, freely, fairly, transparently and properly on the basis of universal and equal suffrage exercised through a secret ballot; and that every citizen has the right-*

(i) to participate in government directly or through freely chosen representatives; and (iii) to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of Government;

(iv)   to participate, through civic organisations, in peaceful activities to influence and challenge the policies of Government;

The implications behind these constitutional prescriptions are that citizens have the right to be incorporated into the political activities that determine their destiny. However, recent developments in Kenya and lately in Zimbabwe have widened the rift between citizen participation and the concept of democracy. While there is no doubt that the right to vote is the first primordial act of participation, the question that needs to be asked is to what extent these rights have translated into credible participation of citizens in the day-to-day activities of the state in SADC (EISA,2003) and subsequently into a democratically-elected political leadership.

Although democratic electoral processes should be associated with the conduct of free and fair elections, elections in Kenya, Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa have, in recent times have been associated with accusations of violence,' vote rigging' and 'vote buying', such that the end results have not been credible. There were cases of boycotting of elections by contesting political parties. In Kenya, violence erupted leaving many hundreds dead and several thousand displaced. The same scenario occurred in Zimbabwe before and in the aftermath of the elections, resulting in the opposition MDC boycotting the elections citing violence on its supporters. Plattner (2005:184) justifies boycotting of elections by maintaining that'…boycotting elections is a peaceful manner in which people may powerfully demonstrate their dissatisfaction". The UNDP Report (2004) envisages the extension of democracy from a 'democracy of voters to a democracy of citizens' where the implication enshrined in the assertion is that electoral processes are not the ultimate democratic institutions in a country, but total involvement of citizens in all governance processes[2].

Most SADC countries [Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Malawi, and lately Zimbabwe] use the *first-past-the-post system*, which is limited in terms of representation but is potentially able to offer a greater level of participation and accountability[3]. The concept of *first-past-the-post* has even created more problems where losing candidates would call for the formation of a government of nation unity (GNU). An election is all about numbers, the *first-past-the-post* formula is used to determine the winner. The fact that a political candidate failed to garner

---

[2] UNDP(2004) Ideas and Contributions :Democracy in Latin America-Towards a Citizens Democracy, N.Y,UNPD Programme Report

[3] "The impact of Democracy on Public Participation in the SADC Region" in Election Institute of Southern Africa {EISA}, EISA Occasional Paper No.13, October 2003

enough votes to become the President of a country implies that the electorate is not satisfied with his/her performance. Incorporating such a candidate in a government of national unity would ultimately be an insult to the very electorate who will have showed disapproval of his/her leadership. Recent events in Kenya where a GNU was formed with a losing candidate [President Mwai Kibaki] seems to have set a wrong precedence on the African continent because elections would eventually mean very little to the electorate and a contradiction of what democracy and citizen participation should mean. Similar events took place in the recent Zimbabwean elections where the ruling party was defeated in the first round of the elections and decided to call for a second round, which was subsequently boycotted by the opposition MDC, citing an orgy of violence that was being perpetrated by ruling party supporters. Such a trend is bound to recur in many African states where incumbent Presidents disregard the will of the people and opt for a GNU if chances of him wining are slim, especially given that those who have lost but made it back to State House through the formation of a GNU got away with it.

GNU is an attempt by losing political candidates to get back into mainstream politics through the backdoor, and claiming to hold the mandate of the electorate. The precedence set by Kenya and the subsequent formation of a GNU and a likelihood of a similar political arrangement in Zimbabwe has been seen as a '*dent on democracy*'[4] [*Mail and Guardian*, 18 July 2008] and is likely to open floodgates of similar scenarios elsewhere in Africa. The whole exercise of GNU formations contradicts the purpose of elections whose sole purpose is to give those who get the highest number of votes the chance to govern the country and those who will not have been successful to rally behind the winner. While GNUs are appropriate in countries like Kenya where there are many ethnic groups, in Zimbabwe the concept is inappropriate due to the monolithic demographic pattern where any chosen leader would be able to unite the nation. The result of a GNU formation in countries like Zimbabwe would be loss of confidence by the electorate on the electoral process and subsequently one would expect record high voter apathy.

A critique of GNUs in Africa

---

[4] This was in reference to the one-man elections held in Zimbabwe after the pullout of the opposition, citing violence on its members, in the Zimbabwe Situation-Daily News,16 July 2008

The most prevalent circumstance in which a nation may institute a government of a national unity is where there might be need to draw upon various parties after an election, where no one party can claim an overall majority or where a winning party still feels it needs to draw upon expertise from beyond its own ranks [5]. Despite the ruling parties having lost credibility in the elections, a power-sharing arrangement would be a compromise especially for the ruling party. Mesfin (2008:9) agrees with this statement by maintaining that "…the creation of a power-sharing arrangement has the advantage of conferring some sort of legitimacy to the ruling party without discrediting the opposition".

James Hamill[6] (The Guardian,July 3,2008) has portrayed GNUs as a formation ' … based upon a straightforward denial of the popular will' given that part of the people destined to govern are those who will have lost in the electoral process. While from the onset the formation implies that unity is achieved, prevailing debates have indicated that is not the case. James Hamill (The Guardian, 3 July 2008), have put forward three principal objections to the national unity argument as it is currently being advanced for Zimbabwe. First, Hamill asserts that a GNU impedes attempts to entrench democratic values on the continent - integral to which is the absolute necessity that parties (and governments) accept election defeat and orderly transfers of power. National unity is invariably couched in a noble rhetoric, but in reality it indulges those who are prepared to unleash terror and mayhem to impose themselves upon the people secure in the knowledge that, at the very least, they will have carved out a continuing role for themselves in government by so doing. That is entirely incompatible with the democratic principles which African states and African multilateral organisations have claimed to embrace since 2000. \

James Hamill further points out that the paradox of national unity governments is that they rarely produce national unity and certainly will not do so in Zimbabwe, against the backdrop of the regime's murderous campaign there. Instead, the likelihood is that it will produce a pantomime horse arrangement as two parties with profound differences are compelled to work together largely at the instigation of outsiders. He further notes that Kenya's arrangement is routinely

---

[5] http://www.thezimbabwetimes.com/?p=748
[6] James Hamill in *The Guardian* 3 July, 2008, made a critique of the viability of GNUs in specified African countries and made a comparative analysis of the states.

paraded before us as though it is an unqualified success rather than what it really is: a rickety and ultimately unworkable structure permanently teetering on the brink of collapse.

The Government of National Unity formation is retrogressive to democracy and brings into question whether the usual *winner-takes-it-all* situation in Africa is the right way to go (BBC, 15 August 2008). Mbeki, a key figure in the mediation efforts to Zimbabwe's crisis has pointed out that "... Africa has once more demonstrated its capacity to solve its own problems," (Zimbabwe.com, 12 August 1008). Despite these optimistic sentiments, similar arrangements elsewhere in Africa have indicated that former enemies cannot co-exist. However, power-sharing talks in governments of national unity (GNU) have mainly failed in post-colonial Africa. They failed in Angola, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and even in South Africa. Currently, the fragile GNU in Kenya is in intensive care unit (Zimbabwe Independent, 12 September 2008).

In Zimbabwe, a government of national unity is not a new concept. At the attainment of political independence in 1980, Zimbabwe adopted a policy of reconciliation at independence. In an effort to show a spirit of reconciliation, a constitutional provision was adopted in which 20 uncontested seats were reserved for the white people. With time, the arrangement fell apart after the two races could not co-exist. At the same time, wartime allies ZANU and ZAPU formed a similar arrangement where they promised to share cabinet seats in parliament. However, shortly after this, a civil war erupted, resulting in the arrangement being disowned. James Hill provides a critique of the future of a GNU in Zimbabwe. He argues that "In the Zimbabwean case the GNU formation portrays a paradox of national unity governments that can hardly produce national unity and certainly will not do so, against the backdrop of the ruling party's orgy of violence". He further notes that instead, in Zimbabwe the likelihood is that a government of national unity is likely to produce a pantomime horse arrangement as two parties with profound differences are compelled to work together largely at the instigation of international community.

However, Kenya is unique in that its heterogeneous demographic pattern has made it susceptible to a power-sharing deal. James Hamill describes the power sharing arrangement for Zimbabwe as "a dead end" implying that it is an unattainable arrangement given the animosity of the two political parties involved. South Africa's national unity government came at the end of a long

period in which the National party and the ANC [itself comprising alliance partners from labour unions and opposition political parties] had worked together to draft a new constitution and bring the new democratic South Africa into being. Nothing remotely similar to this situation currently pertains in Zimbabwe and Kenya.

The case of Zimbabwe is a diabolically different and uncompromising one because unlike in Kenya where President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga have had a history of working together, here one is faced with a situation where President Robert Mugabe and [opposition leader] Morgan Tsvangirai are persons who have been displaying public enmity for a long period. Overdependence on liberation credentials by President Robert Mugabe and the army's pre-election statements that they 'will not salute a leader who did not fight in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle" manifests the uncompromising position of both the military and President Mugabe and their unpreparedness to hand over power to a winner. Therefore it is justified that a government of national unity would be the lowest that President Mugabe and the military would sink to accommodate the opposition MDC[7].

There is also a tendency by the proponents of GNUs to draw a comparison between Mandela and De Klerk and Mugabe and Tsvangirai, but unfortunately, the comparisons does not hold because De Klerk was comfortable with power-sharing than parties in Zimbabwe where each wants absolute and executive powers 'to hire and fire cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister (Zimbabwesituation: Online, 15 August 2008). In Kenya, the concept of a government of national unity was facilitated by the existence of a multi-ethnic demographic pattern that dictates the necessity of ethnic representation in government. This is supported by Erdmann & Basedau (2007:15), who argue that in Africa most states are undeniably plural societies marked, by deep cleavages among a diversity of ethnic groups. Young (1993:305) supports this notion by indicating that elections seem to provide the opportunity to legitimise the political and economic pre-eminence of one group, to reward supporters of that group and compel them to adopt greater

---

[7] Inflammatory pre-lection statements by the ruling party and the military that 'even if the opposition MDC wins the elections, but they will not rule the country' indicated the incompatibility of the two political parties in a Government of national unity, and total disregard of the wishes of the electorate (24 June 2008: www.newzimbabwe.com) (http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/aug16_2008.html).

political conformity, and to re-impose a firm hand on challenging elements within or outside that group.

While Kenya may have adopted the GNU formation that has not solved its political problems. Hamill asserts that despite the fact that Kenya's GNU arrangements are routinely paraded before us as though it is an unqualified success rather than what it really is: a rickety and ultimately unworkable structure permanently teetering on the brink of collapse. By this assertion, James Hamill is implying that the will of the people is still pending and should be realized, not through the GNU formation but through an all-encompassing, free and fair electoral process. The only comparative advantage that Kenya enjoys is its heterogeneous demographic nature that no one political party can form a government on its own and needs the presence of other political parties.

Despite all the modalities of coming up with a government of national unity, there is a tendency by political leaders to consult citizens on whether to adopt a GNU or not. Such a top-down approach alienates the electorate from crucial decision-making processes.

REFERENCES

Ake,C (2000) The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa; CODESRIA, Wiltshire

Arnstein, Sherry. R. 1971. A ladder of citizen participation; *Journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute; April 1971.*

Barnett, C & Low, M (eds)(2004) Spaces of Democracy: Geographical Perspectives on Citizenship, Participation and Representation; SAGE; London

Bratton, M. 2007. Institutionalising democracy in Africa: formal or informal? Paper presented at the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, United States.

Besson,S & Marti,J.L (2006) Deliberative Democracy and its Discontents; Ashgate, Hampshire

"The impact of Democracy on Public Participation in the SADC Region" in Election Institute of Southern Africa [EISA], EISA Occasional Paper No.13, October 2003

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

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

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

Esau, M.V (2006). "Citizen Participation and the poor: A participatory approach to achieving political, social and economic freedom". **Politikon**, Vol.34, No.2

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

http://nvs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/14/1/16 (Accessed 26 February 2008)
Jackson (1962) and Billington (1974) "Citizen Participation In Community Development" in Community Development, Ohio State University. Columbus

James Hamill (2008) 'National unity option is a dead end' in *The Guardian*, 3 July 2008

Marc F. Plattner (2005) 'Documents On Democracy' in *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 183-186

Makinda, S. 1996. Democracy and multiparty politics in Africa; *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34(4):555–573.

Pankhurst, Donna, 'Striving for "Real" Democracy in Africa: the Roles of International Donors and Civil Society in Zimbabwe'. Global Society: *Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations, Vol. 12, Issue 2, May 1998,*

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

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

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.

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

Vengroff, R. and Magala, M. 2001. Democratic reform, transition and consolidation: evidence from Senegal's 2000 presidential election. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39(1):129–162.

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: World Bank

Crick, B (2002) Democracy: A very Short Introduction, Oxford University Press

Zimbabwe Independent, 12 September 2008