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**Citizenship and Public Trust in Informal Settlements in Kenya: The Lived Experiences in the Mukuru Kayaba Informal Settlement, Nairobi , Kenya**

By

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**Abstract:**

This article examines the lived experiences of citizens living in informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya. The article seeks to highlight the existing tensions between these spaces created for all citizens and the experiences in Mukuru Kayaba informal settlement. This gap between the reality of citizenship and the creation of public trust affects the lived experiences of the informal settlement communities. The exercise of active citizenship crucial for building public trust is bounded by constraints of time, location, jargon and contestations of power in favour of certain individuals. This article seeks to contribute to the study of the lived experiences of the poor in slums in African cities. It is also an exploration of the reasons that impede the sustainability and development of African cities. The implications are that citizenship of the urban poor is subsumed and there is a failure to seek and utilize nuanced understandings of the African city.

**Keywords:** Kenya; Informal Settlements; Citizenship; Public Trust

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### **Introduction**

Although Kenya has made steady progress economically, it faces challenges in dealing with elite capture, corruption and widespread apathy. These challenges have affected human development leading to high levels of social and economic inequality and social safety nets are almost non-existent. The capacity of the formal economy has been severely constrained and most of the jobs in the country are created in the informal economy (KNBS, 2021). High levels of poverty, unemployment and underemployment have created fertile ground for people to question the agency of their citizenship and its value to build their participation in society. The Kenyan constitution promulgated in 2010 introduced devolution that created a two – tier system of government. The ceding and sharing of power and resources between the two levels of government meant the county government of the city of Nairobi created spaces to partner with local communities for inclusive, systematic and sustainable slum upgrading. The study utilized qualitative approaches and based on transcendental phenomenology as a lens to examine the lived experiences of people living in Mukuru Kayaba.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The proliferation of informal settlements is one of the clearest exemplifications of social exclusion in developing countries (Mahabir et al., 2016). In 2010, a global assessment conducted by HABITAT revealed that 828 million or 33% of the urban population in developing countries resides in slums. In sub Saharan Africa, 62% of the urban population resides in such slums. Urbanisation is viewed as a major factor that drives the proliferation of slums because of the phenomenal urban transition on Africa. This is evidenced by the fact that, for example, in 1950, 14.5% of the population in African countries resided in urban areas; by 2007, the level of urbanisation had increased to 38.7%. The major consequence of these developments has been the urbanisation of poverty, where poverty and its concentration has moved to urban areas (UN-HABITAT, 2003). Chen and Ravallion, (2007) opine that while the level of urbanisation in Africa increased from 29.8% in 1993 to 35.2% in 2002, the urban share of poverty increased from 24.3% to 30.2 % within the same period.

Slum policies have portrayed informal settlements as institutional failures in housing policy, housing, finance, public utilities, local governance and secure tenure (Mahabir et al., 2016). Some of the strategies adopted by African countries to tackle the problem have ranged from benign neglect, forced evictions and demolitions. A case in point is that of Nairobi's Kariobangi North informal; settlement that was pulled down in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other strategies have been either resettlement or relocation and slum upgrading programmes (Nabutola, 2004). It is also quite interesting to note that although many of these strategies have failed, they are still being persistently implemented across the continent (Nzau and Trillo, 2020). This article, then, problematises the utility of citizenship and spaces for participation in informal settlements.

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## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Citizenship, Public Trust and Urban Informality: Convergences of Global, Regional and Local Contexts**

#### **Formality and Informality : Forms of Informality**

Formality offers ease in the deployment of state resources, social status and power. (Banks et al., 2020). In contrast, a focus on informality highlights those who are disadvantaged by their inability to be formal. It also exposes how opportunities are open or closed and it gives a clearer understanding of how the processes underpinning economic, social and political processes as well as inequality emerge and consolidate (Banks et al. 2020). The study of urban informality is important because it helps in understanding the trends and patterns of urban development. There are scholars that have conceptualised formality as the norm and informality as an aberration. The hierarchy of the formal as the norm and informal as abnormal or inferior has underpinned repressive policy responses such as inadequate service provision or the eviction of informal settlement communities (Roy 2005).

Economic and spatial informality are both seen as the reason to repress, informally tax and further disadvantage already affected groups. Such realities are described by Watson (2009) as she argues that the reason why urban planning rules cannot meet the needs of the poor is because of the elitist nature of urban planning rules. Their elitist nature means that the urban poor must break the law to secure land and shelter. Informality, therefore, is much more than the absence of rules or regulations. It is: “... *the informal sphere can be seen as a different set of rules negotiated and enforced by diverse actors who frequently include , but go beyond, city-based or national elites*”(Banks et al.,2020).

Organised groups of low-income citizens have to make strategic choices because they have limited choices which is linked with clientist politics where they live. Shand (2015) argues that co-production may be used by both the state and the communities to advance the interaction of the formal and informal and to protect vulnerable households previously settled in slums on adverse terms. This is where there are attempts by formal agencies to extend support to disadvantaged groups seeking advancement such as the Mukuru Special Planning Area (Lines and Makau, 2018; Horn, 2021; Mitlin, 2021).

#### **Political and Urban Informality**

Political informality constitutes a variety of political processes and practices and is associated with urban areas in developing countries (Horn, 2021). The urban socio-economic context is important because of its relationship with formal political institutes because of the intensity and concentration of these institutions. Cities in the global South are often centrally governed as spaces of civil power. Lindell (2016) classifies informal activities as those that some respects lie beyond or circumvent state regulation. The essence of informality is that most of its activities are partially integrated into formal state regulatory systems. Politics has its own regulatory framework in a given society that provides official legitimacy to certain process and organisations (Roy, 2005).

As with economic and spatial informality in developing countries, political informality plays a greater role relative to formal politics than in developed countries(Lindell,2016).. While every city is full of formal rules of various kinds, many developing countries are characterised by weak capability to enforce them (Watson, 2009). Instead, developing countries are dominated by ‘deals’ which are interactions rooted in informal, personalised relations between people or organisations that are not based on the

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impersonal application of rules (Banks et al. 2020). Deals can be narrowed down to elites or open to all people, they can be predictable in the way they are ordered. Clientelism is the most obvious example of political informality. Stokes et al. (2013) define it as a form of non-programmatic political mobilisation in which benefits are conferred by people in positions of political power (patrons) conditional on returning these favours with votes or with some other forms of political support. Clientelism is based on a relationship of asymmetrical mutual exchange (Kitschelt, 2000). This is common in informal settlements and plays a key role in the practice of citizenship and citizen participation.

### **Relevance of Created and Invited Spaces for Citizen Participation in Urban Informal Settlements**

Citizenship as a concept is useful for exploring the problems of belonging, identity and personality in the global South (El-Hadj, 2018). It is a concept that describes a number of discrete but related aspects in the relation between the individual and the polity (Isin, 2000). Current conditions around the world have strengthened the emphasis on rights and obligations (UN-HABITAT, 2017). Citizenship is a status which articulates legal rights and responsibilities (Lister, 2003). The mechanisms through which this articulation is shaped and implemented can be analytically distinguished from the status itself and so can the content of the rights (Isin, 2000). That is, today it is the nation-state that provides the mechanisms to do so for the national political space; but these mechanisms may be changing due to globalisation, changes in the nation-state and the emergence of rights-based policy formulation and development (Cornwall, 2000). Politics and identity have been essential because they provide the sense of solidarity necessary for further development of modern citizenship (Kabeer, 2003). Full participation as a citizen rest on a material base and so poverty in many instances excludes large parts of the population. This means that a legal citizenship does not always bring full and equal membership rights (Isin, 2000). Citizenship is actualised by the position of different groups within a nation-state.

The disadvantaged position of these marginalised groups empowered the practices and the struggles that forced changes in the institution of citizenship itself. (Muungano wa Wanavijiji, 2021). Cities have become a strategic terrain for a whole series of conflicts and contradictions. The city is a hub of global capital and in contrast it is also home to a large number of disadvantaged, poor people (Allen et al.1999). The large city of today has emerged as a strategic site for a whole range of new types of operations – political, economic, cultural and subjective (Isin, 2000; Allen et al., 1999; Bridge and Watson, 2000). Today’s citizenship practices have to do with the production of ‘presence’ of those without power and a politics that claims the right to the city (Harvey, 2008).

### **Population and Methodology**

#### **Mukuru Kayaba: The Where, What and Why?**

Urban agglomeration and the expansion of slums are a continuing phenomenon especially in the developing world. Indeed, statistics indicate that more than half of the global megacities will all be in the developing world by 2050 (UN-HABITAT, 2000). However, these burgeoning megacities of the global South lack the capacity to provide decent and affordable housing and sanitation for the urban poor. This leads to the proliferation and expansion of slums as people earning low wages mostly from daily contract labour seek housing that is within their means. They end up settling on the edge of the built up areas out of necessity. Costs also rise with these conditions affecting the poorest members of the society lowering

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their quality of life. The city has the largest slums in the country and on the African continent. Slums such as Kibra, Mukuru, Mathare and Korogocho are home to more than half of the population of Nairobi (KNBS, 2010).

The use of created or invited spaces as entrenched in the Constitution of Kenya (2010) is a contested notion. However, these ‘new’ spaces can be contextualised and used to achieve social sustainability of these communities. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 entrenches the concept of citizen participation as well as the expansion of social and economic rights (Article 213). These second generation rights are further girded by the articulation of civil and political rights. The constitutional dispensation serves as manifesto; a contract between the rulers and the ruled. Through its provisions, these citizens are afforded, social, economic and political rights. The access and utilisation of these rights is crucial for the well-being and governance of subaltern communities. It is also important for addressing issues around the concepts of economic and social exclusion that disenfranchise millions of individuals and communities in slums. This paper then addresses inclusion and participation as fundamental rights that contribute to the dignity of the human being. It espouses principles articulated by Sen (1999) who viewed development basically as the freedom to choose and chart the destiny that improves the well-being of individuals and their communities; especially the poorest in society.

## **Methodology**

### **Philosophical Perspectives and Research Design**

This article is the outcome of research carried out in Nairobi in 2019. It seeks to respond to one of the research objectives of the study: “To examine how citizens in subaltern communities access, interpret and utilise the existing provisions for citizen participation in social sustainability of their communities”. The study was carried out in Mukuru Kayaba informal settlement. The guiding paradigm of this study is the relativist – interpretivist paradigm aligned with the relativist ontology. An ontology raises certain key questions about the nature of reality and the nature of human beings in the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). This study is situated in the qualitative research approach under the transcendental phenomenological method. Transcendental phenomenology is defined as the study of phenomena as they present themselves in an individual’s direct awareness and experience (O’Leary, 2010). Therefore, in this case, perception rather than socio-historic context or even supposed reality is the focus of investigation (ibid, 2010). The aim of this kind of phenomenological research is to collect data from people who have experienced a phenomenon. The researcher used transcendental phenomenology as described by Moustakas (1994). This approach deals with the descriptions of the experiences of the participants. It focuses on the use of one of Husserl’s concepts of bracketing or ‘*epoche*’, where the researcher distances themselves from their experiences to gain a clearer picture of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 1998). According to Moustakas (1994), transcendental means that everything is freshly perceived as if for the first time. He still contends that this may not be completely achieved but serves to provide clearer descriptions of the lived experiences of the respondents.

### **Sampling Procedure**

The study participants were selected using two types of purposive sampling: criterion and snowball sampling. Maxwell (2005) argues that the use of purposive sampling is common in



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qualitative research and that it is a strategy for selecting specific elements or units of analysis due to the unique information only they can provide. Selecting from the population of Mukuru Kayaba to gain a sample of thirty individuals will be based on two forms of purposive sampling: criterion sampling and snowball sampling. The use of a small number of units will be helpful on maximising the diversity relevant to the phenomenon under study. It is important that sampling strategies use the weakness of a small sample's variations in the common patterns that emerge into strength (Patton, 1990).

### **Process of Data Generation**

The data was generated from document analysis and face to face interviews. All the participants were assigned pseudonyms and the face to face interviews were interviewed separately. The focus group discussions were conducted in a group setting. In total, this study had 11 male participants and 19 female participants to make up a total of thirty participants. For both the focus group discussions and the face to face interviews, a semistructured interview guide was used. The three research questions were the main questions from which sub questions of the study were generated. One focus group had 5 female participants and 3 male participants and the other one had 5 female participants and 1 male participant.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Descriptive Presentation of the Study Participants**

The table below, is a descriptive representation of their demographics. It captures participant information in terms of their gender, age, occupation and the number of years they have lived in the settlement. In terms of their gender, the researcher found that it was easier to access female participants as compared to male participants. This could be due to the fact that most of the female participants run small business concerns close to the area where they live. The researcher also attributed this to most of them being mothers who had young children or grandchildren. Also, the attendant costs of starting businesses in areas where renting and transportations costs were higher made it an easier choice to start their businesses in their locality.

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Table 1: Background Information of the Study Participants

Description		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	11	37
	Female	19	63
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>
Age	18-29	06	20
	29-39	09	30
	40-50	09	30
	51-60	06	20
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>
Economic Activity	Small business owners	06	20
	Teachers	02	6.7
	Students/youth	06	20
	Community health volunteers	10	33
	Employed	02	6.7
	Pastors	01	3.3
	Chairmen/ladies	02	6.7
	Housewives	01	3.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of Years Lived in Mukuru	1-5 years	02	6.6
	6-10 years	09	30
	11-15 years	10	33.4
	More than 15 years	09	30
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher, 2019

## Coding Strategies and Data Analysis

### Face to face Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

All interviews were first coded manually through open coding. Saldaña (2009) defines a code as a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. From verbatim transcripts, seventy-three significant codes were derived. The first cycle coding used narrative coding to look at the verbatim transcripts. After first cycle coding, the codes were categorised to generate categories based on the underlying meanings across the codes generated from all the interviews. These codes were analysed and their meanings were formulated. Using the formulated meanings, clusters of meaning were formed by grouping together leading to the emergent themes (Saldaña, 2016).

### Textual Descriptions of the Lived Experiences of Citizenship and Public Trust

The study participants expressed the fact that their views were not taken seriously by their leaders; they may listen to them at the barazas but fail to act on their input. This leaves the

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community with the perception that their views are not important. Joseph, a local clergyman, explained that:

...the first thing is that they lack voice and they can attend public participation and when they speak they are asked to select two or three people to speak on their behalf...but those who are chosen do not follow up because each one of them has their own personal daily activities, so at the end of the day or the year, nothing happens to what they discussed.

Jane, a female CHV, says that:

Citizen participation is beneficial because they [the community] can understand themselves ...but they don't have a lot of power ...powers to act is what they do not have a lot of ...because they have been captured mostly in the village ...those powers have been taken over by the village elders and the Chief... Now, in the way that when they call for a meeting, they call for barazas...the Chief's baraza ...then they create a[place] ...then people can discuss in the open forums...they talk. You see, the more they talk, the more it becomes beneficial...it widens peoples' minds...a person is able to know their rights...they know that if I do this, maybe it is not a mistake.

Hezekiah also finds that there is strength in numbers because:

Voice to people requires that...we look at the number of people that live in a certain area ...how many are they? Because this is what will give them a voice ...not the kind of noise that they can make on the streets ...if you find that a certain area has many people ...that is the voice they have they have that will affect anything they get from the government.

The study participants expressed their lived experiences of viewing representation as an avenue of agency in their community. It is an often underutilised path to gain communal and individual agency. Joseph also stated:

...empowerment is very important and it is what is making the community lag behind ...if public participation was present there would have been empowerment...people would get...the youth, even women will get the information about access, like the women fund, the youth fund...but you find that we have very many young people here...there are those who have moved a bit higher like the youth in other areas in Buruburu and other areas who have accessed public participation.

They opined that if they elected their own leaders directly, especially the chairmen and chairladies, and the chief, they would select locals of integrity who understood their needs and had the local social networks to address them by accounting for local nuances. Although the Constitution of Kenya (2010) guarantees a 'new' bundle of rights- social, political, economic-the study participants expressed their views that politics of the day, the allocative



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function affects the availability of certain assistance. The views of Joseph and Alex, respectively are that:

...awareness...people should be made aware; it should be explained to them. Public participation should be explained to them without any representation or any other people interfering in the process...”

“...their rights are still low, they don’t have it really in their hands...for many of them, their understanding is still low...they don’t understand and that is why sometimes we do (sic) wrong elections.

Miriam explains the importance of their participation as citizens:

...like the meetings they usually call us for in Starehe, when we go there, they don’t know where each one of us is coming from ...once they open the meeting, it is up to us to open up and speak about the places where we have come from, so that they will know that people from a certain place have attended the meeting...so it is necessary that we attend and represent...and there are no restrictions...we are all free to speak”

Associations and relationships between gatekeepers who are the chairmen, chairladies, and chiefs are well-connected individuals who will affect the ability of ordinary citizens to get assistance they need. It may require that they liaise with certain individuals to access the assistance they need. This introduces issues of corruption, bribery and nepotism.

Wycliffe explains that:

...these days , it looks like you need to bribe the chairman, then you bribe another one and then you go to the chief...you find that somebody can give up along the way”

“If people hear about an empowerment programme that is originating from the chief’s office, you just know that it is full of corruption ...in your mind you know it is corrupt ...you need to look for some money ...then I will get it ...I must have some money before I can access it.

Loss of public trust is a major lived experience for people living in informal settlements. There is also a high level of distrust for government officials which many of the study participants expressed their frustration with their service to the local community; Alex says that:

...you understand the chiefs don’t like doing it, they only do it when it comes up as a security matter, only when things become bad do they call for a meeting.

Together with other leaders, they have superficial reach and interaction with the locals. The study participants expressed the view that there are interior areas of the informal settlement that get little attention from their leaders; John who has lived in Mukuru Kayaba for over twenty-five years opines that:

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...the leaders just move on the main roads and claim that they have reached[out to] the locals but they have not gone into the interior to see...passing on the main roads is not the way to reach the local peoples...

This means that conditions in those areas are worse off than in other areas. There is also a perception of distrust in their welfare from their leaders. This was strongly expressed by female participants of the study who are CHVs as they spoke of the need for ARVs, cancer medication, contraception and the distribution of jobs to ‘outsiders’; Anne who is a CHVs in Mariguini village explains:

...even the way those ARVs [are distributed]...the foreigners said that they would not bring them, but when they came and had a meeting, that is when the medication started to flow again ...we saw that people were receiving help.

Rose, a local primary school teacher expresses the same frustration

...you can even get that it is a whole family that is getting access...a whole family and the other members of the community are just left wondering.

Christopher, a university student who has had to defer his studies says that:

...the issuing of bursaries here in Nairobi South, when you go to the chief’s (office) the same people you find denying your application will serve in that office for years and that person lives with you here ...and then one day you have a disagreement ...a small one ...and then you try and go for a bursary there ...do you think that guy will give it to you? He will say ‘that woman was rude to me.

Information which is necessary for communal and personal decision making, is also at a high premium. It is only dispensed to a few select people. It may trickle down to a few members of the community, increasing levels of exclusion and distrust; Rose adds that:

...you need to get someone who already knows what people need in the area. You cannot bring an activity that will not do well at that time...you go around and speak to the women...and because you live in that community you are amongst them and you would know what they need.

Elsa explains that accessing information on projects:

...it is difficult...that one about the accessing of certain projects in the village is hard because the people you link up with ...there must be confrontation...before you can get what you want.

There is also a feeling of entitlement to compensation expressed by the study participants. They opine that the locals should be compensated for attending citizen/public participation barazas. This is because many of them are day labourers who wish to be paid for the time list attending barazas. This is made worse by the fact that they perceive no tangible benefits from citizen/public participation. They opine that there are no visible outcomes of positive impact that enable people to value it. They perceive that external agendas and

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solutions are implemented which makes it difficult for the community to embrace the inputs and outputs of citizen/public participation as driven by their leaders; Joseph says:

...but representation is where one stands in the gap to represent in [public] participation, they can bring water here , construct drainage and maybe I didn't want it or you do certain things that I do not want ...that other people do not want , but when we come together in public participation[we] own the issue and we can own the project.

Janet, who runs a small food business says:

...If you look for a representative and you find them, they want a bribe...and maybe that bribe , you do not have it, so that means you have to stay where you are ...for example, like me...I have a husband but he is jobless...he does not have a job at all ...so it means that I have no choice but to struggle and sell my githeri[common Kenyan meal that is a mixture of maize and beans]...to pay rent and other needs...and you know that the business is not adequate to meet our needs of the house and as well as the needs for food. I have to also leave and go to look for casual employment ...maybe doing laundry ...so that it can assist me a little bit.”

Christine, a student also adds on that:

...someone like the MCA[Member of the County Assembly], you can tell them something here and then when they move ahead, they have forgotten and their focus has moved on to other things ...and then a person like the Chief... he judges the person who is sending the message ...let's say that you are just an ordinary person, he will tell that person that he will act on it so that he/she will go[away] but he/she will not act on it.

Jane, who is a CHV and is part of the team that runs the local women's water project says:

...you know participation of the local people living in the village , they feel like if they are gathered in one place for a participating exercise , they know that there is no stipend there... so most of the time, they do not want because... most of the people live here take part in casual employment especially odd jobs ...now many of them are thinking about what they would gain from going for that exercise ...and waste their time and they could be sitting at their kiosk and selling their wares (vegetables) to at least one person and they get at least Ksh 5 (kobile-slang)to buy paraffin to use in the evening, to buy something like soap to wash the children's clothes...it is not easy.

Accessibility also affects the availability of public goods. For instance, the provision of water through the use of the water token is difficult because of the initial costs of setting up the service. This acts as a barrier to its uptake by most of the people. Also the study participants lamented about the long distances that would not allow them to access this cheaper water point. Instead, many rely on water points closer to them that sell water at

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higher prices. The costs of the project affect its expansion to other areas of the settlement. As expressed by the study participant, Hannah, the interests of various gatekeepers who may be owners of similar businesses have a role in stifling the expansion of the business: "...honestly, those offices do not help ordinary citizens unless you have something to offer..."

Jane adds that:

...on your own you see an opportunity and you feel it is the right place for you to set up a kiosk to sell vegetables so that you can get your daily basic needs...that kiosk will be pulled down ...unless you enquire from the village elders...and the Chiefs and then maybe they will give you the permission, they give you that portion...if they give you that portion, there is a way that you have to pay for it ...there is something small that you have to pay so that you can be allocated that space...so empowerment here in the village is usually difficult because most of the time it is the Chief and the village elders that take control.

As Christopher reiterates,

...there is nowhere that you will go and find a straightforward process that will assist you and then it can also assist the community ...all of them are corrupt..."

Esther explains that:

"...these government bursaries ...the chiefs and the chairmen will take them ...the one who really needs them will not get them unless you go to the chief and give a bribe , then you can get it ...or to the chairman who will come and offer a bribe on your behalf so that you can get it.

Citizenship and public trust go hand in hand as the study shows. In subaltern communities, the concept of citizenship is greatly affected by the realities on the ground. It is the effect on citizenship that leads to a loss of public trust. The idea of citizenship presupposes all of the citizens of a country experience their citizenship in the same way. However, this study shows that there is a differentiation in the perceptions and practices of citizenship. The exclusion of place, policy and lived experiences means that subaltern communities are affected in ways that their power of their citizenship is diminished by their circumstances. All the study participants expressed their dissatisfaction with their citizenship that is not in line with the letter and the spirit of the new dispensation of the constitution. The extended bundle of rights as articulated in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) seeks to ensure Kenyans from all walks of live a life to the highest standards possible. However, socioeconomic and political realities make it difficult to experience this ideal.

The meanings and practices of citizenship illustrate the problematic relationship between the essence of citizenship and the practise of citizen participation. This is consistent with literature from scholars such as Mamdani (1996) who articulate the dual nature of the African as both a citizen and a subject. This dichotomy is evident in Lister (2003) who describes a citizenship as both a status and a practice. Cornwall (2003) highlights the problems with the practice and meanings of citizenship especially for vulnerable communities such as the informal settlement communities. Citizenship as a theme are conceptualised because of the nature of the emergence of the meanings and practices of

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citizenship that by their very nature tied to the emergence of the nation-state which is a Western concept. This means that most of the people living in the informal settlements have little attachment to the practice of citizenship because it has yet to find full expression in their lived experiences as a marginalised community. Although citizenship has connotations of exclusion and inclusion; bound in the definitions, the struggle for recognition of marginalised societies is affected by how people experience these issues which are at the periphery of most governmental concerns.

Loss of public trust is depicted in the literature on the spatial dimensions of citizen participation (Lefebvre, 1991; Foucault, 1984) and the infiltration of the public sphere by government officials (Habermas, 1958). Communities lose trust in the administrators of the system and the system itself because it does not account for the needs of those it purports it was designed to assist. The findings of the research highlight the disillusionment of individuals and communities, with the officials, systems and processes that govern citizen participation. The spaces for citizen participation are affected by a lack of nuance and context of local communities to improve the adoption and effectiveness of policy changes and acceptance by communities. The loss of public trust as a theme is consistent with studies on participation by scholars such as Lefebvre (1991) who opines that these ‘new’ spaces are a reflection of the old spaces. They may sometimes be used to limit the poor.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology study was to examine the lived of citizens in informal settlements as they utilise invites spaces for citizen participation for the social sustainability of their community. The study participants expressed their experiences by their own voices that there is difficulty in actualising all the bundle of rights due to them as citizens. This is because of their subordinate position in society in geographical, political, policy and social terms. This has affected the social sustainability of any developments in their settlement. A conflation of the citizen by policy and classifying the citizen without accounting for differences in policy articulation leads to formulation and implementation of poorly designed policies and programmes.

As the cities of the developing world continue to expand, slums are an inevitable feature. What is required of opinion shapers and policy makers is to address these settlements in the context in which they exist. They must take into account and include the opinions, ideas and agency of the people who live in these settlements. It is important to acknowledge the fact that these settlements are engines of innovation and growth. The lives of the local people have served as an avenue and motivation for the development of various products aimed at serving the needs of these communities. These ‘bottom of the pyramid’ communities serve as fountains of agency for the improvement of local livelihoods that are brought to bear on the rural poor as well.



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