Title

Community participation for urban services in Butajira Urban Center, Ethiopia: Assessing institutional features of community participation

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Abstract

The purpose of this article was to investigate the institutional features that foster the community to participate in urban services in Butajira Urban Center, Ethiopia. To achieve the research purpose, the researchers employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative techniques namely key informant interviews, document analysis, interviews, and focus groups to collect qualitative data were used. The study's findings revealed that in Butajira urban center, there were legal provisions concerning the community's right to participate in urban service provisions. Nevertheless, there was a significant disparity between legal provisions and their actual implementation. The organizational capacity of the Urban Center Government was insufficient to facilitate community participation in urban service provisions. As a result, this case study contended that in order to guide community participation, explicit regulations and rules must be established. Besides, this study contended that the urban center required intensive capacity development in order to fulfill its duties of promoting community participation. To focus on creating supportive institutional culture and favorable organizational structure, capacity development is required.

Key words

Butajira, community, Ethiopia, institution, participation, urban center, urban service

Key dates

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Introduction

The purpose of this article was to investigate the institutional features that foster the community to participate in urban services in Butajira Urban Center, Ethiopia. In this study, 'community participation' refers to the process by which urban center residents collectively or individually influence and engage in decision-making in urban service activities. The authors specifically address whether the urban center has favorable legal frameworks that encourage community participation, as well as the design of urban center organizational structure to accommodate the participation of the community. This article investigates community participation in urban services using a qualitative case study inquiry and provides critical information about the institutional features that encourage community participation. The paper is divided into six sections. The first section provides background for the study. In the second section, we use theories and concepts from the literature to construct variables and frameworks for analyzing the research. The methodology for this study is presented in the third section. The fourth section's central concern is to analyze the institutional features that promote community involvement in urban services by utilizing variables such as the availability of legal frameworks, and the design of the urban center organizational structure. Following that, the section makes some recommendations. The final section contains some concluding remarks.

Background

Urban services namely water supply, cobblestone (stones that are commonly used in street pavement) roads, and electricity are all important components of urban human welfare. However, many developing countries do not have the resources to offer these services. In such cases, governments frequently collaborate with other actors such as the community and their organizations, to offer urban services (Mandefro et al., 2012). Governments can frequently improve their capacity via close relationships with the community and their organizations, based primarily on mutually beneficial exchange (Bell et, al, 2007 cited in Hiwet & Trui, 2017). To this effect, by collaborating with the community, the government can accomplish more than it could if it worked alone. In spite of the fact that the participation of the community in Ethiopia has received increased attention since the Cotonou Agreement in 2000, institutional norms' implications have been overlooked (Gebre et al., 2014). As a result, in this paper, we examine community participation in the context of institutional features, with the goal of determining how the nature of institutional frameworks influences community participation in the delivery of urban services.

It has been argued that comprehending the immense contributions of community participation remains a challenge due to the strict legal frameworks that govern community activities (Yeshanew, 2012); the failure of the government to design specific legislation that guide community engagement; failure to institutionalize community engagement in development leaves the community disconnected from local government authorities (Shah & Baporikar, 2012); the failure of putting in place enabling internal legislation and the design of appropriate organizational structure arrangement (Flynn, 1993); and the government's commitment to creating a space for the community to have a role in development process decisions is often lacking (Kesby, 2005; Robbins & Barnwell, 2006). To this effect, the researchers argue in this article that the above problems influence community participation in urban service provisions. This article employs a qualitative case study inquiry to investigate community participation in urban services and provides critical information about the institutional features that encourage community participation.

Even if several studies on community participation for urban services have been done, an examination of the empirical literature reveals gaps in addressing the aforementioned difficulties. There is a scarcity of empirical studies that investigate community engagement in development in the literature. Development facilitators' roles and talents were not evaluated. In this context, the role of urban local government as a facilitator of participatory development has received little attention in the literature. They neglected to thoroughly analyze bureaucrats' attitudes toward community engagement in urban services and the suitability of administrative structure arrangements for community engagement. The participatory development literatures fail to examine the institution's role in community participation for development. As a result, the purpose of this research is to contribute to efforts to bridge the knowledge gap regarding institution's role in encouraging community engagement in development activities.

There have been few studies in Ethiopia that look into the institutional aspects of community participation. The above arguments about the institutional features of community participation in urban services, as well as the gaps in research on community participation in urban service provisions, prompted us to conduct this study. As a result, this article calls into question the viability of the administrative and institutional structures that enable community participation in urban services in Butajira urban center government.

Literature review

Institution's role for community participation

Institutions are commonly defined as any type of constraint devised by humans to influence human interactions (North, 1990). According to this definition, institutions permit, prohibit, or require specific types of action, namely social, political and economic actions, that are fundamental for enforcing and defining property rights, reducing transaction costs, and enhancing information flows. Nevertheless, this is not a widely accepted definition. In this definition, other institutional aspects were omitted, namely organizational entities, regulatory frameworks, and procedural devices (Williamson, 2000). Most recent studies define institutions broadly, connecting various institutional quality measures to development results from different disciplines and perspectives (Johannes, 2003). As per Johannes (2003), institutions comprised of unwritten codes of conduct and formal written rules that serve to supplement and support formal rules. Informal rules comprised of socially sanctioned norms of behavior namely taboos, customs, and traditions; and internally enforced standards of conduct. Constitutions, charters, laws, property rights, and statutes are all components of formal rules.

The debate over the institutional features of community participation in local governments and their effects on local service provision is becoming increasingly important around the world. Local government capacity is critical for the state's role in providing participatory local services. To facilitate and increase participatory local government, local governments must have legislative capability, conducive organizational structure arrangement, financial strength, and local autonomy (Gebre et al, 2014; Flynn, 1993). Local government's role and responsibility was never easy, but it did necessitate informed thinking about appropriate policies, legislations, frameworks, and regulations that would result the desired development outcomes. In Ethiopia, local government enjoys a direct and close relationship with the community, as well as an excess of its legislative framework on which to function and provide services to its community (Yeshanew, 2012). Momin and Brown (2002) indicated that government policies and laws can either hinder or encourage community activities, and the state can direct their activities, grant them to access to funds, tax them, and include, or exclude, them from government policies and projects (Momin & Brown, 2002, cited in Gebre et al, 2014). To put it another way, policies and laws shape and influence communities' capacity to participate in development.

Organization design, according to Kesby (2005); and Robbins and Barnwell (2006), is the construction and modification of an organization's structure in order to achieve the goals of the organizations. Both authors argue that changing or developing an organization's goals must begin with a goal that has a plan for how it will be achieved. According to the same authors, local government organizational structures should be appropriate and capable for encouraging community participation. They added that the organization structure should bring together various stakeholders; it should be founded on the tasks that must be carried out; and it should establish distinct authorities and duties.

Flynn (1993) revealed that if development activities and services are to be user-oriented, local government organizational structure must be designed in such a way that the service provision unit receives adequate support to do its job (Flynn, 1993, cited in Sibongile, 2007). From the perspective of the local government, such assistance includes putting in place enabling internal legislation and policies; the design of appropriate organizational structure arrangement; and allocating adequate financial resources to the unit.

Research methodology

The study's setting and urban service activities

Because of the following factors, urban center government in general, and Butajira urban center in particular, was purposefully chosen as the case for the study. The preference for urban over rural areas stems from the fact that urban areas are densely populated and need more advanced services and infrastructure than rural areas. Nevertheless, urban center government cannot provide all of the necessary infrastructure and services due to limited capacity. As a result, the infrastructure and service demand and supply gap has prompted the participation of urban residents in order to meet their needs. To this end, urban local governments are the unit's local government where the community engagement is mature enough to make meaningful research.

The Urban Center is populated by people with heterogeneous and diverse occupations and professions. Furthermore, various non-governmental and governmental actors involved in urban service activities can be found in Butajira urban center (Butajira Urban Center, 2019). These circumstances enable for an assessment of the institutional features that encourage community participation and its consequences as seen through the eyes of various residents of the Urban Center and Government. According to data from the SNNPR Urban Works and Development Bureau (UWDB), Butajira was chosen because it had the best practices for involving urban

residents in urban service activities in the SNNPR's urban centers (SNNPR UWDB, 2019). As a result, we were inspired to consider the institutional features that encourage community participation in urban services at Butajira in order to draw lessons that can be applied to other urban governments.

In this article, we made exploratory research in order to choose particular urban service activities that would enable for a more in-depth investigation of the institutional features of community engagement. In this study, the exploratory research was conducted via interviews with government officials as well as key informant interviews with Public Engagement Experts (PEEs) and heads of development committee. Hence, according to the results of exploratory research, we chose water service provisions and road construction provisions as the research's focal point. According to the findings of the exploratory research, the communities were heavily involved in the chosen urban service activities; the chosen urban service activities had a significant impact on the well-being of the community and made a strategic contribution to the urban center urban service provisions.

Research design, sampling size, and data collection instruments

The case study design was used in this research to produce rich and meaningful information/data using qualitative research methodology. According to Mouton and Prozesky (2001: 270), qualitative research "is a process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that investigates a social or human problem [such as poverty, unemployment, and economic growth]." On the positive use of this method of research Andoh (2012:133) claims that "using the qualitative approach allows for the gathering of rich, detailed data that leave the participants' perspective intact while at the same time providing a context to understand behavior". As a result, the "methodological paradigm" is particularly suited to such a study.

In comparison to quantitative research, in most cases the size of the sample for qualitative study is small. Qualitative research typically has a smaller sample size than quantitative research. A point of data saturation determines the size of the sample in qualitative study. When a researcher has exhausted his or her data sources, he or she no longer sees or hears new information. As the investigation continues, the number of respondents required usually becomes clear as new explanations, categories, or themes emerge from the data (Bless et al., 2006). To this effect, in the case study urban center, the researchers conducted four key informant interviews, two focus group discussions, and six interviews. The interviews, focus groups, and key

interviews took place in *Guragegna* and *Amharic* (the urban local languages), with respect for the participants' preferred language. Secondary data for this article were gathered from proclamations, journals, official documents, books, policies of government, and other sources.

Analysis of data and ethical issues

Thematic analysis was utilized in this research. This analysis had five stages. To begin with, the information/data was first prepared and organized for interpretation and analysis. Depending on the source of data, this stage involved typing up field notes; transcribing interviews and focus group findings; organizing and sorting data into different types. The purpose of this stage was to immerse yourself completely in the collected data. In order to identify fundamental issues from data, a thematic framework was formulated in the second phase. In the third stage, the information was coded. In this study, coding implied segmenting text data gathered during data collection, categorizing sentences, and labeling those categories with a term. Preparing thematic charts was the fourth stage and it enabled the whole pattern to be reviewed and explored across a collection of information/data. The fifth step was data interpretation and mapping that implied providing explanations; searching for associations; and emphasizing important characteristics.

In this research, several ethical considerations were taken into account, including permission from Addis Ababa university to conduct the research and Butajira urban center Administration's approval. As advocated by Khupe and Keane (2017), the researchers also followed urban local government cultural protocols namely observing designated days for meeting with urban communities and their heads (development committee head), as well as time frames, and important channels of communication. In accordance with the Ubuntu research values, no research participants were harmed, deceived, treated unfairly, or disrespected.

Results and discussions

Local and national enabling environments encourage and maintain community participation in urban service provisions. The institutional feature is critical in increasing community participation in urban service provisions. In the case of this article, institutional features include urban center legal frameworks designed to manage community engagement; and the design of urban center organizational structure.

Urban center legislative frameworks for community participation

The legislative framework in which communities operate determines their actual significance as forums for engagement (Yeshanew, 2012). Regulation, in particular, gives the foundation upon which communities are permitted as well as prohibited. Since communities operate under the laws of the government, they are subject to the regulations and rules enacted by government to govern their activities and to facilitate their engagement. Government policies and laws can either hinder or encourage community activities, and the state can direct their activities, grant them to access to funds, tax them, and include, or exclude, them from government policies and projects (Momin & Brown, 2002, cited in Gebre et al, 2014). Similarly, Gebre et al. (2014) demonstrated that appropriate legal provisions promote effective community engagement that benefits the local situation at hand. In this section, we will attempt to assess the existing legal frameworks that promote community participation.

The 1995 Constitution

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution, Proclamation No. 1/1995, made general provisions for community participation. The right to development is addressed in Article 43 (2) of the Constitution, which states that "Nationals and civic organizations have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community." Except for the general provision of the community to engage in development, the proclamation did not specify the constitutional mechanisms by which the community can engage in development.

Furthermore, the 1995 FDRE Constitution, Article 43 (4), established a general provision stating that "Nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting the community." Based on the provisions of this article, citizens' in development plays a basic role in improvement of local public services and empowering the community.

The 1995 FDRE Constitution, Article 52 (2) (c), gives regional states the authority" to formulate and execute economic, social and development policies, strategies and plans of the State." This suggests that local governments have the authority to develop policies that guide and govern the community. Hence, the concerned urban center (i.e Butajira urban center) is responsible for carrying out this study, should be able to put this general provision into action on the ground. However, the findings of interviews with key informants and focus groups revealed that the urban center was unable to fully execute this provision. This finding implies that the urban center's limited capacity resulted in a chasm between formulation and execution of policies in terms of community participation in development.

Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) Urban Center Administration Proclamation No.167/2017

One of the reasons for enacting the Proclamation, according to its preamble, was " to develop organization that reinforce decentralized administration to ensure participation and the benefit of the urban residents in respect of the expansion of urbanization, and to solve the existing problem of good governance in urban centers" (SNNPRS, 2017:2).

A closer examination of this rationale revealed that the purpose of the Proclamation is to establish a favorable urban center government structure that encourages community participation. Besides, this clause entails that the structure of urban center government is a critical institutional feature for the provision of urban services to the local community. However, the findings of document analysis and focus groups suggested that the Urban Center Government's structure on the ground was not favorable to community participation.

According to Article 12 2(a) of the Proclamation, one of the goals of urban center government is to "enhance the developmental participation of the urban residents, and to facilitate conditions in which residents benefit from development." Besides, Article 50 (2) of the Proclamation, the other goal of urban center government is "to be a beneficiary of the outcome and to participate on the development and issues of a good developmental governance of the urban center." The aforementioned these two provisions address two critical issues concerning community engagement. Firstly, the clause provided self-autonomy and called for the creation of a conducive environment for community engagement; and it called for community governance that increases the empowerment of the community via the sharing of development benefits. Nevertheless, the findings of key informant interviews and focus groups with the community members suggested that these clauses were not fully executed in a way that empowered the community. Urban center institutional frameworks have not created accountable and transparent systems that enable the community to benefit from participative development. Hence, this circumstances condition hampered community engagement's role in empowering the urban residents.

One of the goals of urban center government, according to Regulation No.154/2017, Article 66 (1),

is to "create relationships, assist to achieve the objective of urban center, with the regional and federal government institutions or other organizations namely NGOs and the community." The clause of this sub-article charges the government with collaborating with the community to increase their engagement. Besides, as per the clause of this article, the government should be the primary actor in facilitating the condition that promotes the empowerment of the community via community engagement. Nevertheless, the findings of focus groups revealed that the relationship between the community and the government is deteriorating. According to the findings, the community's lack of trust in government as a result of its empty promises to solve the demands of the community was a basic reason in the deterioration of their relationship. Hence, this result entails that the proclamation to encourage community participation was poorly implemented.

Proclamation No.167/2017, Article 50 (1), enacted provisions that directly relate to community participation as follows: "The urban center residents, civic societies and private sectors should facilitate meeting to discuss, debate and express their thought on the annual programs of the urban center, budget draft, ideas and implementation of the project, extensional development of the urban center." This clause encourages community engagement in all aspects of government activity. As per the clauses of this sub-article, the community has the sole right to engage in all stages of development process, from idea generation of projects to performance assessment. Nevertheless, the findings of the focus groups and key informant interviews indicated that the community did not engage in the performance assessment. Hence, this result entails that there was a gap in executing the provision in terms of encouraging community participation, which increases the empowerment of the community.

Proclamation No.167/2017, Article 12 2 (b) enacted the right of the community to engage in the urban center strategic planning process as follows: "the residents of the urban center shall have the right to engage and follow up the participation and implementation of the urban centers strategic plans, the development programs and projects." This sub-article's provision provided the community the right to engage in development strategic planning at all development process stages. Nevertheless, the findings of focus groups and key informant interviews with the community members suggested that they were not permitted to engage and follow up in development strategic planning. Despite the fact that strategic planning is an important stage of development process in which the community determines the program and schedule development activities, the Urban Center Government did not include the community in strategic planning process.

Hence, this finding suggests that there was a significant gap in legal and policy execution in Butajira urban center administration.

The design of urban center administration organizational structure

As the facilitator and actor of development, the government is expected to have appropriate design of organizational structure to carry out its multiple responsibilities (Mandefro et al., 2012). The organizational structure of urban center government is designed with an important tool for increasing and facilitating community participation (Kesby, 2005; Robbins & Barnwell, 2006). Hence, these authors argued that the organizational structure should be built using scientific principles to improve effectiveness and efficiency in its operations. Butajira urban center government structures designed to facilitate community participation is evaluated using these general structural principles.

As per Regulation No.154/2017, Article 4 of SNNRS, Urban centers found in the region shall have the organizational structure of urban center administration, urban center's *kebele*, *Zonal*, *locality*, and *station*. Accordingly, Butajira urban center government's organizational structure to manage community engagement was extended from the urban center government level to *station* (an organization consists of between 50 and 100 family units). This organizational structure arrangement was unsuitable for the nature of community engagement that requires bottom up strategy. Facilitating community participation, on the other hand, is determined by the capacity of the relevant government level. Regarding this, according to the findings of an interviews with Public Engagement Experts (PEEs) and Managers of the *kebeles* (administrative units below central urban center administration) and urban center revealed that urban center government levels, particularly *zone* (administrative level beneath the *kebele* that includes 7000-10,000 population), *locality* (administrative tier beneath the *zone* that includes 1000-3000 population), and *station*, lacked capability to encourage community engagement. Furthermore, they lacked the managerial capability to encourage community engagement. They were only used by the urban center government to control the community and collect resources. Hence, this result suggests that the urban center organizational structure was unable to encourage community participation.

Butajira urban center government's institutional arrangement to encourage community engagement was based on Weberian traditional bureaucratic arrangement emphasizing top-down hierarchy and expert domination. To this end, its responsiveness and performance to community engagement demands were insufficient. According to the findings of interviews with *kebele* managers, Butajira urban

center government's structural arrangement was not feasible for facilitating community engagement. It was separated into insurmountable sections without considering the optimal level of activity division on which the scientific organizational structure arrangement is based. According to the findings of interviews with PEEs and focus groups, in the urban center there was no community development project that was solely undertaken by a separate *locality* and *station*. As a result, in Butajira urban center *locality* and *station* organizational structure arrangement were not necessary to encourage community engagement. Hence, this result implies that there was effort duplication, which resulted in effort loss and prevented the community from having a thorough understanding of development projects.

The findings of interviews with key informants and focus groups from the community revealed the following negative consequences of this organizational structural problem. Rather than facilitating community engagement, it caused confusion. Moreover, the urban community develops a negative attitude toward the urban center government organizational structure, particularly the *station*. The findings of the focus groups emphasized that the community believed the government established this level so as to control and follow up the community rather than to facilitate community engagement. Because the community lacks trust among itself, the involuntary division of the community into 50-100 family units instills fear in the urban residents. Hence, this result suggests that the urban center government's organizational structure arrangement was not favorable to community engagement.

In order to facilitate community participation for urban service provisions, different levels of urban center government created overlapping responsibilities. According to the findings of interviews with community development experts and *kebele* managers, the responsibilities of the *kebele's* and the levels beneath it were overlapping. In this regard, according to the findings of the document analysis, in the urban center raising awareness was designated as the responsibility of the *kebele*, *zone*, *locality*, and *station* all at the same time. Instead of establishing clear responsibilities for each tier of organizational structure, this type of responsibility overlap caused confusion among these urban center government tires. In addition, at various stages of the development process, there was overlapping power of various levels of urban center government in decision making. According to the findings of interviews with *kebele* managers and PEEs, identifying needs and prioritizing development are the power and responsibilities of both *zone* and *kebele* administration.

The *kebele* administration organizational structure was also not properly organized to encourage community engagement. Regarding this, the findings of a focus group in 'Ansar Mosque' area, *kebele* 02, demonstrated that the *kebele* administration organizational structure was ineffective in promoting community engagement. Besides, the findings of the preceding focus groups revealed that 'Ansar Mosque' area is a relatively remote area in *kebele* 02 that has been neglected by the urban center government. The case study urban center government failed to build a structure close to the area that takes into account the area's unique condition. Hence, this result entails that in an effort to facilitate community engagement, the diverse nature of community needs was not considered.

Enhancing coordination among organizational parts is one of the organizational structure's functions. Nevertheless, the findings of the focus groups indicated that Butajira urban center government structure was incapable of fostering coordination in encouraging community engagement among the various urban center government offices. In addition, the findings of the focus groups revealed that coordination failure among the various Butajira urban center government branches reduced the longevity of participatory development output. For example, following the construction of cobble stone roads, the Water Office of the Urban Center excavated the cobblestone road so as to install water and then abandoned it. To this effect, the flood exacerbates the cobblestone road's damage. The findings of the focus groups emphasized that the Urban Center Water Office's damage was a widespread issue that threatened cobblestone road throughout the urban center. Hence, this result suggests that urban center government structure serious challenge in facilitating community engagement was coordination.

According to the findings of the interviews with PEEs, absence of clear responsibility within the urban center government's hierarchy posed serious institutional problems to community engagement. The findings of the focus groups revealed that there are no clearly defined roles of institutions involved in the development process. The findings of the focus groups indicated that in some areas, there is a development committee; in others, the Community Engagement Board (CEB) is supposed to play the role of the development committee, but it is ineffective in leading community engagement in development. There was some overlap in the responsibilities of the CEB and the development committee. Both of them existed in some places. This result suggests that role ambiguity resulted from the absence of clear responsibility among organs designed to encourage community engagement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers forwarded the following recommendations. Accordingly, to guide community participation, explicit regulations and rules must be established. These regulations and rules must provide autonomy to engage in community development activities. Besides, the urban center government requires intensive capacity development in order to fulfill its responsibilities of encouraging community engagement. The development of capacity is needed to concentrate on developing a supportive institutional culture and a favorable organizational structure.

Conclusion

This section contains broad conclusions derived from the study's findings in accordance with the research objective. Community participation in the urban center is governed by fundamental legal provisions. In spite of legal provisions, there were still disparity in legal provisions to adequately address the priorities and needs of the community. In addition, a significant gap was observed between legal provisions and their actual execution in the urban center. The organizational structure of the urban center government was inappropriate and incapable for encouraging community participation. Urban center organizational structure was not designed on the basis of scientific principles; it was unable to establish clear responsibilities for concerned bodies; and it was unable to promote activity coordination. In this case, this situation discourages community involvement in urban service provision. Hence, the institutional frameworks would impede community participation in improving urban service provisions.

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