CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENTS: LESSONS FROM BUILDING TRUST AND RECIPROCITY IN MUNICIPAL OF UGANDA AND THAILAND

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Abstract

New governance dynamics are pushing government and its agencies to explore and enhance participatory governance practices at all levels as well as developing and encouraging new partnerships with civil society organizations and other non-state actors. This arrangement however takes participation for granted and does not illustrate how and when it can be meaningful. This article was informed by a study that examined, in a comparative framework and in relation to the expectations created by theory, the extent to which citizen participation reciprocates into trust and transparency in Uganda and Thai municipal governments. Although citizen participation and empowerment are interrelated governance concepts, the study established considerable overlaps between the two. Empowering citizens to understand their stakes and leverage in the local governance processes, and how to make their voices count was concluded to be the missing link in Uganda and Thailand municipal governments. Moreover, without providing citizens with relevant and complete information in user-friendly formats, participation may remain a public display but in reality a surrogate for mere politics with little in terms of citizen trust and reciprocity

Keywords: Participation, Transparency, Governance, Municipal Governments, Reciprocity

Introduction

It's no longer in dispute that citizen trust, transparency and any other benefits from decentralization reforms rest on a strong framework that provides for the participation of citizens, private sector and other non-state actors in governance. This narrative is anchored in a mainstream conviction that the voices of service users need to be heard and given the attention in governance processes (Ganesh, 2015; Pranab & Chowdhury, 2020; Shandana & Miguel, 2017). Arguably, doing so would enable establishing and understanding citizen needs, developing, communicating, allocating and delivering public services as well as assessing the relative levels of citizen satisfaction with the services delivered to them.

Citizen trust in governance plays a significant role in securing citizen's voluntary compliance with government directions, and does provide a more realistic mechanism of deepening citizens' tolerance for what would otherwise appear invasive, annoying, or disruptive government policies, programs and practices (Kumagai & Iorio, 2020; Tsai & Morse, 2019; OECD, 2013). There is evidence to suggest that nurturing trust is not only an investment in economic recovery but social well-being for the future. To this extent, trust is on one hand, an input to governance reforms and, on another hand, itself an outcome of the governance reforms. However, gaining the trust of citizens in a jurisdiction requires that local public officials should not only be responsive but also responsible to the citizens for their decisions, and the citizens on the other hand, to be fully informed of the outcome of their decisions.

Relatedly, an expansive body of literature posits that participatory and transparent governance has a potential to mobilize and galvanize citizens to play more participative roles in their local governance that in turn reciprocates into improved social service delivery within local communities. Citizen participation can only be meaningful if based on sufficient and relevant information so that it can make an impact on decision making thereby holding public local officials accountable for the outcomes of their actions. To his extent, therefore, citizen participation places local governments in closer contacts with their constituents thereby tying them up in social contracts (Coetzee, 2017; Michael, 2020; World Bank, 2014).

The theoretical and conceptual literature assumes building trust and reciprocity through citizen participation and transparency but fail to illustrate this with vivid and convincing empirical evidences. Scholars like Agraw and

Ribot (1999) and Deborah (2009) believe that trust and reciprocity in governance at local levels would largely depend on the extent to which citizen participation is meaningfulness in a local jurisdiction. Yet, literature provides limited consensus on how meaningful citizen participation can happen and the ways of measuring it. Available literature is also silent on the causes and implications of the ineffective participation in local government as well as remedial actions to be taken by governments at all levels to give new meaning and impetus to citizen participation at sub-national level. Similarly, most of the literature on citizen participation and transparency in Africa and Asian countries focus more on expectations and discourse than on practice and outcome. Relatedly, the limited comparative empirical evidences on the framework and outcomes of citizen participation in local government limits our capacity to compare, contrast and learn from other countries' experiences within similar or different contexts like Uganda.

The overcharging research question was to examine, in a comparative framework and in relation to expectations created by theory, the extent to which citizen participation reciprocates into trust and transparency in Uganda and Thai municipal governments. The major question was supported by three specific questions; *To what extent do citizens participate in all areas where the municipalities have responsibilities? How well do the municipal governments provide relevant information to citizens for them to understand and influence decision making?,* and *What are the available incentives for Uganda and Thailand municipal governments to be participatory and transparent?* The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The next section provides a glance at Uganda and Thai governance systems followed by the methodology that was adopted to gather and analyze data. The results of the research are then presented and discussed, followed by a conclusion and a set of recommendations.

A glance at Uganda and Thailand Governance systems

Uganda and Thailand are countries undergoing democratic transitions, and are examples of developing countries still grappling with citizen trust and transparency in governance. In spite of the varying political background for the two unitary states, their local administration systems are reminiscent of the centralized colonial apparatus designed to facilitate effective central control of local areas (Arghiros, 2001; Morell & Samudavanija, 1981). Although, unlike Uganda, Thailand was never colonized, her public administration was highly structured according to centralized systems (Kamnuansilpa et al, 2012). Accordingly, the two countries' decentralization approaches in respect to levels of progress in both in political and administrative content and in fiscal discretion have significant and observable variations.

The Thai municipal budgeting and planning system is still under a lot of control and influence by central government through the appointed governors (Mutebi, 2004; Tatchalerm, Wood & Thurmaier, 2009). In contrast to Uganda, the Thai national bureaucratic agencies oversee municipal planning and budgetary processes. The agencies can therefore overturn any budgetrelated decisions made by the various citizen categories in the municipal councils

Methods

Research Design

The study was a case analysis that enabled a detailed understanding of stakeholders' perceptions on citizen participation and transparency in the two countries and establishing how it is shaping reciprocity and citizen trust in the municipal governments. The study adopted the '*Logic of research model'* by Mill (1843) with respect to qualitative comparative analysis. In particular, the study used the "Most different systems design" (MDSD) approach;

> If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance save one in common, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ is the effect, or cause, or an necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon (1843, 455)

The comparative approach examined a handful of cases that are as different as possible, except on the outcome (reciprocity), which was the same. Although the municipalities of Entebbe and Khon Kaen were only cases

from the many local governments in each of the two countries, to a big extent they mirrored the reality of local governance in both countries.

Participant Characteristics and Sampling

The estimated population of Entebbe municipality was 80,000 and Khon Khaen municipality with 111,777 totaling to 191,777 (Khon Kaen Municipality, 2014; UBOS, 2011). Given the study interest, however, the target participants was a voter or a taxpayer. Since 18 years was the eligible voting age in a public election for both Uganda and Thailand, the target participant was 18 years and above. Table 1 below illustrates the characteristics of the specific participant categories that informed the study

Table 1: Summary of Methods

Local Government	Participant Category	Sampling technique	Data Collection Method	Actual Response
Entebbe Municipality	• Technical Staff, • Political officials, • Representative of CSOs, • Members of the Private sector	Purposive & Convenience	Focus Group Discussions	22
Khon Kaen Municipality	• Administrative officials • Political officials • Informed stakeholders	Purposive & Convenience	Focus Group Discussions	26
	Total Respondents			**48**

As indicated in table 1 above, the participants were selected from three categories including the elected political officials; appointed public officials; and the informed stakeholders. The informed stakeholders constituted members of civil society organizations including leaders of political parties, the media, community-based organizations, Non-government organizations and other pressure groups operating within each of the municipalities. The informed stakeholders were preferred to the citizens because they were deemed to have more relevant information concerning their respective municipal governance as well as better capacity to interpret and understand the information

As for the sample size, qualitative research requires interviewing respondents up to a point of saturation (Ragin & Becker, 1992). However, saturation point in this study was not used since the study did not have the luxury of continuing the open-ended research that saturation requires. Moreover, the point of saturation (especially undergrounded theory methodology) that required a point of saturation for all properties and the dimensions was potentially limitless. Saturation would also make it procedurally impossible to specify the required number of qualitative interviews in the proposal as required by this study. The sample used of 60 in this study was therefore determined to be adequate (Crouch & Mckenzie, 2006; Ragin & Becker, 1992; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003).

Data Collection and Analysis

The study relied on focus groups to collect data from the three defined multiple focus groups simultaneously. Focus group interviews (FGIs) were intended to provide insights into different opinions and perceptions among selected respondents in terms of their experiences with citizen participation and how it was reciprocating into transparency and citizen trust in their municipal governments. The FDI were less threatening to group members and enabled a more conducive environment for them to freely and genuinely interact and discuss their perceptions, ideas, opinions, and thoughts on the study interests. In total, eight FDIs were conducted three from Khon Kaen and five for Entebbe municipalities making from a total of 48 participants Operationally, citizen participation was observed by the available opportunities for citizen engagement in planning and budgeting,

consultations, and available arrangements for feedback. Relatedly, transparency was measured by availability and ease of accessing appropriate information necessary for citizen participation, and fairness in local processes. Being a qualitative study, data collection and analysis took place simultaneously. Data analysis started with transcribing each FGI and then coding them using a qualitative form of content analysis (Wong, 2008). The codes were condensed into various categories, trends and themes that would emerge from the data. The researcher summarized the overall response to a particular question. The things that were considered in deciding what to include in the summary were the frequency with which different participants in a group made key points; specificity in terms of how detailed particular responses were; and emotions, enthusiasm, passion, or intensity expressed in discussing a particular issue. Concerning the accuracy of the categories, three subject experts were used to verify and to appropriately suggest slight modifications.

Although a group was the focus of analysis in the study, both individuals and groups were used as the units of analysis. This was so, because using group as a unit of analysis would preclude the analysis of individual focus group data thereby preventing the study from recognizing focus group members who may not have contributed to the category or theme or those with dissenting views. Information about the dissenters or outliers in focus groups usually assumed to increase the descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity associated with emergent themes thereby increasing the phenomenon interest. However, the study was also aware of the fact that majority or even all of the focus group members expressing a particular viewpoint did not necessarily imply that every individual's viewpoint was important or compelling. To that end and where appropriate, the study analysed some focus group data like a conversation and not like an interview. While analysing the data, special attention was given to comparing and contrasting data from Entebbe and Khon Kaen municipalities through a continuous process until a point when no new issues were emerging. This enabled to see what similarities and differences emerged as I kept moving backwards and forwards between transcripts, memos, notes and the research literature, comparing for various groups and municipalities

Findings and Discussion

In a comparative framework, the study findings reported and discussed here were structured around three interconnected themes, which emerged from the focus group interviews. The first theme focuses on the reality of participation in all areas where the municipalities have responsibilities. The next theme analyses how well the municipalities provide relevant information to citizens for them to understand and influence decision-making, and the last one presents an assessment of the available incentives for municipal governments in Uganda and Thailand to be participatory and transparent.

Opportunities, Levels and Focus of Citizen Participation

The Ugandan case suggested a number of opportunities for citizen participation in all affairs where the municipality has responsibilities. The study established that citizens and the local public officials take advantage of any public and social events in the localities to engage citizens on any pertinent local issue at a time. Occasionally, citizen groups organize meetings and invite their public official to talk to them. Social events like burials, weddings, church congregations and village meetings were found to be the most common opportunities for citizen engagement in a wide range of social concerns including security, health, education and market wrangles. One respondent in one the FGDs for elected official in Entebbe municipality seemed to summarize it:

Since we stay within the communities, we take advantage of any public and social events in our consistencies to talk to and consult the citizens and also get their feedback on the local services being delivered. Whereas sometimes people organize meetings and invite us to interact with them, in a few cases we also organize and invite the citizens otherwise prevailing circumstances can force to call the people

However, the most common practice reported was for local public officials looking for citizens in their localities to engage them from there. Accordingly, most times the issues for discussion depend on what is pertinent at a time and who, between the citizens and local officials initiated the meeting. It was also established that the decentralization policy itself provides inherent requirements for local officials to engage citizens at different levels of local governance in Uganda. This findings from Uganda suggests high opportunities of

citizen participation compared well with the opportunities for participation in municipal governance of Thailand where various opportunities for citizens to participate in various local issues were reported. One informed stakeholders explained her views in ways consistent with many other focus discussion groups in the Thai municipality:

There are many opportunities for people in our communities to participate as representatives for various projects, such as the Health Fund activities. The Community Leader is selected to lead oversight of the projects and chair meetings of the Fund. The Khon Kaen Municipality (KKM) gives ample opportunity for the public to participate. For its part, the KKM has to inform the public about development projects and progress on a monthly basis. The village health volunteers (VHV) make sure that the community is informed of health related developments. Even when there is no financial compensation, many of us work on a voluntary basis to get things done, and everyone is informed about this. The Khon Kaen Think Tank (KKTT) is one example.

These findings suggest that Municipal governments in Thailand like their counterparts in Uganda provide opportunities for local participation at all phases of local governance. As the case for Uganda, the focus and intensity of participation largely depend on the social issues at the hand and its expected social benefit. This participation is usually initiated by either the municipal officials, the citizens themselves or by CSOs on behalf of the people.

The similarities in the perceived opportunities for citizen participation observed in both cases may have been due to the cosmopolitan nature of municipalities. The high level conglomerations of activities, diversity of peoples and high influx of information in municipal authorities can drive the people to take interest and participate in their municipal governance. On the other hand, both cases being municipalities, the observed opportunities for citizen participation may be induced by the fiscal system. Because of the peculiar nature of urban management, urban dwellers in their socio-economic settings usually find themselves tied up in more tax obligations and administrative controls than their counterparts in rural local governments. In a bid to either relax or plead their cases against such fiscal obligations and controls, municipal citizens may tend to take up any opportunities to engage their public officials.

From both cases however, citizens' participation in municipal governance is not unlimited. In the Ugandan case, findings indicated that citizens' participation in the municipality was still inadequate and lacking in purpose. This was established to be so, because a number of them did not seem to appreciate the need to understand why their municipality operates and performs the way it does, and how they can have a big voice in governance decisions concerning them. It was reported in both cases that the actual citizen participation was far less in terms of quality and quantity than it was perceived. In other cases, it was established that although citizens do participate by suggesting ideas and can input decisions about their municipal projects, it appeared more of a formality. It was a common practice for the final decisions taken and services delivered to reflect very little, if any citizen, semblance of citizen wishes. Relatedly, participation and involvement were found to be two different things with the latter implying a one-on-one approach between the citizens and public officials. Involvement would be a more direct method of participation, as the citizens would be included in all aspects of the decision-making process. It is both participation and actual involvement in municipal governance that would encourage citizens to take ownership of the outcome of the projects. Involvement of citizens would affect the process itself by both encouraging the citizens to become more involved in municipal projects and empower them generate ideas on how to improve their local projects.

A significant implication from the findings was that participation had only partially contributed to citizen empowerment in both cases. In the Thai case for example, although citizens participate in most of the affairs of the municipality and given that the municipal act provides them with some legislative authority, they have not been able to formulate appropriate local laws to support the municipal revenue enhancement efforts. The finding concerning the disparity between participation and empowerment is in tandem with Blair (2000, 25) who concluded:

The results registered today become successfully less substantial. Democratic local government initiatives have encouraged participation and have increased representation, but have provided little in the way of

empowerment, and even less in making the distribution of benefits more equitable or reducing poverty. This does not mean however, that promoting democratic local governments is a futile endeavour.

The kind of citizen empowerment mentioned in the statement describes a situation where municipal governance should be about giving people authorship of governance decisions and outcomes other than reducing it to the current 'policy jargon' that hides as much as it reveals. Other than merely being co-opted, participants need to be given power over municipal decisions. Citizens should for example have powers to insert or erase certain issues on the municipal governance agendas. Effective empowerment requires that participation must be effective to the extent that local governments in their political processes should for example, be able to utilize the space provided by the municipal law, to make local legislations that facilitate appropriate local government functioning and service delivery, and consequently enhances accountability and public trust (Arkorful, Lugu, Hammond & Basiru, 2021; Bahil, 2009; Lieberman, Martin, & McMurry, 2017). The findings further support the argument that local citizens' participation in areas such as planning and budgeting processes are reduced to mere formalities in developing countries (Carvallo, Pinto & Seixas, 2019; Kiyaga & Olum, 2009; Sanogo, 2019).   They still lack the required guidance and capacity to understand their local economies. Devas and Grant (2003) put the challenge for participation more elaborately:

Participation can be inhibited by social dynamics of exclusion and inclusion at the 'community level'... Some people are more inhibited in meetings, will not ask for clarifications and leave confused and frustrated, or are pressured into acquiescence, and yet their attendance is still classified as 'participation. '...Structures of authority in Uganda which inhibit free exchange of ideas and render people unwilling to demand accountability from those in authority. Thus 'participation', rather than necessarily being fair and democratic, is often manipulated from the top, with powerful individuals imposing decisions on others (309).

The statement implies that whereas on one hand, such structures providing for representative participation like the municipal councilors and women representatives, such representations at times impose limitations to the direct citizen voice. The representation can also be hijacked or compromised by higher levels of government with interest and priorities different from those of the citizens. Citizen voice in this case describes an engagement with the sub-national governments beyond mere consultations to more direct mechanisms of influencing decisions. The statement above also describes situations where the key actors in municipal governments have been found unfamiliar with or lacking the necessarily skills to make use of the new instruments of citizen participation.

Transparency and Reciprocity

Effective citizen participation depends on the availability and ease of accessing information. The argument in this theme is that availability of adequate information to the citizens is the starting point for meaningful citizen participation in municipal governance. When asked about the availability of information to citizens, responses in all the focus groups for both municipalities illustrated several avenues of availing information to the citizens in the municipality. Consistent with this view, one member of the popularly elected political leaders in Entebbe Municipality stated:

There are quite a number of channels through which information is passed on to the communities in this municipality. At different instances whenever administrative officials and ourselves interact with the citizens, we give them any relevant information at the time. Apart from organizing the village level meetings through which we give information, this is a cosmopolitan municipality with a dot com community which has a high use of social media. In some cases we use local public microphones to pass around any urgent information.

Although findings reported quite a number of information channels in Entebbe, the adequacy of the information in the municipality generated mixed responses from either category of respondents. Whereas the popularly elected political officials reported that they try to give citizens all the information that themselves (political leaders) think is enough for the citizens, the administrative officials were more committed to giving reports as raised by one of the top administrative officials in Entebbe municipality during the course of the study, "*now, if I put the citizens at same level of information like myself, how do I control them and even remain relevant in my position?*"

The above is quite a remarkable and interesting admission that having citizens as well informed as administrators or even popularly elected leaders is threatening. The statement also implies a challenge on the part of public officials, of maintaining a balance between personal and public interests in municipal governance which can turn into information asymmetry. Information asymmetry in this case is a practice in which municipal public officials in governance retain more or superior information compared to other stakeholders. Potentially, this could be diffuse reciprocity as public officials may take advantage of the other stakeholders' lack of knowledge. The finding suggests that many times, the citizens are not given all information that they need to participate in their municipal governance but only what has been deliberately determined and sieved by the administrative and elected officials.

Similarly, the informed stakeholders who are usually very vibrant in mobilizing and interpreting information for the citizens relating to any pertinent issues at hand in Entebbe municipality, reported difficulty in accessing adequate and up-to-date information. As a member of the NGO forum in Entebbe municipality emotionally put it:

There is a tendency by both the administrative and elected leaders to conceal some information from us. We sometimes have to "dig for it", search and research yet they know the work we do in keeping the people informed of what is going on. Onetime, we had to write to the donor not to send any other funds until the municipality availed us all the information about the project

The finding for inadequate information in Entebbe municipality contrasts with that of KKM. The Thai case indicated a relatively better attempt by the municipal government to access citizens with the required information. An administrative official submitted during the study:

Khon Kaen Municipality is proactive in sharing information, so the issue of transparency and inspection is moot. Information is shared through meetings of the community sub-committees, Council meetings and printed reports. Information is also always available and updated on the municipal website

This contrast between the two municipalities may be attributed to the fact that KKM has comparatively higher concentration levels of trade, commerce and agro-business as well as a bigger population than Entebbe municipality. High levels of business in an urban area as stated earlier in this report are expected to compel citizens to demand and look for more complete information concerning their local governance. The implication from the findings for Entebbe municipality is that although there is some endeavour to give citizens information, such information is deliberately provided in forms that are inadequate and inappropriate. Giving inadequate information to the citizen seems to be used as an instrument by both the popularly elected and the administrative officials to limit the level of citizen participation and involvement in the issues where the municipality has responsibilities

Incentives for Participation, trust and Reciprocity

Reciprocity of municipal governments to the citizens as with any other level of government is known to succeed only where public officials have incentives to do so. There should be a wide range of mechanisms to hold all key players on a participatory and responsive governance system based on a principle of integrity necessary to attract the trust of the citizenry (Huang & Feeney, 2016; Smoke, 2015). Mechanisms including recalls, public petition, and inspection and auditing, political responsibility and most importantly election are always available to enforce responsiveness in local governance. This sub-section compares incentives for responsiveness in the two countries' municipal governments.

Although findings indicated a number of reasons, the threat of losing a political trust in competitive local political processes was found to be the most direct incentive for responsiveness of municipal governments for both Uganda and Thailand. A member in one of the political leaders' FGD in Entebbe put it;

There are many reasons why elected officials should be responsive to citizens in this municipality. If not for your political safety, then for the sake of your political legacy and family integrity, you always need to listen or at least appear to be responding to people's needs. It can politically haunt you and your entire family later if you turned a deaf ear to citizens' wishes

The submission implies that a ballot box or political legacy is still by far the most vivid available instrument for reciprocity in municipal governance. This finding is especially so, given the cosmopolitan nature of

municipalities and the higher influx of CSOs in which citizen demand for services usually prevail over political identities hence making voters issue-minded. Indeed, municipalities unlike other levels of governments in both countries are characterized by higher turnover of political leaders during electoral periods.

Whereas the Ugandan case is even more illustrious with the majority of popularly elected municipality leaders coming from opposition parties, the Thai case advocates for political responsibility whereby political/local executives do not even have to wait for elections if their decisions backfire. Political responsibility is however, yet to happen in the country's local government system. The findings support the models within the public choice theory that rely on voting as an instrument of accountability (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 1998; Besley & Coate, 1999; Downs, 1957). Such models postulates for capacities of voters to choose their local political representatives with regard to citizens' preferences. In this logic, the elected local officials are expected to oversee/prevail over their technical counterparts, increase citizens' awareness about policy performance of local governments, and directly involve citizens in decision-making beyond elections. The finding is also in line with the submission that for political accountability to happen there should be mechanisms that allow for citizen-initiated legislation (petitions), referendums, or recalls of elected public officials (Andrews & Shah, 2002; Devas, 2005). Agrawal and Ribot

Other than the periodic local elections, citizens in their social groupings do also provide other incentives for municipal responsiveness. It's not uncommon in Uganda for people, especially traders, to withhold payment of their local taxes demanding that the municipality first addresses their issues. Peaceful demonstrations against leaders are also common instruments to demand responsiveness from municipal governments.

In the final analysis, although voting holds its own limits as a mechanism for reciprocity in rural local governments, it is still the most direct and effective incentive for reciprocity in municipal governments. On top of the electoral threat, the high levels of awareness, relatively informed citizens and a comparatively vigilant civil society can drive reciprocity and consequently citizen trust in municipal governments

Conclusion

This paper contributes to understanding the nature of citizen participation, a key governance challenge today, that can reciprocate public trust and reciprocity. My findings advance a theory suggesting that citizen participation and its expected benefits for public trust and reciprocity in local governance are contingent on citizen empowerment and transparency. Overall, the findings revealed various opportunities for citizen participation in local governance initiated by municipal officials, the citizens themselves or CSOs in both cases. Although there was high levels of citizen participation in both cases, meaningful participation is hampered by high levels of illiteracy, political naivety, and insufficient mechanisms to incorporate citizen participation. The available opportunities for participation have had little impact on the empowerment of citizens as individuals or through their representative categories. Much as it is unlikely that a decision taken in absence of citizens reflects their opinions, interests or concerns, participation should be meaningful so that citizens can feel confident and know where and how to participate. Concerning transparency, the study established a number of channels through which information reaches the citizenry in both municipalities. In contrast however, whereas in the Ugandan case information given is many times inadequate, incomplete and in too technical formats, the Thai case highlighted comparatively better approaches and intentions by the municipal government to access citizens with the required information.

Situating my study in an authoritarian context, participation can still make beneficial effects indicated in this study, but just putting up structures for participation and information channels is not enough. There is need for commitment of governments at respective levels to empower all actors in governance. The study therefore concludes that empowering citizens to understand their stakes and leverage in the local governance processes, and how to make their voices count is the missing link in local governments for countries like Uganda and Thailand. Additionally, without transparency in providing citizen groups with relevant and complete information in userfriendly formats, participation may remain public displayed but in reality a surrogate for mere politics with little in terms of citizen trust and reciprocity

Further research should explore and evaluate the nature of empowerment required for citizens to take full charge of their mandates and expectations. In particular, there is need to understand the levels and skills of participation across the various citizens that are required to enable them effectively engage and influence municipal governance in developing countries. As for transparency, other researches may explore the applicability of a street-level discretion to address information asymmetries in local governance, where some actors possess more or better information at the expense of others

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