Journal of Nusantara Studies 2019, Vol 4(1) 1-22
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin
ISSN 0127-9386 (Online)
http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol4iss1pp1-22

Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS)

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Jalaluddin Abdul Malek, *Sengboon Lim, & Zurinah Tahir

School of Social, Development and Environmental Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM, Bangi Selangor, Malaysia
*Corresponding author: limsengboonn@gmail.com

Received: 22 Nov 2018, Accepted: 05 May 2019

ABSTRACT

Citizen participation is a much contested and conflicting term, whereby the general consensus highlighted its value for a democratic society. However, various complex issues regarding its understanding and implementation from power holders and citizens alike are abundant in practice. Therefore, this paper aims to make sense of the issues of citizen participation from the perspective of different stakeholders, such as power holders and have-not citizens. Purposive sampling on 45 informants was utilized in this study to facilitate a qualitative research design using in-depth interviews. Meanwhile, open and axial coding allowed the formation of themes regarding the understanding on the specific phenomenon of citizen participation in city programs conducted by the local authorities of the state of Selangor, Malaysia. The themes that surfaced as issues included the dependency on government resources, mismatch of interest, organized and collective citizen force, and life cycle approach and realistic volunteerism. This study contributed to the enrichment of knowledge on citizen participation issues, clarifying for citizens and power holders alike in fostering genuine participation that truly benefited all. Additionally, it underlined findings fundamental for further academic quantitative participation research.

Keywords: Citizens' dependency, conflicting needs, organized and collective opinion, power distribution, realistic volunteerism.

Cite as: Abdul Malek, J., Lim, S., & Tahir, Z. (2019). Understanding the issues of citizen participation. *Journal of Nusantara Studies, 4*(1), 1-22.
http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol4iss1pp1-22

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The topic of citizen participation has been championed and brought to public attention by various international associations. They include the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2001, 2010), United Cities and Local Governments [UCLG] (2016), World Bank (1996, 2014), European Union (EU) (Brande, 2017; Bruno, 2015), the International Association for Public Participation [IAP2] (2018), the Young Foundation (Davies & Simon, 2013; Davies, Simon, Patrick, & Norman, 2012), and the Case Foundation (Gibson, 2006). Similarly, United Nation (UN) has outlined a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Framework, whereby its 17 goals were adopted to ensure a partnership among stakeholders to resolve multi-dimensional issues and that 'no one is left behind' (European Union [EU], 2016, 2017). Meanwhile, the recently held 9th World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur has linked the topic of citizen participation with the New Urban Agenda during the discussion sessions (WUF9, 2018). The combination of rapid urbanization and deteriorating social and environmental issues being faced by various cities has led to their citizens being perceived as co-creators or partners, assisting the government in city management (United Cities and Local Governments [UCLG], 2016; World Bank, 2014). In the Malaysian context, Lee (2010, para. 9) has stated that "Involving citizens at the grassroots level is a key ingredient of good governance…only genuine stakeholder involvement can give the people what they want for their cities".

Despite immense organizational support, stakeholders encompassing the government and citizens are still plagued with difficulties in achieving genuine engagement. Therefore, this paper is specifically designed to inquire the issues faced by stakeholders in terms of citizen participation. Such question has also been instigated by empirical studies conducted by Arnstein (1969) and Mohammadi et al. (2018) in the United States of America (USA) and Iran, respectively. However, the exploration is rooted in the context of Malaysia in clarifying the phenomenon of citizen participation among city stakeholders, whether in theory or practice.

The next section outlines the definitions, characteristics and issues of the topic, and is followed by another section explaining the method of study. Then, an analysis and discussion on the data collected using in-depth interviews are detailed accordingly.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Definitions of Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is a largely controversial concept (Arnstein, 1969; Rosener, 1978; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Callahan, 2007; Mohammadi et al., 2018). This is due to the terminologies used which are related to the broader concept of democracy or power. In participation-related studies, various terms are used other than "citizen", such as "public", "community", or "civic". Meanwhile, terms of lesser popularity included "people" or "stakeholder". Similarly, the term "participation" is also interchangeably utilized with "engagement", "involvement", "empowerment", "partnership", "co-production", "co-create" and more. Thus, one can foresee that the understanding regarding the meaning of "citizen participation" varies among different scholars or groups of dissimilar interests.

Pateman (2003) has referred to citizen participation as a range of different actions by different people in decision-making under the umbrella of democracy. Citizens, in particular, are viewed as democratic participants who possess the rights in voting, input provision, and helping the government to define goals (Simonofski, Asensio, De Smedt, & Snoeck, 2017). Therefore, participation typically ensures that people work in the center, voice the local needs, and implement programs accordingly (Wilcox, 1994). Furthermore, World Bank (2014) has defined citizen engagement as a two-way interaction between citizens and governments or the private sector. It is within the various scopes of intervention, which encompass policy dialogue, programs, projects, and advisory services and analytics. Such interaction allocates the citizens a stake in decision-making processes with the objective of improving the development outcomes. Moreover, another seminal definition offered by Arnstein (1969) has highlighted citizen participation as a categorical term for the power of the citizens. It is the redistribution of power that allows the future deliberate inclusion of the have-not citizens, who are presently excluded from political and economic processes. A government holds the absolute power and is protected by laws, whereas citizens are merely prompted to "engage". Such scenario is primarily due to reasons like their interests being affected, which may potentially lead to deteriorated living quality (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008; Rosener, 1978; Vigoda, 2002;

White, 1996). Thus, this study explicitly states that participation is related to having a stake, power or interest in decision-making processes.

2.2 The Characteristics of Citizen Participation

The characteristics of citizen participation can be discussed in terms of the types and processes of participation that it entails. The types of participation refer to the extent or levels of involvement, whereby its classification differentiates the involvement approaches and distribution of power. The latter may occur concurrently without a clear initial or ending point. In Table 1, different authors have illustrated the levels of involvement, whereby patterns visibly indicate the level of informing and consulting as the basic constituent in the initiation of citizen's participatory interest. Furthermore, Cornwall (2008) has commented that information can be made available to everyone regardless of its actual reach. In contrast, consultation exercises can only reach a small proportion of the population and aim for representation rather than coverage. Going up the levels has revealed terms similar to each other, namely partnership, collaboration, or coproduction. Such level is the most preferred type of participation amongst all, and is heavily popularized by scholars (Davies et al., 2012; Elias & Alkadry, 2011; Holgersson & Karlsson, 2014), practitioners (Bason, 2013; Huggins, 2012) and organizations. In contrast, the highest level defined that parallels with having the majority representation in the decision-making board or a significant control of citizen's power is the elements of power delegation, active participation, empowerment, or social innovation. Thus, it can be summarized that there are four commonly agreeable levels, namely informing, consulting, partnership, and power delegation.

In case of the processes of participation, they refer to public involvement in programs beginning from the initial agenda setting and throughout until the end of the evaluation. According to Wilcox (1994), participation is a procedure in which people have to think of what they want, consider some options, and work through potential scenarios that should happen. Table 1 summarizes the processes into three, which are: 1) the early preparation decision-making process (i.e. decision-making, planning and designing); 2) the middle implementation process (i.e. managing and delivery); and 3) the final evaluation process (i.e. monitoring and evaluation). According to White (1996), the process of decision-making itself is the most concerning phase as it carries the impact in which citizens can influence the policy.

Table 1: Types and processes of citizen participation

Author(s)	Types of involvement	Processes of involvement
Arnstein (1969)	8 types in 3 levels, i.e. non-participation (manipulation, therapy); tokenism (informing, consulting, placation); and citizen power (partnership, delegated power, citizen control)	Mentioned power sharing, decision making, participate in meeting and voting, and negotiating
Wilcox (1994)	5 levels and stance (i.e. information, consultation, deciding together, acting together, and supporting)	4 phases (i.e. initiation, preparation, participation, and continuation)
Word Bank (2014)	4 levels (i.e. inform, consult, collaborate, and empower)	Involvement in decision-making, preparation, implementation and evaluation
OECD (2001)	3 trends (i.e. information, consultation, and active participation).	Evolves from a one-way relation, a two-way relation, to a relation based on partnership.
Fung (2006)	5 extents of authority and power (i.e. individual education, communicative influence, advise/ consult, co-govern, and direct authority)	6 modes of communication and decision (i.e. listen as spectator, express preferences, develop preferences, aggregate and bargain, deliberate and negotiate, and technical expertise)
Bovaird (2007)	Mentioned coproduction, co-planners, co-deliverers	Value chain of service (i.e. planning, design, commissioning, managing, delivering, monitoring, and evaluation activities)
White (1996)	4 'bottom-up' interests (i.e. inclusion, cost, leverage, and empowerment)	-
Capra (2014)	Information, consultation, partnership, control, and social innovation	-
Silverman, (2005)	5 continuum viz. inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower	-
Cohen & Uphoff (1980)	-	4 kinds (i.e. decision-making, implementation, benefits (or harmful consequences), and evaluation)

2.3 The Issues of Citizen Participation

Ideally, stakeholder involvement during the process is linked with improved outcomes for better decision making (Brody, 2003). However, Cornwall (2008) is of the opinion that involving everyone in the planning phase would be a logistical nightmare. The implementation

may involve particular kinds of 'beneficiaries' only, whereas monitoring takes time and may only require a dedicated few. This calls for caution as being involved in a process is not equivalent to having a voice and ensuring that all interests are fulfilled fairly (Cornwall, 2008). The voice of the citizens requires nurturing and empowerment by the power holders. This allows the gradual and small steps of involvement, which may one day allow them and the community to gain the influence and majority voice or seats in the decision-making boards. Such movement according to White (1996) will gradually reduce governmental resource dependency, while also benefiting the long term direction. Moreover, Wildavsky as cited by Forest (2013) has pointed out that it is achievable by cultivating more volunteers with altruistic spirit. However, it should be limited to a certain life cycle and realistic expectations should be made regarding volunteerism. This will prevent the creation of other social problems when one is involved in such works.

Other than that, the power relations is yet another issue where those who are in position typically display tendencies for personal interest and ignoring the have-not citizens (Arnstein, 1969). However, the spectrum of power as explained by Callahan's (2007) opinion states that it can be minimized by emphasizing the type of partnership interaction, and for both stakeholders to play the active roles of co-producers. Similarly, conflicting views and needs have also plagued the cause. Mohammadi et al. (2018) indicated that the general citizen wishes to participate directly in the decision making processes of their local authorities. This is due to such local level decisions that are capable of directly affecting their daily lives. However, the power holders allocated for these citizens are limited to fiscal participation as their opinions are homogenous, time is delayed, and larger expenses are consumed (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). Regardless, Boyte (2018) presents a common view of both, calling for a strong sense of care and community that is consistently good for building quality living environment. This view has held both stakeholders accountable.

In contrast, Irvin and Stansbury (2004) have opposed and underlined the high costs and minimal benefits for citizen participation for the have-not citizens and power holders, respectively. For citizen participants, the decision-making process is perceived as time-consuming. Manaf et al. (2016) have described it as dull, pointless if the decision is ignored, and generating bad policy decisions if it is heavily influenced by groups of opposing interests. Similarly, governments may find themselves disadvantaged by its time-consuming and costly elements, the potential for backfiring, increased citizen hostility towards them, and their loss of decision-making control. Additionally, it may also pose the possibilities of bad decisions

that are politically impossible to be ignored, and of less budgets for actual project implementation.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative design approach. Due to the complex nature of participation research, this particular approach gained fast and wide acceptance in the social sciences field (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Maguire, 1987). Such design generally allowed the explanation of words, emotions and reactions of the informants to be reported as is (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, previous studies revealed increasing popularity that the in-depth interview technique displayed in participation research specifically (Mohammadi et al., 2018; Oakley, 1991; Silverman, 2005). Using purposive sampling, the findings of this paper were drawn from 45 interviews carried out with the city stakeholders of the state of Selangor, Malaysia. The informants were divided into two groups, namely the power holders and have-not citizens (refer Table 2 below).

Table 2: Breakdowns of informants

Groups	Informants (abridgement)	Quantity
Power Holders	Local Authorities' Officers (LA)	14
	State, Federal Officers (O)	7
	Politicians, Councilors (PC)	2
Have-not Citizens	Residents (R)	10
	Non-Governmental Organizations (N)	2
	Academicians (A)	3
	Private Technology Sectors (P)	7
	Total	45

The first group encompassed the local authorities' officials, state government officials, federal government officials, councilors, and politicians. Meanwhile, the second group included residents, community leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), university lecturers, and businesses. These entities encapsulated the informants' group previously described as the city stakeholders in a participatory research (Arnstein, 1969; Mariana, 2008; Mohammadi et al., 2018). As each entity represented the voice of a specific group of people, this study benefited by focusing on individuals who had some knowledge of or were in contact

with city programs carried out by the local authorities. During the data collection stage, the issues of participation were investigated thoroughly. To ensure thorough data processing and analysis, this study followed the thematic analysis described by Kawulich and Holland (2012). Meanwhile, the final write up of the report was in consideration of the procedures suggested by Burnard (2004).

3.1 Qualitative Interview

This research utilized a semi-structured in-depth interview technique. The interview guide was developed to capture the scope and capacity for answering the research questions that were investigated (Morris, 2015). Due to the presence of two different groups of informants (i.e. power holders and citizens), the interview protocol varied accordingly (Mariana, 2008; Mohammadi et al., 2018). The main research question in this study was: what are the issues of citizen participation? It was dissected and clarified using several protocols designed to capture the informants' views and input accurately. An example of the protocols on citizen informants are as follows:

Table 3: Protocols of interview

No.	Item
1.	What is your perception on citizen participation?
2.	Why should you participate?
3.	How much power should be delegated to citizens?
4.	Who are normally the targeted participants?
5.	Who are the group of participants that pay attention to public matters?
6.	In what condition where citizens can gain more power or make change?
7.	What are the efforts of the government in encouraging participation?
8.	In what situation do you consider citizens are participating in the city's program?
9.	How deep should one participate?

The protocols were ensured to be easily understandable, open-ended in nature, and the use of jargon terminologies such as power delegation and co-production was avoided (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, they were verified by three key personnel with vast experience in the area, namely senior officers and qualitative academicians. Therefore, they served as a probing interview guide that encapsulated important topics while also allowing the interviewees a

certain scope to digress. This included their opinions, feelings, factual knowledge, experiences (i.e. behavior and sensory), attitudes, and expectations (Patton, 2015).

3.2 Data Analysis

Qualitative data obtained through interviews are often subjective and rich, while consisting of in-depth information and expressed in words (Morris, 2015). An analysis of these intricate materials required one to transcribe the interviews, read and reread them, and interpret meaningful open codes. Then, they should look for any similarity or differences, or plausible and spurious data, well as classify them into axial coding, namely the categories and themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Termed as thematic analysis, the process incorporated a constant comparative method that created a coding scheme. The emergent themes were then presented as the final and most important output to help researchers identify any relationship or patterns in the data. Furthermore, saturation issues were overcome by implementing Morris (2015) and Kawulich and Holland's (2012) suggestion to initiate the transcribing and transcript analyzing processes. Done once the first interview was conducted, such iterative reflexive process generally resulted in clearer code appearances. Code repetitiveness was indicative of data saturation for building themes and signaled for the cessation of the interview process at that point of time.

3.3 Trustworthiness of the Study

This study utilized the strategies of evidence corroboration through various manners. They included: 1) the triangulation of multiple data sources (i.e. researcher's lens); 2) prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field (i.e. participant's lens); and 3) having a peer review or debriefing of the data and research process (i.e. reader's lens). For the first strategy, data were collected through multiple methods of reviewing stakeholder literatures, carrying out interviews, and collecting audiovisual materials. Stakeholder literatures that were reviewed included academic research (for research organizations), news media (for citizens), and practitioner publications such as reports and meeting minutes (for businesses or governments) (Marrone & Hammerle, 2018). Meanwhile, the second strategy resulted in a six-month engagement with the local authority's programs and two-month attachment as an observer (i.e. the second author) with the Planning Department in the Sepang Municipal Council. These prolonged engagement enabled rapport building with the participants and gate keepers, learning the culture and context, and checking for misinformation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For the third strategy, the authors sought out for an external check on the data collection process and analysis results by a PhD researcher familiar with the participation phenomenon explored.

The reliability of the analyzed results was confirmed by employing two strategies. They were: 1) keeping detailed field notes (Silverman, 2013) with good-quality recording devices (i.e. Sony IC recorder ICD-UX560F), and 2) using the intercoder agreement strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For the purpose of upholding the reliability of transcribed texts and formation of codes and themes, this study followed the procedures suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Willems, Bergh, & Viaene (2017). They rendered all of the authors to have shared responsibilities in conducting intercoder agreement checks using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software packages of ATLAS.ti.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All 45 interview transcripts obtained were read and coded in the style of a thematic analysis with repeated discussions. The details regarding the number of informants are as displayed in Table 2. In terms of coding, a total of 702 codes, 15 categories and 4 themes were categorized accordingly, whereby the four themes emerged as the main issues faced in inquiring the meaning (making sense) of citizen participation. They were: dependency on government resources, mismatch of interest, organized and collective citizens' force, and life cycle approach and realistic volunteerism.

The first theme of long general public dependency on government resources was acknowledged as a social norm. It was described by the informants as a situation of 'government do for citizen' per the definition of citizen participation. This indicated that the government called and encouraged its citizens to participate in public matters with the top-down policy direction and lacking initiatives from the ground. The current social structure required for the citizens to pay taxes to their government. Thus, this resulted in their expectation for the power holder to 'serve' or act on behalf of them. This may include acts like maintaining and repairing public infrastructure (e.g. road and solid waste collection). It was not flawed in the short term context, but it led to long-term impacts. Such influences were due to limited government resources and the skewed public mindset towards high dependency on the administration. The conditions and circumstances of the city were subsequently hinged upon their reliance on their government's efforts. Such reliance may be associated with the blame game if issues popped up.

The second theme of mismatch of interest was a reference to the hidden conflict for most of the informants. This was due to their beliefs regarding citizen participation as an activity that benefited all parties. However, only local authorities emphasized on engaging citizens on the ground, but not the 'heart-feel' interest of citizens to participate in public matters. Therefore, participation was synonymous with attention and application gained for those who supported bottom-up approach of the governments. Meanwhile, citizens were self-centered and opted 'to involve when there is an alert button that hits them'. For example, the presence of dengue cases would instigate their participation and concern in dengue campaigns or the city's cleanliness *'gotong-royong'* programs. Similarly, the 'minimum engagement for me' mentality was yet another social norm for a majority of citizens. Thus, if the particular area was not affected by dengue fever, then residents of the location would not be interested in participating in the cleanliness campaign.

The third theme of organized and collective force of citizens was a reference to the unsuitability of solo action for individuals when they participated, appealed or engaged in city programs. Citizens and community members should be structured and registered instead under some kind of social-based organization (e.g. residential association). Most of the power holder informants perceived the voicing of opinions by single or very few number of residents as personal issues, indicating the potential for bias for others. Therefore, this rendered their chance to change the status quo to be very minimum due to the minority voice. In contrast, a structured approach of collective voices was further solidified by a show of their capability, expertise or professional backgrounds. This would be linked with a greater chance for status quo change.

Finally, the fourth theme described the acceptance of citizens' lifecycle to public engagement and upholding realistic expectations regarding volunteerism. The interviews indicated that most of the power holder informants hoped for full public participation. Meanwhile, only a few accepted that citizens were in possession of their personal, familial or career-related matters to be solved, preventing them from participating freely. Such expectations generally led to a disappointment due to unenthusiastic response of the residents in programs specifically planned for them. In contrast, the few accepting powerholders usually resulted in leniency, as in allowing residents to take part without much monitoring. In the following section, all of the above-mentioned issues would be discussed further in detail along with informant quotes.

4.1 Democracy, Power Relations, and Dependency on Government Resources

Answering the first question on the perception on citizen participation yielded several common terms. They included engagement, partnership, cooperation, togetherness, involvement, which were also linked with sub-theme like 'democracy, free will, have rights, power, benefit, representatives, decision making, and for common goods'.

Both the power holders and have-not citizen informants (i.e. LA2, LA4, P2 and N2) comprehended participation as the togetherness with citizens in all aspects of planning, implementation, enforcement and management of the city. Table 2 displays the abbreviations used for informants; for example, LA2 for the second local authority officer. Meanwhile, a few have-not citizens (i.e. P6, R10 and A1) mentioned that the act of participating was a democratic action. This opinion paralleled Simonofski et al. (2017) who positioned citizens as democratic participants. In fact, citizens were entitled to their own rights, whereby many informants highlighted their power to be involved in decision making via their elected representatives. Similarly, an informant of the private technology sector felt that it was acceptable that general citizens did not vote directly, as the democratic society functioned using a representative in citizen participation.

Another academician related the idea to liberal ideology, whereby "if you want to look more on the definitions of participation, it evolves around the expression of free will and how they benefit in terms of utility." Meanwhile, a resident and academician informants linked it to civilization conceptualization in which people decided to agree on certain norms that were gotten together and enforced for the common good. A local authority officer also added that it could be constituted under the condition of "ruler and being ruled", whereby ordinary citizens were those being ruled. They would require representatives to speak for them and seek for a common good from the authority, aptly termed as ruler. It was worth noting that from a private technology sector informant's opinion, citizen participation referred to citizen governance and required good democracy to make it work.

Next, the second question to be answered was regarding the reason behind informant participation, whereby an academician informant viewed it as an ethical philosophy. In the utilitarian ethics, participation was both beneficial to the people and allowed them to express their needs. Then, a resident informant mentioned that its purpose was rooted in building a stronger community around an individual and his neighborhood. A simple action of saying 'Hi' to neighbors itself was considered as a good start in forging a good relationship with other people. In fact, the ultimate aim of citizen participation was to benefit people, whether directly

or indirectly towards improving lives, helping other citizens, and meeting expectations. Besides, societal changes were encouraged with the help of technology, as higher public participation was correlated with more freedom and knowledge gained. This would consequently result in the higher success rate of city programs.

In contrast, a resident and private technology sector informants collectively mentioned that citizen participation was in support of the government. It was detailed by the higher amount of ground aid and the resulting stronger decisions made on ground. According to both power holders and have-not citizen informants, citizens should provide their input and experienced perspective in improving city programs and meeting the key performance indicator, which were crucial.

Furthermore, a federal officer noted the current view of participation that was equated with the government's efforts to empower, pull in, involve, or inform citizens regarding the steps they already took. In general, two academician informants were worried regarding the lack of citizen concern and dependency on the government, which would burden the administration in the long run. Similarly, one of them felt that in the future, the act of participation should not be led by the government. The effort should instead be sourced from the have-not citizens and private sectors. This paralleled White's (1996) suggestion to avoid creating citizen dependency in the long term and maintain participation sustainability.

The goal of making the citizens more independent should be allocated with more power for them to execute a decision. This led to the third question of asking the amount of power that should be delegated. Both power holders and have-not citizen informants mentioned that governmental public professionals should still hold more power and have a higher weightage due to them having more technical knowledge than the average. Meanwhile, a counselor informant suggested that delegating full power to the citizens was not the issue, but rather the act of balancing between the power holders and have-not citizens as the area to be focused on. Moreover, a local authority officer highlighted the issue of misuse of power. Some speculating parties might take advantage if the power to execute was simply delegated to the general public. A local authority officer informant (LA1) gave an example of pothole issues:

> *We need the public to take action in the pothole issue, but if we reward money to those who repair the potholes for example, then there might be certain "cari makan" people who takes that advantage, claim money reward from us. It is not practical, we still have to do it ourselves, but it may be slow.*

Therefore, no exact answer was currently present for this particular problem, but surely it would not culminate in full power delegation. Regardless, the idea of changing the spectrum of power as described by Callahan (2007) served as a good reference, with power being balanced via both stakeholders acting as co-producers.

4.2 Mismatch of Interest Among Participants and Power Holders

With regards to 'targeted participants', both the power holders and have-not citizen informants (i.e. LA7, R6, R8, R9, P4, and P6) defined it as a group of people or community that the authority had to accommodate for their common interest, rather than by doing things according to their own agenda (*"syok sendiri")*. This was evidently due to citizens being the center of every policy or program launched by the government, rendering them as the end user of the development, not the power holders. In fact, two resident informants foresaw that the decisions made by the government should be correlated to the citizens, per their important role as the beneficiary. Meanwhile, government was primarily the decision maker.

For example, a participatory observation made in Cyberjaya indicated that the city program by the Sepang Municipal Council advocating for a car-free day and supplemented by free breakfast and t-shirt was unable to attract the high-income community, students or foreigner groups. The mismatch was inevitable, thus requiring the local authority to revisit its programs to match the local interest and attract the crowds to the event. The aim of building a strong local community participation itself would assist in building the soul of a city in the long run (Boyte, 2018).

One might ponder the actual identity behind the group of participants that paid attention to public matters. Regarding this, both group of informants (i.e. LA13, PC2 and O7) highlighted that they would normally consisted of elderly people as they were retired, had more free time and higher interest in community matters. Young people and working adults were typically less involved compared to the elders, unless a specific program and its target group were tailored purposely for their demography, such as youth leadership camps or others. Furthermore, a state officer informant mentioned further that involved participants were mostly those with their own family, children, and old folks, whereby they had better and closer living environment. Another state officer informant profusely agreed, mentioning her higher involvement in city programs when undertaken together with her family rather compared to

her individual participation. Additionally, a private technology sector informant confirmed that single individuals, foreigners and students displayed a higher tendency to care less.

Nevertheless, all parties agreed regarding the importance of citizen participation. However, some informants (i.e. LA1, LA6, PC2, A2, O4, R10, and P6) posited that on ground, different and conflicting interest might develop between the power holders and have-not citizens. In terms of interest and decision making, a private technology sector informant expressed that it was not up to the authority to decide what is good for a community, as they themselves would know better regarding what was the best for them. Forcing their participation might end up with them rejecting such decision. The interviews indicated that in Malaysia, mismatch of interest occurred similar to cases highlighted by Cornwall (2008) and White (1996). It showed that the perception of participation was different between the power holders and the receiving end (citizens), and they were conflicted most of the time.

4.3 Organized and Collective Citizens' Force, and Efforts of Government in the Process of Participation

The participation process was typically initiated by the early decision making process, with a majority of the informants indicating the predominantly bottom-up state of current practice and the lack of need for autocracy. According to a politician informant, this particular stage required for the right problem to be defined and highlighting the importance for the government to elicit input from the citizens and private sector both. This was due to governmental perceptions that might not parallel to the real and actual issue that citizens faced. Therefore, properly handling of the private sector required them to ask and identify the target problem, following by getting them or the citizen to solve the issue. Solving a problem should only come second.

A government that successfully consulted their private sector and citizens both to define a problem indicated their efforts and openness to accept new ideas and allow more social innovation, according to a private sector informant. Furthermore, in answering the question of the condition that allowed citizens to gain more power or make changes, the have-not citizens group of informants (i.e. R3, R7, R10, P2, P3, P6 and P7) mentioned that a single citizen would hardly be capable of change. One individual generally had no power, was sometimes messy, and prone to bias. In contrast, organization entities and individuals were those that participated and represented voices and opinions, fight biased sentiments, and showing confidence for the power holders. They served as the evidence of their voice of the majority and their effort for the public interest, rather than personal gain. Thus, collective participants could be described

as an organized group of people, whereby participation worked the best under such collective opinion engagement.

Nevertheless, not all feedbacks would bring change. a resident informant felt that organized participants did have their chance to provide feedback and opinion, but everything depended on the power holders in the end. If the implementing agencies opted to absorb and apply citizens feedback, only then change would be possible. Furthermore, despite the nature of collective opinion, both the power holders and have-not citizens groups of informants (i.e. O9, C3, P2, and P7) remained cautious that a group or community might be going the wrong direction. This may be due to the lack of forward thinking and them accepting the power holders' final call. Therefore, it was inevitable for the participant's opinions to be contested despite its collectiveness, and for their direction to be questioned.

Thus, the so-called bottom-up practice was functional in the manner in which the power holders were tasked with making the final call. However, a heavy emphasis was placed upon the opinions and consultation obtained from affected individuals. This would ensure a final decision that benefited all parties. However, consulting residents might be difficult at times, requiring the government to use strategies and "buy in" from the local champions. They could opt for the smaller communities before the remaining and ensuring their comfort and security. This would generate the desired good result, as per a local authority officer informant. These efforts seemed possible, but they contrasted Irvin and Stansbury's (2004) opinion for government's high cost and low benefit conditions in case of non-ideal conditions for citizen participation. Regardless, this work believed that participation might be of low-cost and high-benefit by viewing the perspective in consideration of the long-term benefits gained. They encompassed the cultivation for economically and mentally independent residents, who were equipped with more skills and organized. This particular group of individuals could also pose as the structured forces that the future generations could benefit from.

4.4 Life Cycle Approach and Realistic Volunteerism

In answering the question of the conditions that individuals considered to participate, several conditions were outlined. The acts of participation included: (1) joining merely as users or attendants in the implementation stage of any program or services (i.e. LA1, LA6, LA10, O6, and A3); (2) joining as fiscal tax payers (i.e. LA11, and LA8); (3) using open data and producing something for social purposes (i.e. P6, O2, and O9); (4) providing inputs and opinions (i.e. A3, LA3, and LA14); and (5) partnership or co-management with the government

(i.e. O1, O8, P5, and LA7). These actions collectively satisfied the respective types of participation discussed in the literature review viz. informing, consulting, and partnership, excluding power delegation.

In this work, the higher level of delegated power was deemed to be the provider of 'soul' towards participation, which was agreed upon by an academician informant. The informant underlined the actual participation of citizens in decision making rather than just being a mere user. One who was uninvolved in the decision making process would render the impact of participation as very minimum. This would thus lead to easy manipulation or twisting by certain power holders or political parties. It would also blur the lines of authentic participation, as pointed out by White (1996).

Meanwhile, the informants were also questioned regarding their expectation on the extent to which one should participate, or what is the life cycle to public participation. Two differing views were subsequently elicited, whereby the first group felt that all residents should be involved actively and volunteered themselves (i.e. R3, R2, R5, and LA5). In contrast, the second group deemed it reasonable for some to be involved freely as one should understand that everyone has their own lives and problems within communities (i.e. P3, R1, P5, and P4). It was worth noting that flexible involvement by the citizens were typically linked with low response rate most of the time. However, they also agreed to always encourage and involve citizens using various methods and tools. They aimed to achieve a broader involvement either in the co-creation of services or consultation.

The second opinion was similar to the point argued by Wildavsky as cited by Forest (2013), where one should expect limited engagement from citizens over a limited period of time and on specific issues. It was applicable beyond their participation in elections and other formal political processes. Wildavsky also provided an example of excessive devotion to public participation that might concurrently create a personal social issue for others, which was irrational. Therefore, this work was of the opinion that it was illogical to demand citizen involvement at all times with regards to the life cycle of participation. Instead of asking them to volunteer without limit, they should accept and involve citizens in programs and areas of interest of their choice and suitability. One should always be realistic regarding the act of volunteerism, as it might be good for the cities but it may not be of the citizen's interest. Regardless, the power holders should pay attention towards the interest of certain populations and groups, and subsequently strategize and encourage them for volunteering in areas of their interest. This would aid in stretching the limits of public resources.

5.0 CONCLUSION

All parties involved viewed citizen participation as an activity that benefited all and empowered the have-not citizens, while also hindered by various grounded issues such as the dependency on government resources, mismatch of interest, organized and collective citizen force, and life cycle approach and realistic volunteerism. If the hurdles were ignored, they may be manipulated by politicians or utilized as a therapy tool to "steal" the citizen's trust by the power holders. Moreover, the public might consistently reject well-organized programs, become less interested in volunteerism, and retain their highly reliant mind-set upon the government. Therefore, this would result in a vicious cycle should both stakeholders continue to be disillusioned and retained their dependency-oriented mind-set in contrast to the concept of participation.

This paper successfully contributed on the grounded views of citizen participation of two opposing parties, namely the power holders and have-not citizens. It elucidated further information in comprehending the changing spectrum of power, mind-sets, and responsibilities of both parties. Furthermore, it paved the way in suggesting possible indicators of authentic participation, whereby power holders should have better policy directions in handling the dependency on government resources and interest mismatch issues. Similarly, the have-not citizens should also realize the importance of structuring themselves to ensure they carry meaningful voices and a higher possibility for real change. Moreover, both parties should accept the practice of realistic volunteerism and opt for flexible collaborations in sharing their respective powers towards building a better life for all.

This study primarily focused on city stakeholders that participated in the delivery of local authorities' city programs. It encompassed the mixture of civic, social, and community activities and participation (Baum et al., 2000). Therefore, it differed from political and civic activism type of participation, which could be explored further. Additionally, the matter of governmental will to delegate more power to citizens in cultivating less dependency on governmental resources is yet another topic with rife research potential.

REFERENCES

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, *35*(4), 216-224.

Bason, C. (2013). Engaging citizens in policy innovation: Benefiting public policy from the

design inputs of citizens and stakeholders as 'experts.' In Lindquist et al. (Ed.), *Putting citizens first: Engagement in policy and service delivery for the 21st century*. Canberra: ANU Press.

Baum, F. E., Bush, R. A., Modra, C. C., Murray, C. J., Cox, E. M., Alexander, K. M., & Potter, R. C. (2000). Epidemiology of participation: An australian community study. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, *54*(6), 414-423.

Bovaird, T. (2007). Beyond engagement and participation: User and community coproduction of public services. *Public Administration Review*, *67*(5), 846–860.

Boyte, H. C. (2018). How Americans can reweave our fraying social fabric. Retrieved from https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2018/11/how-americans-can-reweave-our-fraying-social-fabric/

Brande, L. V. D. (2017). *Reaching out to EU citizens: A new opportunity*. Luxembourg: European Union.

Brody, S. D. (2003). Measuring the effects of stakeholder participation on the quality of local plan based on the principles of collaborative ecosystem management. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, *22*(1), 407-419.

Bruno, E. (2015). *Co-deciding with citizens: Towards digital democracy at EU level*. Brussels: European Commission.

Burnard, P. (2004). Writing a qualitative research report. *Nurse Education Today*, *24*(1), 174-179.

Callahan, K. (2007). Citizen participation: Models and methods. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *30*(11), 1179-1196.

Capra, C. F. (2014). *The smart city and its citizens: Governance and citizen participation in Amsterdam Smart City*. Rotterdam: Erasmus University.

Cohen, J. & Uphoff, N. (1980). Participation's place in rural development: Seeking clarity through specificity. *World Development*, *8*(1), 213-235.

Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking "participation": Models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal*, *43*(3), 269-283.

Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Davies, A. & Simon, J. (2013). *The value and role of citizen engagement in social innovation*. Brussels: The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe (TEPSIE).

Davies, A., Simon, J., Patrick, R., & Norman, W. (2012). *Mapping citizen engagement in the process of social innovation*. Brussels: European Commission.

Elias, M. V. & Alkadry, M. G. (2011). Constructive conflict, participation, and shared governance. *Administration and Society*, *43*(8), 869-895.

European Union, EU. (2016). *Sustainable development in the European Union: A statistical glance from the viewpoint of the sustainable development goals*. Luxembour: European Union.

European Union, EU. (2017). *Sustainable development in the European Union: Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context*. Luxembourg: European Union.

Forest, P. G. (2013). "Citizens as analysts" redux: Revisiting Aaron Wildavsky on public participation. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, *9*(1), 1-13.

Fung, A. (2006). Varieties of participation in complex governance. *Public Administration Review*, *66*(S1), 66-75.

Fung, A. (2015). Putting the public back into governance: The challenges of citizen participation and its future. *Public Administration Review, 75*(4), 513-522.

Gibson, C. M. (2006). *Citizens at the center: A new approach to civic engagement*. New York: The Case Foundation.

Holgersson, J. & Karlsson, F. (2014). Public e-service development: Understanding citizens' conditions for participation. *Government Information Quarterly*, *31*(3), 396-410.

Huggins, M. (2012). Community visioning and engagement: Refreshing and sustaining implementation. *National Civic Review, 101*(3), 3-11.

International Association for Public Participation, IAP2. (2018). Advancing the practice of public participation. Retrieved from https://www.iap2.org/default.aspx%0AAdvancing

Irvin, R. A. & Stansbury, J. (2004). Citizen participation in decision making: Is it worth the effort? *Public Administration Review*, *64*(1), 55-65.

Kawulich, B. B. & Holland, L. (2012). Qualitative data analysis. In Wagner et al (Ed.), *Doing social research: A global context* (pp. 228-245). London: McGraw-Hill.

Kirby, S. & McKenna, K. (1989). *Experience, research, social change: Methods from the Margins*. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Lee, L. T. (2010, May 12). Get citizens to participate in urban governance. *The Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2010/05/12/get-citizens-to-participate-in-urban-governance/

Maguire, P. (1987). *Doing participatory research: A feminist approach*. Amherst: University

of Massachusetts.

Mariana, M. O. (2008). *Stakeholder participation in the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in Malaysia*. Serdang: Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Marrone, M., & Hammerle, M. (2018). Smart cities: A review and analysis of stakeholders' literature. *Business & Information Systems Engineering, 60*(3), 197-213.

Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mohammadi, S. H., Norazizan, S., & Nikkhah, H. A. (2018). Conflicting perceptions on participation between citizens and members of local government. *Quality & Quantity, 52*(4), 1761-1778.

Morris, A. (2015). *A practical introduction to in-depth interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Oakley, P. (1991). *Project with people: The practice of participation in rural development*. Geneva: International Labour Office, ILO.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD. (2001). *Citizens as partners: OECD handbook on information, consultation and public participation in policy-making*. (Marc Gramberger, Ed.) (Vol. 20). Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD. (2010). Transparency through consultation and communication. In *Better Regulation in Europe: Finland* (pp. 71-82). Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Pateman, C. (2003). Participation and democratic theory. In R. Dahl, I. Shapiro, & J. A. Cheibub (Eds.), *The democracy sourcebook* (pp. 40-47). Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rosener, J. B. (1978). Citizen participation: Can we measure its effectiveness? *Public Administration Review, 38*(5), 457-463.

Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Silverman, R. M. (2005). Caught in the middle: Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and the conflict between grassroots and instrumental forms of citizen participation. *Journal of the Community Development Society, 36*(2), 35-51.

Simonofski, A., Asensio, E. S., De Smedt, J., & Snoeck, M. (2017). Citizen participation in

smart cities: Evaluation framework proposal. *In Proceedings of IEEE 19th CBI, Thessaloniki, Greece, 24-17 July* (pp. 227-236). Washington DC: IEEE Computer Society.

United Cities and Local Governments, UCLG. (2016). *Executive summary of co-creating the urban future: the agenda of metropolises, cities and territories* (Vol. Gold IV). Barcelona: United Cities and Local Governments.

Vigoda, E. (2002). From responsiveness to collaboration: Governance, citizens, and the next generation of public administration. *Public Administration Review, 62*(5), 527-540.

White, S. C. (1996). Depoliticising development: The uses and abuses of participation. *Development in Practice*, *6*(1), 6-15.

Wilcox, D. (1994). *The guide to effiective participation*. Brighton: Delta Press.

Willems, J., Bergh, J. V., & Viaene, S. (2017). Smart city projects and citizen participation: The case of London. In R. Andeßner (Ed.), *Public sector management in a globalized world* (pp. 249-266). Berlin: Springer.

World Bank. (1996). *The World Bank participation sourcebook*. Washing DC: The World Bank.

World Bank. (2014). *Strategic framework for mainstreaming citizen engagement in World Bank Group operations*. Washingto DC: The World Bank.

WUF9. (2018). WUF9 program at a glance. Retrieved from http://wuf9.org/programme/