

A Reality Check of Stakeholder Engagement Practice in Urban Planning in the Harare Metropolitan Province

ENIAS CHIDAKWA¹

Abstract

Urban planning increasingly emphasises participatory approaches to ensure that development outcomes reflect community needs. This study examines stakeholder engagement in urban planning within the Harare Metropolitan, using a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and key-informant interviews. Quantitative data driven from a sample size of 205 and a population of 1 195, were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were assessed through thematic analysis. Findings indicate that stakeholder engagement remains limited, largely fragmented and constrained by governance challenges, inadequate communication, power imbalances and insufficient transparency. Stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the level of consultation, access to information and influence on planning decisions. The study recommends strengthening participatory frameworks, improving transparency, building institutional capacity and establishing inclusive planning platforms to enhance meaningful engagement.

Keywords: participatory approach, community, Harare, transparency, inclusive planning, capacity, policy

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Already, over half of the world's population is living in urban areas and this share will continue to rise in the upcoming decades.

¹ Department of Administration, Zvimba Rural District Council, Murombedzi, Zimbabwe; Department of Local Governance and Public Administration, Midlands State University, Gweru; Zimbabwe, <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5138-351X>

Housing provision problems, infrastructure development issues, environmental concerns, transportation systems and service delivery have become a problem due to the increased urbanisation rate (Teklemariam, 2022). In a more complex city, the planning process has developed from a technical task to one that needs to be coordinated among various actors (Healey, 1997). Stakeholder engagement has, therefore, become a key part of urban governance because of its ability to contribute aspects of knowledge, resources and perspectives that enhance urban planning outcomes (Bryson, 2018; Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021).

It is a common fact found from engaging urban citizens that that is one of the very basic elements of contemporary urban planning: stakeholder engagement. When Healey (1997) discusses collaborative planning, she has in mind processes that create a shared understanding among actors and enable consensus to be developed during decision-making. The same applies to decisions in the public sector, where Bryson (2018) says it buys in stakeholder credibility and action, with those who are impacted by the outcome given a chance to shape that decision. Empirical research in recent years has supported these claims. Collaborative engagement processes, for instance, have been shown to enhance trust, knowledge exchange and stakeholder buy-in for planning results in collaborative engagement processes (Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, participatory methods can enhance accountability and democratic governance by affording citizens opportunities to meaningfully engage in the decisions of urban development by establishing space and platforms for citizens to do so (Tappert *et al.*, 2024).

Stakeholder engagement is gaining increasingly greater significance as there are many broad trends towards more collaborative and networked approaches to urban management than more hierarchical governance arrangements (Innes and

Booher, 2004). Many of the issues and pressures faced by cities today are much larger than the capacity of any specific institution to address, such as the development and unsustainability of informal settlements and the failings of infrastructure networks, environmental pollution and adaptation to the impacts of climate change (Healey, 2010). These obstacles can be overcome only through collaboration between the governments, communities, non-governmental organisations and private sector actors. This has made the concept of co-production and participatory governance more central, when it comes to improving urban resilience and sustainability (Tappert *et al.*, 2024).

Participation is also a key focus in international development agendas on urban governance. Citizen participation is deemed as one of the main principles of effective city management and hence, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 calls for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities (Hewlett Packard Enterprise, 2022). According to research, participation builds trust among stakeholders which leads to better policy acceptance, improved effectiveness in implementation and increased social ownership of development initiatives (Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021). In addition, participatory processes allow for the incorporation of local knowledge and technical knowledge that results in more community-sensitive planning interventions (Liu *et al.*, 2020).

However, in many developing countries, it is difficult to create a meaningful dialogue with stakeholders at the local level, even in the face of these acknowledged advantages. Urban growth can put great strain on planning institutions, sometimes compromising their capacity to engage in inclusive participation processes in terms of financial resources, know-how and administrative capability (*ibid.*). Formerly, the engagement process is represented as consultation instead of collaboration,

significantly diminishing opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to decision making (Miraftab, 2009). While participatory mechanisms have grown in many cities globally, structural inequalities and institutional challenges often hinder the impact of such approaches (Tappert *et al.*, 2024).

In Africa, where urbanisation is one of the highest in the world, the problems of stakeholder engagement widen even further. The population has grown at an accelerated rate, resulting in growing demand for housing, transportation facilities, urban water, sanitation and environmental management systems. Local governments meanwhile are frequently constrained in both resources and opportunity to reach out to others and must contend with institutional barriers. Participatory planning has been encouraged as a strategy for enhancing urban governance and optimising development results, but participatory processes are often disjointed and mal-coordinated (Miraftab, 2009). Teklemariam (2022) contends that political, institutional and socio-economic contexts can significantly affect the success of participatory planning as they affect the possibilities for participation and participation of the plans' products.

Zimbabwe manifests a lot of urban governance challenges that have been described in Africa as a whole; it resonates with these myriad concerns. Population growth, housing shortage, ageing infrastructure, environmental issues and growing needs for public services remain key challenges in urban centres. The planning methods that must be used to overcome these challenges must include a diversity of stakeholders' knowledge and experiences. Engaging stakeholders can increase community-specific ownership of the development process, communities' responsiveness and the opportunity for linking government institutions with citizens into joint action (Bryson, 2018). In addition, participatory planning may also enhance transparency and accountability by giving stakeholders plenty

of room to be part of the planning process in which decisions are taken about their communities (Healey, 2010).

Moreover, the Harare Metropolitan Province is Zimbabwe's main urban centre and economic hub, making its experience of stakeholder engagement in urban planning a timely and pertinent interest. The fast growth of urban settlements, informal settlements, traffic congestion, housing shortages, aging infrastructure, environmental degradation and overcrowding are some of the Metropolitan region's development problems. The challenges are multifaceted and can entail various stakeholder groups with varying capacities, interests and priorities. Good stakeholder engagement can thus be a facilitator for coordination across planning institutional levels and benefit public trust and the city's development outcomes in achieving a more sustainable development (Healey, 2010; Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021).

From hands-on experience in urban planning practice, it is clear that challenges to stakeholder engagement are common, especially in urban planning. Planning information may also be limited which hinders stakeholders from having meaningful participation in decision-making processes (Liu *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, any limitations of institutional capacity, such as lack of financial resources and qualified staff, can negatively affect the quality and consistency of engagement activities (Bryson, 2018). Moreover, in particular, decentralised governance structures can lead to vague lines of authority or responsibility that dampen accountability and coordination between actors (Innes and Booher, 2004). These are occasionally complicated enough that they make it possible for consultation to happen, but contribute nothing to planning decisions, rendering participatory governance less effective (Miraftab, 2009).

With this backdrop, this study samples the nature, extent and effectiveness of the engagement of stakeholders in the process of urban planning in the Harare Metropolitan Province and its peri-urban rural outskirts. The study explores what happens now when people should be involved, and what issues need to be addressed at an institutional and operational level to encourage participation, and how are outcomes of planning influenced by stakeholder participation. The study helps to shape the actual lived reality of participation in the Harare Metropolitan Province and makes recommendations to improve inclusive and effective planning processes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The participatory process of planning has gained prominence due to its impact on sustainability and legitimatisation and accountability in the planning outcomes. In recent literature, stakeholder engagement has been considered a cornerstone of current urban planning, fostering transparency, legitimacy, accountability and sustainability in planning outcomes through the inclusion of diverse stakeholders' perspectives in planning decision-making process (Healey, 2010; Bryson, 2018; Bjrgen *et al.*, 2021). International agendas such as SDG 11 have called for inclusive, sustainable and resilient cities through participatory urban planning process (Teklemariam, 2022). Despite the push for participatory governance, in developing countries, lack of information, lack of institutional capacity, lack of information sharing and limited power of stakeholders in the planning decision-making, have been highlighted as barriers to stakeholders' participation in planning (Liu *et al.*, 2020; Tappert *et al.*, 2024). Rapid population growth, the problem of informal settlement growth, deteriorating infrastructure, shortage of service delivery, environmental problems and low participation continue to pose challenges for urban planning in Zimbabwe, especially in the Harare Metropolitan Province and its rural surrounds. However, urban planning processes remain

largely centralised and citizens continue to be under-represented.

This means that, whilst planning with 'all stakeholders' is a desired goal, there is a mismatch with how those stakeholders are involving each other in planning actions which reduces the effectiveness, uptake and actuality of planning actions. Despite the growing focus of planning policy and practice on stakeholder engagement, there is little empirical evidence on how much, how well and how effectively stakeholders are engaged in the Harare Metropolitan Province and what stakeholders' experiences are, what the barriers to participation are, what institutional influences exist and how this could be improved. Planning authorities and planners have limited knowledge to underpin evidence-based processes in strengthening participatory governance. Thus, the study aims at examining the nature, extent and effectiveness of stakeholder participation in city planning in the the Harare Metropolitan Province and its surrounding rural councils; identify the factors that constrain or facilitate stakeholder participation; and propose inclusive and effective measures towards strengthening urban planning .

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

THE STAKEHOLDER THEORY

Freeman's Stakeholder Theory (1984) offers a theoretical foundation in the understanding of different stakeholders who can be found within urban planning processes, such as the Harare Metropolitan and surrounding district local authorities. In its essence, the Stakeholder Theory recognises the need for an inclusive and open engagement of a wide range of stakeholders who have an interest in urban planning processes. In practice, it helps understand why inclusiveness and representation matter in urban planning processes. Empirical

research conducted in urban settings shows that inclusiveness improves innovation, helps define the problems at hand and increases the legitimacy of urban planning processes. On the other hand, this theoretical framework helps to understand difficult truths such as the elitist nature of urban governance and inequality in the inclusion of various stakeholders into decision-making processes. However, research regarding the situation in Harare shows an inadequate and unevenly distributed stakeholder involvement, especially due to the absence of participation of such key stakeholders as informal traders, youth and marginalised populations, resulting in decisions being made by those in power for their own interests, without considering common needs (Ward, 2001; Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021; Sibanda and Lues, 2021; Ruhangisa, 2026). In addition, the process is hindered by political intervention, leading to a dominance of tokenistic or co-optive dynamics and thereby making it impossible for stakeholders' voices to be effectively heard. Analysis of the identified phenomenon using the Stakeholder Theory allows revealing the mechanisms determining both participants of urban planning and distribution of its outcomes (Khazaei *et al.*, 2015; Bandauko and Arku, 2025; Fu *et al.*, 2025; Bandauko and Asante, 2026).

The application of the Stakeholder Theory does not only help to identify all the possible stakeholders, but what is important, it makes it possible to explain the differences between their level of involvement in the process. It becomes easier to understand why some particular social groups tend to dominate urban planning discourse and others, including informal traders, youth, etc., continue to be marginalised despite having vested interests in urban futures. In this connection, it is possible to see how important it is for the process of engagement design to focus on overcoming existing power imbalances and obstacles. Comparative analysis of participatory urban planning demonstrates that inclusive measures are crucial for achieving

sustainable urban development, such as multi-sectoral engagement and empowerment. In the case of the exclusion of informal traders in Harare, it is important to admit the involvement of political interests aimed at dominating urban areas. Besides, the marginalisation of youth violates the principles of engagement processes recommended by modern theories of stakeholder engagement, particularly those stressing the importance of involving stakeholders of the future. Thus, the application of the Stakeholder Theory explains why the stakeholder engagement process in Harare is partial and political since it sheds light on the degree to which urban planning processes can be considered participatory or otherwise. This theoretical justification corresponds to the purpose of the study which seeks to determine whether there is enough consideration of different interests and participation in urban planning in Harare Metropolitan (Khazaei *et al.*, 2015; Bjørger *et al.*, 2021; Bandaiko and Arku, 2025).

THE COLLABORATIVE PLANNING THEORY

The Collaborative Planning Theory, proposed by Healey (1997), is a useful theoretical approach that can be used to evaluate stakeholder involvement in the process of urban planning in the context of the Harare Metropolitan and district local authorities. The main focus of this theory is communication and dialogue between various stakeholders and their participation in processes of negotiations of their interests and reaching of agreement through this means of discussion. As stated by Healey (*ibid.*), planning is an interactive and cyclic activity based on joint learning and mutual understanding, resulting in collaborative decision-making and implementing of the plans. Involvement in the process and feedback are considered the main characteristics of the theory under consideration. It allows stakeholders to influence the planning process in a genuine way, not a merely symbolic one. It is necessary to underline that communication is essential in this case, as it allows

stakeholders to be involved in discussions of policies (Liu *et al.*, 2020; Sharp *et al.*, 2022; Tappert *et al.*, 2024). Regarding the urban planning processes within the City of Harare, there are many instances in which the concepts behind the Collaborative Planning Theory show the weaknesses in the actual planning process of the area. For example, the presence of poor communication channels prevents the existence of continuous dialogue and hinders stakeholders' ability to engage effectively. Additionally, there is a lack of feedback systems which prevents more serious consultation from taking place in an effective manner. Indeed, the phenomenon of tokenistic consultation is very common when talking about the Harare Metropolitan and it reflects the problem discussed within other scholarly papers focused on the topic of urban planning. Specifically, the research literature indicates that, especially in urban planning contexts, consultation tends to be tokenistic and stakeholder participation severely lacking (Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021; Fasawe *et al.*, 2024).

In this sense, the Collaborative Planning Theory provides a robust basis to critically analyse what happens regarding consultation and collaboration between stakeholders. In particular, the concept of the theory revolves around communication issues and feedback. Therefore, based on the above, the theory can help interpret whether stakeholders have been effectively involved in the planning processes and whether there is real dialogue and consensus creation. Unfortunately, empirical studies done in Harare have shown a prevalence of poor communication channels and the absence of systematic feedback procedures which would help stakeholders identify ways through which their contributions impact planning decisions. Such weaknesses do not only affect stakeholders' trust, but are also a sign of tokenism that characterises an authoritarian form of collaboration and decision-making process in the urban development sector (Margerum, 2002;

Khazaei *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the low level of stakeholder involvement goes against the principles of collaborative planning, in which sharing of power and negotiating interests play key roles. Such criticism is consistent with the literature on issues of persistent power imbalance and ideological challenges in the building of consensus in the urban environment (Goodspeed, 2016; Raynor *et al.*, 2017). Notwithstanding, the Collaborative Planning Theory can prove extremely useful in the evaluation and improvement of current planning practices in Harare, since it emphasises the importance of engaging in genuine deliberations and participatory learning process. In summary, the Collaborative Planning Theory can be applied as a conceptual and analytical framework for assessing the need to ensure continuous dialogues in the development of urban areas to achieve the necessary goals and objectives. Therefore, the chosen theoretical framework emphasises the necessity of developing planning processes that involve collaboration, transparency and responsiveness toward various interests of metropolitan stakeholders (Wray, 2011; Bondinuba *et al.*, 2025).

INSTITUTIONAL TRUST THEORY

The Institutional Trust Theory provides a comprehensive lens through which one can analyse stakeholder engagement within urban planning, focusing on the critical importance of trust between citizens and municipal institutions. The key dimensions of the theory include institutional credibility, transparency, accountability and legitimacy, all of which play an instrumental role in motivating stakeholders to engage actively within the planning process. According to the theory, institutional credibility indicates that citizens would be more willing to engage if they see the institution as being competent and credible, whereas transparency implies openness of the information provided, allowing stakeholders to feel included and confident within the process. The principle of accountability

entails the readiness of the institutions to offer justifications behind each decision to engender trust and legitimacy refers to the fact that institutions that are legitimate in the eyes of the public would prompt people to be more involved. With regard to the context of the Harare Metropolitan and adjacent districts, the theory is applicable to the study's results insofar as low levels of transparency and repeated trust deficits have been documented, undermining effective participation. At this point, political manipulation and governance barriers become another factor that negatively influences institutional trust and contributes to a decrease in stakeholders' engagement in the discussed planning process. It leads to the development of negative perceptions concerning local authorities among citizens (Bandaiko and Arku, 2024; Fu *et al.*, 2025; Ruhangisa, 2026). Empirical studies also validate significant relations between trust and participation, supporting the importance of trust as an influencing factor in participation of stakeholders in urban planning processes (Kyambade *et al.*, 2026). In other words, any form of governance that is not transparent and interfered with politically, tends to undermine trust and hinders collaborative planning efforts, leading to superficial engagement and reduced influence on the part of participants. This is how the Institutional Trust Theory summarises the interaction of institutions; attributes involved in effective participation and existing challenges in Harare Urban Governance (Pagliarin, 2018).

The application of the Institutional Trust Theory on the challenges facing the Harare Metropolitan demonstrates the existence of trust and transparency challenges that hinder urban planning activities. In light of evidence suggesting the existence of insufficient transparency structures and political manipulation by institutions, the key principle of this theory is highly relevant (Bandaiko and Arku, 2024; Ruhangisa, 2026). Thus, the scope for participation is restricted in terms of the

numbers of stakeholders involved and their ability to influence the decision-making process. Further, studies devoted to planning in similar urban settings demonstrate that accountability and legitimacy are crucial for gaining stakeholder support (Devlin and Coaffee, 2021; Hansen and Dahiya, 2025). These problems are indicative of the gap between what urban institutions are capable of doing and what is expected from them by diverse urban communities. In such conditions, the use of the theory becomes critical in helping researchers and practitioners understand the impact of trust on stakeholders' participation and provide guidelines to increase transparency, ensure accountability and avoid any political influences. The theory emphasises the importance of bringing about trust in institutions as a key aspect of building genuinely participatory and collaborative governance, participatory and governance models in urban planning in Harare if the whole planning process is to be changed from mostly symbolic consultations to active citizen engagement (Ray and Miller, 2017; Toukola and Ahola, 2022). In this way, a lens of the Institutional Trust Theory was developed and applied to local urban planning in question. This makes the theory a lens through which to assess and improve legitimacy and effectiveness of local urban planning governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the literature in existing studies. The key themes presented are stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in urban planning, communication, information sharing and transparency in urban planning and governance, power relations and institutional trust in urban planning.

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSIVENESS IN URBAN PLANNING

The notion of stakeholder participation in urban planning is rather multifaceted as it includes different levels and types of

engagement that go beyond mere information delivery to encompass all aspects of interaction, from the minimum of consulting to the maximum level of citizens controlling. It has evolved substantially from traditional top-down consultations to more inclusive and empowering frameworks that seek to engage diverse groups actively in decision-making processes (Martinez-Avila and Olander, 2024; Fu *et al.*, 2025). By distinguishing the terms from the etymology, one can see that participation is about stakeholders being involved in planning activities, consultation is about people giving their opinion but not necessarily having an impact, involvement is about closer engagement, collaboration is about working together to achieve collective goals and empowerment is about granting stakeholders decisions-making power (Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021; Maravilla and Pelmin, 2025). The emergence of participatory planning marked a shift towards democratic, citizen-centred approaches designed to democratise urban governance and enhance legitimacy through increased inclusiveness and transparency (Oregi *et al.*, 2025; Ruhangisa, 2026). These approaches take urban residents as holders of knowledge and active problem-solvers, leading to collaborative work and joint problem solving. However, in practice, stakeholder involvement is not always encountered as a coordinated occurrence and many planning processes are not truly meaningful.

In this regard, participatory urban planning focuses on the need for involving different stakeholders and engaging in collaborative planning efforts to enable democratic principles of planning. Participatory urban planning places special emphasis on the right of citizens to have an impact on urban decisions and highlights the role of multi-level governance (Almulhim, 2025; Kougias and Papadakaki, 2025). Citizen-centred smart city initiatives illustrate this trend, combining technological tools with participatory governance to enhance responsiveness and resilience (Toukola and Ahola, 2022; Oregi *et al.*, 2025).

Such approaches are based on principles of transparency, inclusiveness and equity. They involve stakeholders in all aspects of decision-making through utilising new digital technologies for consultation and for information exchange (Toukola and Ahola, 2022). Importantly, participatory planning accommodates the fluid nature of stakeholder engagement; from the initial consultees to co-creators of plans, thus evolving away from a one-way flow to that of joint creation (Fu *et al.*, 2025). Institutional obstacles such as bureaucratic paralysis, technology divide and institutional capacity continue to complicate participation.

Inclusiveness in urban planning refers to proactive inclusion of the varied forms of stakeholders, particularly the marginalised forms that are women, the youth, the informal economy workers and the elderly, in planning processes (Archer *et al.*, 2014; Ruhangisa, 2026). Research demonstrates that authentic inclusiveness increases planning legitimacy and enhances outcomes by incorporating a plurality of voices and experiences (Björger *et al.*, 2021; nMaravilla and Pelmin, 2025). However, representation of vulnerable groups often confronts systemic barriers, including socioeconomic exclusion, limited access to information and political marginalisation that curtail participation levels (Ruhangisa, 2026). There is also an emerging set of strategies that can improve inclusiveness that create connections between policy and grassroots, particularly through community-based adaptation, shared governance and digital empowerment - both Archer *et al.* (2014) and Maravila and Pelmin (2025) are examples of such strategies. Equally, informal economy actors play an important role in both carrying out and implementing inclusive participation, as their livelihoods and rights to space are often overlooked in the formal planning systems that thereby fosters urban inequalities. Participation can be threatened by the continued practice of elite capture, wherein participation is dominated by powerful

actors, who have little regard for the needs of ordinary citizens (Fu *et al.*, 2025; Ruhangisa, 2026). Lack of participation and tokenism erode the motivation of stakeholders and trust, since consultations are regarded as tokenistic exercises (Martinez-Avila and Olander, 2024; Kougias and Papadakaki, 2025). While lack of transparency, together with exclusion of other actors and political interference, sustain barriers of governance, particularly where the institutional legitimacy is lacking (Bjrgen *et al.*, 2021; Ruhangisa, 2026, these limitations cause reduced participation by informal traders, the vulnerable, thus reflecting the tokenism and elite dominance seen in planning processes (Martinez-Avila and Olander, 2024; Ruhangisa, 2026). There is need for institutional reforms that prioritise transparency, decentralised governance and multi-stakeholder collaboration to overcome these challenges and enhance the sustainability of planning and good governance (Maravilla and Pelmin, 2025; Ruhangisa, 2026).

COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION SHARING AND TRANSPARENCY IN URBAN PLANNING

Communication is foundational to stakeholder engagement in urban planning, serving as the conduit through which inclusive participation, dialogue and collaboration are fostered. Effective communication in planning processes ensures that stakeholders are not only informed, but also actively involved in decision-making, thereby building legitimacy and trust (Martinez-Avila and Olander, 2024). Models of stakeholder communication emphasise the need for multi-directional flows, incorporating transparent information exchange, feedback loops and mobilisation through participatory platforms (Bjrgen *et al.*, 2021; Alhassan, 2025). However, communication is a major constraint on effective engagement – for example, in the Harare Metropolitan, the planning meeting duos are not being well communicated and as a result, stakeholders cannot meaningfully engage in planning without knowing what to

expect and what was said. This echoes findings that communication deficits contribute to tokenistic participation rather than substantive influence (Fu *et al.*, 2025). Hence, achieving greater horizontal connectivity (not just information) to promote dialogue and responsiveness is critical to address systematic weaknesses in the participation process (BjØrgen *et al.*, 2021).

Information access is an essential element of the participation, and that information asymmetry poses an important constraint on an equitable stakeholder engagement. The right to timely, contextually relevant and understandable information underpins stakeholders' capacity to engage in urban planning thoughtfully and confidently (Martinez-Avila and Olander, 2024). Information is disseminated to stakeholders in various forms, including public notices and digital platforms which, however, do not provide equal access for the marginalised group(s). In Harare, like in other urban areas, restricted access to information on the budgets, project proposals and development plans have perpetuated institutional weakness and imbalance of power (Bergen *et al.*, 2021). The dissemination of public information through community fora, media and electronic channels can bring this gap to a minimum and foster better planning (Alhassan, 2025). The existence of a well-informed citizenry empowers them to participate, put forth demands and hold their local authorities accountable.

Transparency goes beyond providing information to a process where accountability and legitimacy are generated through clear processes. Transparency of a planning system manifests itself through the ability to disseminate to the stakeholders clear guidelines regarding the rules governing their participation and making information readily available to them through the presentation of financial and strategic documents and having mechanisms for responsiveness to their suggestions (BjØrgen *et*

al., 2021; Martinez-Avila and Olander, 2024). A lack of transparency can often be associated with a planning process that seems clandestine and which erodes trust among the citizens, making it unsustainable. The transparency deficit evident in Harare's urban governance structure through a lack of disclosure in their budgets, rationales behind decisions and limited feedback of stakeholder inputs into plans, indicates such an environment (Fu *et al.*, 2025). Effective feedback mechanisms can be regarded as critical for enhancing stakeholder continuous participation (Alhassan, 2025). Insofar as formal policy can effectively supplement lived participatory dynamics in urban planning, transparency frameworks must be strengthened.

Digital platforms and e-governance are new tools to address communication and transparency gaps and create more participation opportunities. Digital instruments extend the possibility of information sharing, dialogue and feedback beyond geographical and temporal boundaries—such as social media, web-based consultation windows and dedicated engagement apps—they create interactive 'spaces' for information sharing, dialogue and feedback (Toukola and Ahola, 2022). The digital participation can be implemented via case studies that show that it makes the lives of stakeholders happier, the projects more likely to succeed and can lead to project sustainability as digital participation can provide multiple modes of interactions for stakeholders into the project throughout the project's life cycle (*ibid.*). Despite their commitment, to counteract these inequalities, digital divides regarding access, digital literacy and digital inclusion need to be resolved (Fu *et al.*, 2025). Harare stakeholders have expressed a pronounced demand for digital engagement platforms as a means to overcome traditional communication bottlenecks and increase transparency (Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021). Harnessing e-governance tools while complementing them with offline

communication strategies is essential to cultivate broad-based, transparent and accountable stakeholder engagement in urban planning.

GOVERNANCE, POWER RELATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL TRUST IN URBAN PLANNING

Urban governance encompasses complex frameworks, processes and actors involved in managing cities and metropolitan regions, differentiating itself from traditional government by emphasising multi-actor participation and collaborative decision-making (Fung, 2015; Maravilla and Pelmin, 2025). Good urban governance entails principles such as transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, responsiveness and rule of law, aiming to foster participatory governance that empowers diverse stakeholders in planning and development (Samaratunge and Alam, 2021; Barbera *et al.*, 2025). Most of the cases, however, show that the government faces many similar problems to the Harare Metropolitan, such as low capability in capacities to govern, political manipulation and inefficiency among the bureaucrats, including weak stakeholder participation which may be attributed to low capability, administrative pressures and political dynamics in developing governments (Denhardt *et al.*, 2009; Ruhangisa 2026). Governance structures must set up participatory platforms for multi-stakeholder discussion and deliberation and also involve institutions to make sure openness and that decision-making power is shared (Maravilla and Pelmin, 2025). Participatory governance may not live up to its democratic ideals, where there is significant political tension and the elite may take advantage of this by capturing the process and exclusion of others (Fung, 2015).

Trust is an important factor for determining the level of participation and successful implementation of urban policies. It relates to citizens' perceptions of institutional honesty,

competence, transparency and fairness—elements essential for fostering engagement and compliance (Vento, 2024; Barbera *et al.*, 2025; Nyadzi and Morris, 2026). Empirical studies reveal strong correlations between institutional trust and participation levels, with trust deficits contributing significantly to disengagement and scepticism toward local authorities (Bazie and Diallo, 2025; Panday and Al-Maruf, 2025). Transparency of information, accountability measures and responsiveness among authorities will, however, instil public trust (Fung, 2015; Samaratunge and Alam, 2021). Governance quality and institutional legitimacy (Bazie and Diallo, 2025) are crucial determinant factors for trust development in a fragile or politically volatile context. This is an illustration of the need for institutions to build trust to make an effort to achieve meaningful engagement from its stakeholders or as evidenced in Harare's metropolitan governance institutions.

Power relations in the urban planning context influence decision-making by favouring specific stakeholders and leading to skewed participation in the planning process which gives the well-connected, elite advantage over other stakeholders (Kazanskaia, 2025; Maravilla and Pelmin, 2025). Politically mediated decisions influence planning processes and, ultimately, results as the latter are often subject to political machinations and partisan interests which favour particular groups over others, thus marginalising vulnerable ones (Denhardt *et al.*, 2009; Ruhangisa, 2026). Elite dominated planning processes negatively affect the legitimacy of plans due to the lack of transparency and exclusion of numerous groups from planning processes (Samaratunge and Alam, 2021; Kazanskaia, 2025). Procedural legitimacy is obtained through transparent decision-making processes and citizen engagement, which helps citizens to develop trust and willingness to participate in planning, but this can be undermined by politics

(Barbera *et al.*, 2025). As a result, bureaucratic red tape and citizen disempowerment occur, leading to exclusion perception. Political interference and manipulation constitute one of the major governance challenges affecting the outcomes of planning processes in many developing urban centres such as Harare and other districts within the region. Politicisation of planning processes results in uncertainty, partisanship and selective implementation, negatively affecting coherence of policies and inclusiveness of participatory platforms (Denhardt *et al.*, 2009; Ruhangisa, 2026). Such political dimensions undermine urban governance processes, thereby fostering both institutional deficits and distrust among stakeholders (Fung, 2015; Nyadzi and Morris, 2026). Strong relationships between trust and participation highlight the importance of accountability mechanisms and transparent governance practices to counteract exclusion and rebuild public confidence (Samaratunge and Alam, 2021; Vento, 2024). Successful participatory governance entails navigating political complexities while institutionalising systematic leadership, improving procedural fairness and empowering citizens meaningfully to influence urban development trajectories (Fung, 2015; Maravilla and Pelmin, 2025). The theoretical and empirical understanding gives an essential basis for evaluating stakeholder engagement realities that are experienced in the Harare Metropolitan and governance challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in pragmatism as its guiding research philosophy. Pragmatism supports methodological pluralism and allows the integration of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to address complex social phenomena. The study adopted a sequential explanatory design. The target population was drawn from relevant stakeholder groups associated with the study context (e.g., urban residents, planners, municipal officials, community leaders, private developers, civil society

representatives and service providers). The population was heterogeneous and reflected multiple categories of stakeholders to ensure comprehensive representation of perspectives. The stakeholders included government officials, ratepayers, local authority officials, councillors, land development agencies, ministers of state, planning consultants, analysts and academics involved in the planning decision-making space. The multi-stage sampling strategy was employed to ensure representatives and analytical rigor. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants proportionally from identified stakeholder strata. Stratification ensures representation across key groups. For the qualitative component, a purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Participants were selected based on their knowledge, influence, or direct involvement in the phenomenon under study.

Ethical clearance was obtained from all the relevant stakeholders. The study adhered to key ethical principles: *Informed consent* in which participants receive full disclosure of study objectives and voluntarily consent to participate. There were *confidentiality and non-maleficence* to avoid psychological, social, or professional harm. Everyone had the *right to withdraw* at any stage without penalty. Data were used strictly for academic purposes and stored in password-protected systems.

FINDINGS

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

OBJECTIVE 1

To examine the extent of stakeholder engagement in urban planning processes in the Harare Metropolitan.

Table 1: *Frequency of participation in urban planning activities* (Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Participation Level	Percentage (%)
Never	33.0
Rarely	26.0
Occasionally	22.0
Frequently	13.0
Very Frequently	6.0
Total	100

ANALYSIS

The results indicate limited stakeholder engagement in urban planning processes. A combined 59% of respondents reported never or rarely participating. Only 19% reported frequent or very frequent participation. This suggests that stakeholder engagement mechanisms in the Harare Metropolitan remain largely consultative rather than participatory, with low sustained involvement across planning cycles.

The results are in line with the literature and the theory suggesting that although participatory planning has become an integral part of the urban governance agenda in many developing countries, very few planning processes are truly participative and collaborative (Miraftab, 2009; Bjørgen *et al.*, 2021). In addition, many institutional and political factors can inhibit meaningful stakeholders’ participation in planning decision-making as described by Ruhangisa (2026).

Table 2: *Awareness of urban planning meetings* (Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Awareness Level	Percentage (%)
Not aware	38.0
Slightly aware	27.0
Moderately aware	21.0
Highly aware	14.0
Total	100

ANALYSIS

Approximately 65% of respondents reported being either not aware or only slightly aware of planning meetings. Limited awareness significantly constrains effective engagement and may reflect weaknesses in communication channels.

The finding resonates with the literature in the field of communicating and engaging stakeholders in urban planning. Martinez-Avila and Olander (2024) argue that access to timely and understandable information is a prerequisite for meaningful stakeholder engagement because it enables citizens to participate effectively in planning processes. Similarly, Alhassan (2025) notes that inadequate communication channels and poor dissemination of information often lead to low participation levels and limit opportunities for dialogue between planning authorities and stakeholders. Bjørgen *et al.* (2021) further emphasise that effective communication should go beyond merely informing stakeholders to creating interactive platforms that facilitate continuous engagement and feedback.

OBJECTIVE 2

To identify the factors influencing effective stakeholder participation in planning.

Table 3: *Factors influencing participation (multiple response)*
(Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Factor	Percentage (%)
Access to Information	72.0
Political Influence	63.0
Trust in Authorities	59.0
Availability of Platforms	52.0
Socio-economic Status	46.0
Time Constraints	43.0

ANALYSIS

Access to information emerged as the most significant factor (72%), followed by political influence (63%) and trust in authorities (59%).

This suggests that engagement effectiveness is strongly conditioned by governance quality and institutional transparency. Political dynamics appear to shape whose voices are prioritised in planning processes.

This finding supports Martinez-Avila and Olander (2024), who argue that access to timely and understandable information is fundamental for effective stakeholder participation. Similarly, Samaratunge and Alam (2021) observe that transparency and accountability are essential elements of good governance that influence citizens’ willingness to engage in planning processes. According to Ruhangisa (2026), it is the political interference that decides whose interests will be represented in urban governance, thus hindering inclusion.

Table 4: *Correlation between trust and participation* (Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Variable	Participation Score
Trust in Authorities	r = 0.61 (p < .01)

ANALYSIS

A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.61, p < .01$) indicates that higher levels of institutional trust are associated with increased stakeholder participation. This implies that improving governance credibility may directly enhance engagement levels. The presented result is aligned with the idea expressed by the Institutional Trust Theory that institutional trust significantly impacts citizen participation. Bazie (2025) and Panday *et al.* (2025) report that greater institutional trust is observed to promote citizen engagement in the governance process. Vento

(2024) also finds that trust, transparency and cooperation are reinforcing aspects of participatory governance.

OBJECTIVE 3

To assess stakeholders' perceptions of inclusiveness, transparency and communication in urban planning.

Table 5: *Perception of inclusiveness* (Authors' compilations, 2026)

Response	Percentage (%)
Very Inclusive	8.0
Inclusive	16.0
Neutral	25.0
Not Inclusive	32.0
Not Inclusive at all	19.0
Total	100

ANALYSIS

A majority (51%) perceive planning processes as not inclusive, while only 24% view them as inclusive or very inclusive. This indicates perceived marginalisation of certain stakeholder groups.

This result echoes that of Archer *et al.* (2014) that the "voiceless" (assuming the perspective of women and youth and informal sector workers) are ineligible in formal planning systems. The authors also identify a common feature in urban planning processes of developing countries: the limited extent to which they are disruptive towards inclusion, particularly when only the elite and politically connected actors are engaging in the process. Bjørgen *et al.* (2021) also stress the importance of inclusive participation to increase the legitimacy of planning and to improve the quality and outcomes of urban development.

Table 6: *Perception of transparency* (Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Response	Percentage (%)
High Transparency	12.0
Moderate Transparency	25.0
Low Transparency	36.0
Very Low Transparency	27.0
Total	100

ANALYSIS

Approximately 63% perceive transparency as low or very low. This reinforces earlier findings regarding limited awareness and information access.

The finding also correlates with the idea of making transparency a fundamental principle of good governance and its implicit impact on the trust and participation of the people developed by Samaratunge and Alam (2021). Martinez-Avila and Olander (2024) further argue that transparent planning systems should provide open access to planning information and establish clear feedback mechanisms. The lack of such characteristics has often caused a sense of exclusion and distrust among stakeholders.

Table 7: *Effectiveness of communication channels* (Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Communication Rating	Percentage (%)
Very Effective	9.0
Effective	18.0
Neutral	26.0
Ineffective	29.0
Very Ineffective	18.0
Total	100

ANALYSIS

Nearly 47% rate communication channels as ineffective. Weak communication systems likely contribute to low participation rates identified in Objective 1.

This result supports Alhassan (2025), who argues that ineffective communication undermines stakeholder engagement by restricting information flows and limiting opportunities for dialogue. Similarly, Bjørgen *et al.* (2021) stress the need to communicate both ways so that information is shared, there is feedback and decision-making can be done together. Poor communication means, for example, that there can be tokenistic participation rather than meaningful participation.

Objective 4

To explore challenges and opportunities for improving stakeholder engagement in the Harare Metropolitan.

Table 8: *Major challenges identified* (Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Challenge	Percentage (%)
Political Interference	67.0
Lack of Feedback Mechanisms	63.0
Limited Civic Education	59.0
Resource Constraints	55.0
Bureaucratic Delays	49.0

ANALYSIS

Political interference (67%) and lack of feedback mechanisms (63%) are the most significant barriers. This suggests engagement is constrained by governance and accountability weaknesses.

The results support findings of Denhardt *et al.* (2009), that internal difficulties in citizen involvement in the developing world include political interference and a lack of accountability

structures. Political dynamics also challenge participatory governance as they tend to dominate populist issues, according to Ruhangisa (2026). Moreover, Alhassan (2025) suggests that the ability to instil hope in participating stakeholders by creating a feedback mechanism is crucial for maintaining their trust and making it seem that participations are worthwhile.

Table 9: *Suggested opportunities for improvement* (Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Proposed Improvement	Percentage (%)
Digital Participation Platforms	70.0
Community Workshops	66.0
Legal Reforms	57.0
Strengthened Feedback Systems	63.0
Transparency Policies	59.0

ANALYSIS

Respondents strongly support digital platforms (70%) and community workshops (66%) as mechanisms to enhance participation. This reflects demand for structured and accessible engagement frameworks.

The findings are supported by Toukola and Ahola (2022), who demonstrate that digital participation tools enhance stakeholder engagement by facilitating continuous interaction, information sharing and feedback. Oregi *et al.* (2025) also observe that citizen-centred digital platforms improve inclusiveness and responsiveness in urban governance. Community workshops have also been shown to be an effective method of engaging stakeholders (Archer *et al.*, 2014).

INTEGRATION OF RESULTS

Across all four objectives, three overarching themes emerged:

- *Structural Weakness in Engagement Systems:* Participation remains largely consultative and procedural rather than collaborative.

- *Trust and Transparency Deficit:* Low institutional trust undermines participation willingness.
- *Demand for Reform and Innovation:* Stakeholders are willing to engage if provided with accessible, transparent and inclusive platforms.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS:

Data collection methods used were semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

OBJECTIVE 1

To examine the extent of stakeholder engagement in urban planning processes in the Harare Metropolitan.

Table 10: *Themes on extent of engagement* (Authors' compilations, 2026)

Theme	Sub-theme	Illustrative Quote
Limited Participation	Irregular consultation	"We only hear about meetings after decisions are already made." (P7)
Tokenistic Engagement	Symbolic consultation	"They invite us just to tick a box; our input doesn't change anything." (P14)
Unequal Participation	Elite dominance	"It is always the same influential people who are consulted." (P22)
Passive Information Sharing	One-way communication	"They inform us, but they do not engage us." (P35)

ANALYSIS

Most participants described engagement as irregular and symbolic, rather than participatory. Many emphasised that consultation often occurs after key decisions have already been made, indicating procedural limitations.

A recurring narrative highlighted that participation tends to favour the elite and politically connected individuals, reinforcing structural inequalities in planning processes. Overall, qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative evidence of low engagement frequency.

Findings from the study above are consistent with the findings from previous researches such as MirafTab (2009). The research noted that the practice of participation in developing nations is often tokenistic consultation but not true collaboration among stakeholders. The same sentiments were echoed by Ruhangisa (2026) who notes that political structures favour the elite, hence unequal participation and influence of citizens in decision-making processes. Findings from Bjørgen *et al.* (2021) indicate that stakeholder engagement must involve interactions during all stages of the process and not just consultations.

OBJECTIVE 2

To identify the factors influencing effective stakeholder participation in planning.

Table 11: *Themes on influencing factors* (Authors' compilations, 2026)

Theme	Sub-theme	Illustrative Quote
Access to Information	Poor dissemination	"We don't get information in time to prepare our views." (P11)
Trust in Authorities	Institutional credibility	"People have lost trust in the council. That's why they don't attend." (P29)
Political	Political	"Participation depends on your political alignment." (P41)
Political Dynamics	Political interference	"Participation depends on your political alignment." (P41)
Socio-economic Constraints	Financial/time limitations	"Many residents cannot afford transport to attend meetings." (P18)

ANALYSIS

Four dominant factors emerged:

- *Information asymmetry* - Late or unclear communication restricts meaningful engagement
- *Institutional trust deficits* - Perceived corruption or bias discourages participation.
- *Political interference* - Political affiliations reportedly shape influence and inclusion.
- *Socio-economic barriers* - Poverty and employment constraints limit attendance.

Participants emphasised that engagement effectiveness depends less on policy frameworks and more on governance culture and inclusiveness.

There are literature supporting these findings regarding participatory urban governance. Martinez-Avila and Olander (2024) argue that information asymmetry creates barriers to effective participation because stakeholders cannot contribute meaningfully without adequate access to planning information. Institutional trust deficits are also widely recognised as a major obstacle to participation (Bazie and Diallo (2025; Vento, 2024). Citizens are less willing to participate in governance due to the fear of being treated unfairly, lacking transparency and experiencing corruption issues. Another critical issue in terms of urban planning and governance is political interference which affects participation (Ruhangisa, 2026).

OBJECTIVE 3

To assess stakeholders' perceptions of inclusiveness, transparency and communication in urban planning.

Table 12: *Themes on inclusiveness and transparency* (Authors’ compilations, 2026)

Theme	Sub-theme	Illustrative Quote
Perceived Exclusion	Marginalised groups ignored	“Informal traders are rarely consulted.” (P5)
Low Transparency	Hidden decision-making	“Budgets are not openly shared with residents.” (P37)
Weak Feedback Mechanisms	No follow-up communication	“We never get feedback after submitting our concerns.” (P12)
Ineffective Communication Channels	Outdated methods	“Not everyone uses notice boards; we need digital platforms.” (P48)

ANALYSIS

The majority of participants perceived planning processes as insufficiently inclusive and inadequately transparent. Marginalised groups, particularly informal sector workers and the youth, were identified as under-represented. Transparency concerns centred on financial disclosure and decision-making rationales. Participants frequently expressed frustration over the absence of structured feedback mechanisms.

Communication was largely viewed as outdated and centralised, relying on physical notices rather than digital or community-based dissemination.

This finding is supported by Archer *et al.* (2014), who emphasise that inclusive planning requires deliberate efforts to engage marginalised groups and ensure equitable representation. Martinez-Avila and Olander (2024) argue that transparency involves open disclosure of planning information and feedback systems that demonstrate responsiveness to stakeholders. Furthermore, Toukola and Ahola (2022) note that digital communication platforms can overcome many limitations associated with traditional communication channels and enhance citizen participation in urban development projects.

OBJECTIVE 4

To explore challenges and opportunities for improving stakeholder engagement in Harare Metropolitan.

Table 13: *Themes on Challenges and Opportunities* (Authors' compilations, 2026)

Theme	Sub-theme	Illustrative Quote
Governance Barriers	Bureaucratic delays	"Everything takes too long due to red tape." (P33)
Political Interference	Power imbalance	"Decisions are influenced by politics, not public interest." (P44)
Capacity Gaps	Limited civic education	"Residents don't understand planning procedures." (P9)
Digital Opportunities	E-participation platforms	"Online platforms would allow more people to participate." (P52)
Community Empowerment	Participatory workshops	"Workshops in communities would help us understand and contribute better." (P21)

ANALYSIS

Participants identified governance inefficiencies and political interference as primary structural barriers. However, they also proposed constructive reforms:

- ☐ Adoption of digital engagement platforms
- ☐ Regular community workshops
- ☐ Civic education programs
- ☐ Institutionalised feedback systems

There was strong consensus that engagement can improve if processes become more decentralised and technologically inclusive.

These findings are in line with Fung (2015), who argues that effective participatory governance requires institutional reforms that enhance accountability, transparency and citizen empowerment. Toukola and Ahola (2022) further demonstrate that digital engagement platforms provide accessible and interactive opportunities for participation, while Archer *et al.* (2014) highlight community-based alternative and civic education as a way to support inclusive city governance. The results then indicate possible reforms which include decentralisation and technological inclusion as having the potential to enhance stakeholder participation in Harare Metropolitan.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholder engagement in urban planning within the Harare Metropolitan and surrounding district councils is present but insufficiently institutionalised, uneven and often symbolic. Both quantitative and qualitative findings confirm that stakeholders experience limited consultation, weak communication and minimal influence over final planning decisions. Structural constraints political interference, poor coordination, limited capacity and inadequate information sharing further undermine meaningful participation. Strengthening engagement is essential for enhancing transparency, improving planning outcomes and fostering inclusive urban development.

The study recommends that local authorities should strengthen legal and policy frameworks for participation by institutionalising mandatory stakeholder participation at all planning stages. To improve corporate governance, local authorities should enhance transparency and information dissemination by using digital platforms, community centres and public meetings to share planning information. Another consideration should be to build institutional capacity by training planning officials in participatory methods and provide

adequate resources for engagement. To improve stakeholder engagement, there is need to promote collaborative planning platforms by establishing multi-stakeholder fora involving communities, private sector and civil society. That should promote representation of youths, informal settlements, women's groups and people with disabilities. To reduce partisanship due to political interference, councils should promote professional planning processes guided by rationality and evidence. Councils should improve monitoring and evaluation of stakeholder engagement by developing measurable indicators to assess inclusiveness, transparency and quality of participation.

REFERENCES

- Almulhim, A. I. (2025). Building Urban Resilience through Smart City Planning: A Systematic Literature Review. *Smart Cities*, 8(1), 22. <https://doi.org/10.3390/smartcities8010022>
- Archer, D. *et al.* (2014). Moving towards Inclusive Urban Adaptation: Approaches to Integrating Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change at City and National Scale. *Climate and Development*, 6(4), 345-356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2014.918868>
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216-224.
- Bandauko, E. and Asante, L. A. (2026). 'Displace, Dump and Cage?': Contested Logics of Formalisation of Street Trading in Harare and Kumasi. *Habitat International*, 167, 103632. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2025.103632>
- Bandauko, E. and Arku, G. (2024). "They Want to Get Rid of Us by All Means": A Critical Analysis of Policy and Governance Responses and their Implications for Street Traders' Access to Urban Space in Harare, Zimbabwe. *Environment and Planning. C, Politics and Space*, 43(5), 917-936. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544241298414>

- Bandauko, E. and Arku, G. (2025). Negotiating Access to Contested Urban Spaces: Street Traders' Resistance Against Exclusionary Practices in Harare, Zimbabwe. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 43(5), 809-833. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758251322343>
- Barbera, C. *et al.* (2025). Governance and Accountability in Reshaping Public Services: Open Challenges and Wicked Problems of the 21st Century. *Public Administration*, 103(3), 677-692. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.70012>
- Bazie, P. and Diallo, M. A. (2025). State Legitimacy in Sahelian Countries: Exploring the Impact of Insecurity on Institutional Trust in Burkina Faso. *Cogent Economics and Amp; Finance*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2025.2524574>
- Bjørgen, A., Fossheim, K. and Macharis, C. (2021). How to Build Stakeholder Participation in Collaborative Urban Freight Planning. *Cities*, 112, 103149. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2021.103149>
- Alhassan, A. Y. (2025). Rethinking Participation in Urban Planning: Analytical and Practical Contributions of Social Network Analysis. *Frontiers of Urban and Rural Planning*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44243-024-00052-Z>
- Bondinuba, F. K. *et al.* (2025). Building Collaborative Advantage: Exploring Innovative Stakeholder Engagement Models for Construction Project Success. *International Journal of Construction Management*, 25(16), 1879-1891. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15623599.2025.2488922>
- Bryson, J. M. (2018). *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organisations* (5th Ed.). London: Wiley.
- Denhardt, J. *et al.* (2009). Barriers to Citizen Engagement in Developing Countries. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 32(14), 1268-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900690903344726>

- Devlin, C. and Coaffee, J. (2021). Planning and Technological Innovation: The Governance Challenges Faced by English Local Authorities in Adopting Planning Technologies. *International Journal of Urban Sciences*, 27(S1), 149-163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12265934.2021.1997632>
- Fasawe, O., Samuel Akinola, A. and Morenikefilani, O. (2024). Review of Stakeholder Engagement and Alignment Strategies in Large-Scale Operations Programs. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies*, 4(4), 1488-1503. <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049x.2024.4.4.5061>
- Fu, D., Chen, T. and Lang, W. (2025). Evolutionary Patterns and Mechanism Optimization of Public Participation in Community Regeneration Planning: A Case Study of Guangzhou. *Land*, 14(7), 1394. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land14071394>
- Fung, A. (2015). Putting the Public Back into Governance: The Challenges of Citizen Participation and its Future. *Public Administration Review*, 75(4), 513-522. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12361>
- Goodspeed, R. (2016). Digital Knowledge Technologies in Planning Practice: From Black Boxes to Media for Collaborative Inquiry. *Planning Theory and Practice*, 17(4), 577-600. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2016.1212996>
- Hansen, M. M. and Dahiya, B. (2025). Traffy Fondue: A Smart City Citizen Engagement. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frsc.2025.1491621>
- Healey, P. (1997). *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*. London: Macmillan.
- Healey, P. (2010). *Making Better Places: The Planning Project in The Twenty-First Century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Innes, J. E. and Booher, D. E. (2004). Reframing Public Participation: Strategies for the 21st Century. *Planning Theory and Practice*, 5(4), 419-436.

- Kazanskaia, A. N. (2025). Legitimacy and Policy Engagement of Nonprofit Organisations. *NEYA Global Journal of Non-Profit Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.64357/neya-gjnps-pblplcpwinfdsmk-07>
- Khazaei, A., Elliot, S. and Joppe, M. (2015). An Application of Stakeholder Theory to Advance Community Participation in tourism Planning: The Case for Engaging Immigrants as Fringe Stakeholders. *Journal of Sustainable tourism*, 23(7), 1049-1062. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2015.1042481>
- Kougias, C. and Papadakaki, M. (2025). Rethinking The ‘Smart City’: From Technology-Led Visions to Citizen-Centered Governance—Barriers and Pathways in Digital Urban Initiatives. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 48(5), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2025.2502116>
- Kyambade, M. *et al.* (2026). Understanding Stakeholder Engagement for Improved Sustainability Performance of Health and Sanitation Projects in Uganda: A Qualitative Inquiry. *International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijhcqa-12-2025-0211>
- LandaOregi, I. *et al.* (2025). Enhancing Citizen Participation in Citizen-Centered Smart Cities: Insights from Two European Case Studies. *Urban Science*, 9(5), 140. <https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci9050140>
- Liu, L. *et al.* (2020). System Building and Multistakeholder Involvement in Public Participatory Community Planning through both Collaborative- and Micro-Regeneration. *Sustainability*, 12(21), 8808. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12218808>
- Maravilla, V. and Pelmin, M. (2025). Shared Governance in Community-Oriented Tourist Destinations: An Exploratory Case Study. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(5). <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.101>

- Margerum, R. D. (2002). Collaborative Planning. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 21(3), 237-253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456x0202100302>
- Martinez-Avila, C. and Olander, S. (2024). Stakeholder Participation in the Implementation of Urban Property Development Projects. *Construction Management and Economics*, 42(10), 926-941. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01446193.2024.2361789>
- Miraftab, F. (2009). Insurgent Planning: Situating Radical Planning in the Global South. *Planning Theory*, 8(1), 32-50.
- Nyadzi, B. K. and Morris, J. C. (2026). E-Government and Public Trust in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review and Research Agenda. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 49(3), 178-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2025.2597453>
- Pagliarin, S. (2018). Linking Processes and Patterns: Spatial Planning, Governance and Urban Sprawl in the Barcelona and Milan Metropolitan Regions. *Urban Studies*, 55(16), 3650-3668. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017743668>
- Panday, P. K. and Al-Maruf, A.-. (2025). *Local Governance Transformation and Citizen Engagement in Bangladesh*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003628323>
- Ray, K. N. and Miller, E. (2017). Strengthening Stakeholder-Engaged Research and Research on Stakeholder Engagement. *Journal of Comparative Effectiveness Research*, 6(4), 375-389. <https://doi.org/10.2217/cer-2016-0096>
- Raynor, K. E., Doyon, A. and Beer, T. (2017). Collaborative Planning, Transitions Management and Design Thinking: Evaluating Three Participatory Approaches to Urban Planning. *Australian Planner*, 54(4), 215-224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07293682.2018.1477812>

- Ruhangisa, V. F. (2026). Politics of Urban Planning and Inclusive Development in Tanzania. *Pancasila International Journal of Applied Social Science*, 4(01), 75-95. <https://doi.org/10.59653/pancasila.v4i01.2026>
- Samaratunge, R. and Alam, Q. (2021). Accountability and Transparency in Emerging Countries: Governance, Democratic Currents and Change. *Public Administration and Development*, 41(4), 147-156. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1963>
- Sharp, D. et al. (2022). A Participatory Approach for Empowering Community Engagement in Data Governance: The Monash Net Zero Precinct. *Data and Policy*, 4, E4.
- Sibanda, M. M. and Lues, L. (2021). Public Participation Power Dynamics in Strategic Development Planning in a Metropolitan Municipality: Eastern Cape Province. *Journal of Local Government Research and Innovation*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.4102/jolgri.v2i0.44>
- Tappert, S. et al. (2024). Citizen Participation, Digital Agency and Urban Development. *Urban Planning*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.8448>
- Teklemariam, N. (2022). Sustainable Development Goals and Equity in Urban Planning: A Comparative Analysis of Chicago, São Paulo and Delhi. *Sustainability*, 14(20), 13355. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142013355>
- Toukola, S. and Ahola, T. (2022). Digital Tools for Stakeholder Participation in Urban Development Projects. *Project Leadership and Society*, 3, 100053. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.plas.2022.100053>
- Vento, I. (2024). Trust, Collaboration and Participation in Governance: A Nordic Perspective on Public Administrators' Perceptions of Citizen Involvement. *Public Administration Review*, 84(5), 870-887. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13833>

- Ward, D. (2001). Stakeholder Involvement in Transport Planning: Participation and Power. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 19(2), 119-130. <https://doi.org/10.3152/147154601781767131>
- Wray, M. (2011). Adopting and Implementing A Transactive Approach to Sustainable Tourism Planning: Translating Theory Into Practice. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(4-5), 605-627. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2011.566928>