POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS | REVIEW ARTICLE

Policy making and governance structures in Zimbabwe: examining their efficacy as a conduit to equitable participation (inclusion) and social justice for rural youths

Sikanyiso Masuku¹ and Tafadzwa Macheka²*

Abstract: Although the African Youth Charter emphasizes the role of the youth as prerequisites for sustainable development’, there remains an existential marginalisation of youth from most policy making and governance structures. In response to such exclusion, young Africans across the continent have been at the fore of protests and similar movements. In effecting inclusivity, decentralisation in Zimbabwe has meant that equitable participation is regulated by the Rural District Councils Act and the Traditional Leaders Act. However, the effectiveness of such frameworks and institutions in facilitating for the full participation of youth in policy making and governance has not been interrogated. In doing so, this study examined the degree of child and youth involvement in Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs). This involved a case study-based exploratory inquiry of Masvingo in rural Zimbabwe. Through a purposive sampling technique, there were three FGDs held with youth and four face to face in-depth interviews with relevant civil society representatives as well as

ABOUT THE AUTHORS
Sikanyiso Masuku is graduate with a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of KwaZulu Natal and former lecturer at the Institution. He is a current Research fellow at the Institute for Democracy Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa (IDCPPA) and the Centre for Social Science Research at the University of Cape Town. With relevant professional trainings and qualifications from the University of Copenhagen and the University of Amsterdam, Dr Masuku’s work has mainly focused on inequality (broadly defined), political economy and social protection. Previously, he has also done research on human mobility as well as migration.

Ransom Tafadzwa Macheka is the Advocacy and Research Officer at the Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT). He is also a PhD candidate at the University of KwaZulu Natal and his research interests center on youth participation in local and national governance, capacity building of youth led organizations, as well as human rights advocacy.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
Youth participation is integral to improved governance. Ideally, decentralisation should help in the inclusion of marginalised groups within the ambit of governance and decision making. The Traditional Leaders Act and the Rural District Councils Act provide opportunities at community level for inclusive participation by creating Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs). Given how these two structures are designed to facilitate for a community level participation in governance (decentralisation), the study examined their effectiveness in providing Zimbabwe’s rural youth with the same. The study found that despite the availability of legislation, informal power dynamics (the conduct of partisan actors and the agency of older community members/leaders), have led to the ineffectiveness of the said VIDCOs and WADCOs. The study concluded by encouraging government to invest more towards inclusive development as well as developing the capacity of community leaders and elected representatives overseeing participatory structures.
youth ward coordinators. The findings revealed how, despite available legislation on youth participation at village level, and the presence of VIDCOs and WADCOs as participatory structures, youth participation has been limited due to patriarchy, gerontocracy and partisan actors within the governance architecture. In ensuring that young people have maximum utility of VIDCOs and WADCOs, the study encourages government to invest more resources towards inclusive policy development as well as the capacity building of community leaders and elected officials who oversee participatory structures.

**Subjects:** Social Inequality; Sociology & Social Policy; Politics & Development; Rural Development

**Keywords:** rural youth participation; inclusion; equality; village development committee; ward development committee; Africa

1. **Introduction**

In Zimbabwe, although citizen participation ranks as a high priority for most development partners in the country, the youth have long suffered from marginalisation. The 2016–2020 Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF), which is the United Nations (UN) strategic programme framework to support national development priorities in Zimbabwe, outlines participatory measures. ZUNDAF outlines six priorities, i.e. Food and Nutrition Security, Gender Equality, HIV and AIDS, Poverty Reduction and Value Addition, Public Administration and Governance, and Social Services and Protection. The gender equality component outlines the need for enhanced qualitative and quantitative participation of girls within decision-making positions and structures. In Zimbabwe’s rural areas, this is of paramount importance as these areas are often considered patriarchal and repressive towards children, women, as well as the youth (Chiweshe et al., 2015; Gordon, 1994; Schmidt, 1991). Given the importance of young people’s active inclusion in organizational governance (Zeldin, 2004), this study explores the views of youth on the rural governance participation structures, namely the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and the Ward Development Committees (WADCOs).

While there has been research done on generalised community participation in rural development, rural women participation in local governance, etc., (Chifamba, 2013; Kurebwa, 2014), none of the studies on Zimbabwe have examined youth participation through VIDCOs and WADCOs. In this study, VIDCOs and WADCOs are conceptualised as a means of addressing some of the deprivations impacting on youths, i.e. voice, representation and influence (Gaventa & Runciman, 2016). This use of rural VIDCOs and WADCOs is pertinent as 70% of youth in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) reside in rural areas, in contrast to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimate that around 55% of youth reside in rural areas (Bennell, 2007). Zimbabwe is thus a microcosmic representation of this scenario with 77% of its population living in the rural areas (Nyoni & Bonga, 2017). While the global youth population was projected to reach a peak of 1.5 billion by 2035, the bulk of this population increase is forecast to occur in SSA, i.e. 26% increase between 2005 and 2035 (Bennell, 2007). Similarly, such high population statistics for the youth are discernible in Zimbabwe where the below 30 age group is 69.8% of the national population (Bennell, 2007). Such statistics at both a national and continental level, rationalize this study’s exploration of young people’s experiences of Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs). In doing so, we utilized Hart’s Ladder of citizen participation to conceptualize youth participation in local governance structures. Such participatory platforms in Zimbabwe are regulated through the Rural District Councils Act Chapter 29:13 and the Traditional Leaders Act Chapter 29:17.

The public administration and governance component in Zimbabwe is also emphatic on the need for increased citizen participation in the country’s democratic processes as enshrined in the
constitution. Young people’s engagement thus promotes positive youth development whilst increasing organizational effectiveness. For that reason, the perceptions of Zimbabwean children and youth towards VIDCOs and WADCOs constituted a critical departure point in this study. We conceptualized youth, as all persons between 15 and 35 years of age, i.e. as stipulated in the 2013 Zimbabwe National Youth Policy document (designed in alignment with the continental African Youth Charter) (African Union, 2006). Although there is a clear mandate for inclusionary participation (as evidenced by the United Nations’ attempts to address all discriminations and foster coexistence or policy frameworks that develop a peace architecture), the political will to promote this participation appears to be missing from the Zimbabwean government. This study thus discovered how, through their institutional setup, VIDCOs and WADCOs are crucial and plausible means of participation but have been limited due to informal power dynamics exacerbated by patriarchy, gerontocracy and partisan actors within the governance architecture.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine young people’s experiences of VIDCOs and WADCOs and determine the obstacles to their full participation.
2. To examine the challenges in operationalising youth participatory structures in Zimbabwe and determine how future participation could be enhanced.

2. Background

Across the African continent, the domination by gerontocrats of the political and bureaucratic space in Malawi, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, etc., has proliferated the exclusion of youth from equitable participation or representation within the policy making and governance discourse (Aguilar, 1998). Despite the OAU having been formed in 1963, the formation of a youth charter only occurred in 2009, i.e., 46 years later. Although the Pan African Youth Movement (PYM) had its inception in the early 1960s, there has, however, been little evidence of support from the African Union (AU) towards such youth bodies (Amupanda, 2018). Despite the African Youth Charter theoretically emphasizing the role of the youth as “partners, assets and prerequisites for sustainable development”, the absence of support towards youth bodies has remained a cause for concern even after the PYM transformed in 2003 to the Pan African Youth Union (PYU) (African Union, 2017). This situation was worsened in 2017 by the introduction of yet another youth advocacy group in the form of the African Youth Commission (AYC), which was an intended successor of the African Union Youth Working Group (AUYWG). Despondency and lack of unity amongst these institutions has thus significantly derailed the youth agenda within Africa as a continent.

In theory, talks from the African Union on furthering the youth agenda have been focused on “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in Youth” (Gay et al., 2017). To fulfil this goal, a roadmap was developed with a view to expedite the implementation of a continental initiative to establish key deliverables and concrete action for 2017 as well as beyond (African Union, 2017). Although inclusion of youths within political systems is an essential pillar of democracy and civic participation, this has not metamorphosed into tangible results within the majority of African states (Richter & Panday, 2007). In its 2017 roadmap, the AU laid down accompanying principles and values, including transparency, democracy, good governance, anti-corruption, rule of law, as well as women and youth participation in decision making at all levels (African Union, 2017). Operationalising such ideals has, however, remained a principal challenge with very little has being done in most African states (Richter & Panday, 2007). As shown in Figure 1, a 2018 survey of African states found that most citizens perceive their governments approach to the needs of the youth as abysmal:

Authentic engagement of youth through discussion, debate and decision making provides a mechanism to enhance social justice (Augsberger et al., 2018). Although the African Youth
Charter, in Article 11 (d), has provisions for youth participation in various aspects of community life (including decision making and civic duty), studies carried out in South Africa have demonstrated a nexus between youth poverty and the absence of socio-economic or political participation (Richter & Panday, 2007). The African Youth Charter presents a guideline for youth development, with its preamble outlining the view that Africa’s greatest asset is its youthful population (African Union, 2017). Through Article 11 (b), state parties are also obligated to strengthen youth participation in decision making at local, national, regional and continental levels, while Article 11 (e) compels states to sensitize the youth on available opportunities and their rights to participate in decision making or civic life. The potential benefits of an included or empowered youth include an increased national workforce, as well as an increased market for goods and services on the continent, provided there exists an enabling policy framework (Jimenez & Murthi, 2006).

Despite the progressive proclamations in the African Youth Charter mentioned above, the problems at the centre of youth exclusion and marginalisation on the continent have become entrenched in governance institutions. This has sparked confrontation and protests, making the relationship between the youth and government evermore conflictive. For example, in Senegal, political exclusion and continued impoverishment have been conceptualised as some of the precipitating factors behind youth violent protests (Hanlon et al., 2017). In places such as Mali and Chad, youth protests are perennially staged in the struggle for equitable citizenship or belonging and rightful representation (Resnick & Thurlow, 2015). In South African politics and decision-making institutions, the youth (amongst other groups) suffer from three types of deprivations, i.e. deprivations of voice, representation and influence (Gaventa & Runciman, 2016). In absolute contrast to the African Youth Charter Preamble that epitomizes youth as assets, young people in most African states are often viewed as liabilities and security threats (African Union, 2006).
3. Legal framework governing youth participation

3.1. The convention on the rights of the child
To have a better understanding of the legal framework that provides for citizen participation, there is a need to explore various legislative instruments surrounding child and youth participation in Africa. Globally, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides a framework for protecting children and promoting their participation. The CRC was entered into force in September 1990 and provides an overarching framework for children’s rights (United Nations Center for Human Rights (UNCHR). The CRC contributes towards understanding the concept of childhood, which is given as a social construct (Appell, 2009). The preamble begins with a consideration that children need to be prepared to live within a society in the spirit of peace, tolerance and solidarity (United Nations Center for Human Rights). This presents an opportunity for practitioners and interested institutions to develop innovative ways to promote children’s development. The preamble also makes an assumption on the evolving capability of children, as tolerance and solidarity are values that are learnt and practiced at different fora in societal life.

Article 13 of the CRC speaks to the right to freedom of expression which includes the right to seek and impart information and ideas. Article 13 of the CRC also makes assumptions on the capability of young people to form their own opinion which may in turn benefit society, i.e. participating develops their capacity to exercise critical thinking (Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 288). To this effect, the state is then obligated to ensure that platforms to practice and enjoy freedom of expression are availed. Zimbabwe has struggled in this regard, notoriously codifying a host of legislation that has been blamed for limiting adult’s freedom of expression (Holland, 2012; Moore, 2011). With the state failing to prioritise adult participation, would possibly not be prioritised or if they were, their concerns would not be foregrounded (Resnick & Thurlow, 2015).

In respect of children living with disability, Article 23 outlines the state’s obligation to provide conditions that promote and facilitate for their active participation in the community. At a national level, most African states have failed to adopt such global guidelines, i.e. the operationalisation of mechanisms that safeguard the living potentials of disabled children while also ensuring their rights to meaningful and equitable participation. The availing of engagement platforms (through government initiatives), has also been an area where Zimbabwe has particularly failed, often surrogating the promotion of participation and community development projects to donor agencies (Bornstein, 2004. As an institution, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) developed a plan of action on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that outlines the need for children and adolescents to be able to freely express their views according to their evolving capacity. Children also need to acquire knowledge and skills for conflict resolution, decision making and communication. Once children have participated and communicated their concerns, there is need for their views to be respected and taken into account, particularly on issues affecting their welfare. This theme has been continued under the banner of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with citizen education, a theme under SDGs four and sixteen (Assembly, 2015; Nilson et al., 2016).

3.2. Legislation in Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe has 10 provinces and 61 Rural District Councils (RDCs). Urban areas, as guided by the Urban Councils Act of 1996, are governed by councillors who report to mayors and are elected every five years (Dewa et al., 2014). While the concept of Executive Mayors was introduced in 1987, this was scrapped in 2008 through an policy amendment that now required Mayors to be elected into office by councillors i.e. Rural District Council Act [Chapter 29:13] and the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15]. Youth participation, nationally, is guaranteed by the 2013 National Constitution, the Traditional Leaders Act and Rural District Councils Act. These three clearly outline provisions for youth participation while the Zimbabwean Constitution further articulates the measures expected for youth in Sections 19, 20 and 81.
At a national level, Zimbabwe has the 2013 National Constitution, Traditional Leaders Act and Rural District Councils Act outlining provisions for youth participation. The Zimbabwean Constitution outlines the measures expected for youth in Sections 19, 20 and 81. The 2013 Zimbabwe National Youth Policy, African Youth Charter, as well as the 1991 Convention of the Rights of the Child, designate the 15–17 age groups as youth (National Youth Policy (NYP), 2000; African Union, 2006). In Zimbabwe, they are, however, (contradictorily) disfranchised from full participation due to how Section 81 of the Constitution designates anyone below the age of 18 as a child) (Mtew & Muchacha, 2017). There is therefore a need for the country to align its laws in accordance to the 2013 National Constitution. Some of the existential challenges emanating from a failure to do so, e.g., the adverse impact this has had on the evolution of a democratic culture amongst children, are discussed in the proceeding sections. Nonetheless, the 15–17 age groups in Zimbabwe can still make claim to the rights of participation by virtue of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 13) which speaks to the right to freedom of expression (including the right to seek and impart information and ideas).

The Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17) provides for the establishment of Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) in line with the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13). The VIDCO is accountable to the Village Assembly (VA) and outlines community project priorities. The VA is also tasked with deliberating on all issues pertaining to natural resources (including land and water), while also making suitable submissions according to the village plan. This therefore requires adequate village representation and without special consideration of all young people (including the 15–17 age groups as well as those living with disability), it means the VA is at risk of making non-representative resolutions. The VA elects and supervises the VIDCO, reviews village development plans before submission to the Ward Development Committee for incorporation into the Ward Development Plan. This VIDCO should deliberate as a committee as well as consult other community members on issues of concern.

The Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17) also provides for the establishment of VAs to deliberate on all matters affecting the interests and well-being of the village dwellers. VAs therefore comprise all dwellers who are over the age of 18 years. As argued before, the age factor is again limiting for dwellers aged between 15 and 17 years. As many young people aged 20–25 years migrate to urban areas in search of jobs, the exclusion of the 15–17 age group means that the VA will predominantly comprise seniors, who may be out of touch with the issues affecting those aged below 18 years. Given how Zimbabwe has a predominantly youthful population, young people’s input towards resolutions that determine their future needs, in regards to land and water for livelihoods, is of paramount importance (Nyoni & Bonga, 2017). Any form of exclusion (on the basis of age or disability) thus incapacitates the Traditional Leaders Act’s mandate of providing for the establishment of requisite decision-making structures, pertinent in the development of rural communities.

4. The state in Zimbabwe

The study conceptualizes youth as all persons between 15 and 35 years of age as stipulated in the 2013 Zimbabwe National Youth Policy, which was designed in accordance and alignment with the continental African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006). Literature often cites children, however, the Zimbabwean definition of youth includes the age group commonly referred to as children as those aged 15–18 in Zimbabwe are youth as well. Zimbabwe’s recent history has been characterised by attempts to reconfigure the local governance framework for political hegemony (Murisa, 2013). The 17th Amendment to the Constitution of 2005 expanded traditional authority and elected Rural District Councils which replicated the function of local government. In many areas, the traditional authorities have been reduced to appendages of the ruling party. The culture of violence in the governance system has since independence also spread to grassroots levels. The violent culture has been perpetuated by an increasing use of state offices including state apparatus for personal gain and growth of informal networks to choke avenues for political participation.
Maszuki & Macheka, Cogent Social Sciences (2020), 7: 1855742
https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1855742

Masvingo rural, by virtue of it being under rural district councils, also falls under the jurisdiction the traditional leaders who have declared their allegiance to Zanu PF and cordoned off these areas as a Zanu PF territory (despite the constitution requiring them to be apolitical) (Kubatana, 2019). The state has also attacked local civil society for being “unpatriotic” when it exposes the capture of the judiciary and governance structures. This attack has limited the capacity of civil society to contribute towards democratisation and increased citizen participation (Maclean, 2002). The youth space in political governance has also been largely limited by internal fights within the main political parties (Sachikonye, 2002). However, there has been an increase in the number of youth officers employed by government which would have been a largely positive step towards increasing support of youth programs in local communities (Newsday, 2017). However, youth officers have been appearing as ghost workers on the government payroll, recruited along partisan lines with Zanu PF rewarding its youth militias with posts in government (Newsday, 2018). VIDOCS and WADCOS are imbedded in this hostile political environment which affects the ability of youth to participate.

4.1. Formal and informal barriers to youth participation

There are numerous social and national benefits to promoting a culture of youth participation as it forms part of a much broader discourse on public participation and social justice (Cushing, 2015). Youth participation not only enhances young people’s ability to socialize and share their problems without facing undue criticism but it also promotes democratic ideals by allowing for diverse ideas to emerge (Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Youth participation goes beyond the scope of mere voting every few years, and is in fact a medium through which diverse social and political groups can be represented and accommodated. Youth participation enhances social justice, as well as development (Kurtenbach & Pawelz, 2015). Permitting young people to engage effectively, i.e. through unrestricted discussion, debate and decision making, possesses numerous social benefits particularly when the youth are permitted to be catalysts of change and agents of development (Egbo, 2012, p. 78; Augsberger et al., 2018, p. 41). Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development (through its motto on “leaving no one behind”), also speaks to an inclusive approach to developmental initiatives that accommodate all demographic groups.

Despite the existence of the above-mentioned advantages to youth participation, several challenges have inhibited this from happening. Such inhibitions to the effective participation of youth in governance structures include existential threats (structural or otherwise). Structural barriers include the processes of exclusion effected through the policies and actions of governments (Battrell & Armstrong, 2007, p. 354). Camino and Zeldin (2002) concur and submit that legislation, e.g., age restrictions codified within law, can encourage the exclusion of young people from actively participating in governance structures. A study focusing on child and youth participation in Ghana also identified the emphasis on age hierarchy as a limiting factor for participation. Apart from age, exclusion can also take a gender connotation as exemplified by the belief that allowing young women to participate would somehow make them arrogant and disrespectful (Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 288). Citizenship functions, such as voting, serving as parliamentarians or serving on organizational boards, etc., may therefore disfranchise individuals who are not only below a stipulated age of majority, but also of a certain gender (Camino & Zeldin, 2002, p. 214). Nevertheless, even when progressive or inclusive policy frameworks are in existence, normative implementation gaps can still persist. In Ghana, for instance, although considerable efforts have been made in passing supportive legislation, authorities have failed to implement the agreed laws, with community members effectively limiting youth participation (Battrell & Armstrong, 2007, p. 354; Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 290).

Exclusions against young people, in contravention of existing policy frameworks (as in the Ghanaian case), are a traditional phenomenon rationalised by how children have been historically categorized as ranking below other community members, with reprisals and punishment commonly being meted out for being “too expressive” (Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017). This phenomenon is not peculiar to Africa alone. It is argued that, adults, regardless of culture and nationality,
believe it is their duty to educate, direct, control, discipline and entertain young people instead of listening to or learning from them. Such an approach emanates from a lack of comprehension on the benefits of youth participation. Under what has been demarcated as “safe” participation, youth involvement (particularly for those aged between 15 and 17) has thus often been confined to the private sphere, i.e. the family, with the perilous public sphere mostly being an area for adults to control (Nairn et al., 2006).

Civic knowledge programs that have a vertical top-down orientation have also failed to engage young people, i.e. when youth are invited to participate in community governance they are often expected to do so on the terms, processes and settings set by adults (Harris, 2006, p. 224; Augsberger et al., 2018, p. 44). Vertical top-down conceptualisations of youth representation have also resulted in the creation of an elite group of young people, modelled to represent all others within their demographic group. Participation has also been compromised by selective flaws of including “brainy kids” or those youth who are viewed by adults as being more industrious (Nairn et al., 2006, p. 257). A principal limiting factor to participation in Zimbabwe, for instance, has been the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) strategy of utilising local structures for political control and accumulation (Alexander & McGregor, 2013). This strategy has adversely compromised the ability of governance structures to promote youth participation, while also compromising youth’s ability to fully participate in its social environment. In the wake of all these challenges, this paper proceeds to examine the inhibitions to youth participation as a “social need”, through focusing on the very structures that offer opportunities for participation in community planning (Chacón, 2007, p. 127).

5. Theory: Hart’s ladder of child participation
The study utilised Hart’s Ladder of Child Participation to explain the modes of participation offered by the VIDCOs and WADCOs. The model (consisting of varying stages of participation) has been used as a comprehensive tool for measuring performance by child protection practitioners (Eguren, 2008; Hart, 2008). The concept is based on Arnstein’s essay on Adult Participation, with scholars such as Hart going on to outline the rungs as representations of varying forms of participation (Hart, 1987). At the lowest rung, manipulation is given as a level of participation. This level involves children taking up causes that they might not have an in-depth understanding of. Hart’s conceptualisation of manipulation, as representing a scenario whereby children are consulted but not provided with feedback, makes the framework suitable for this study (Hart, 1992, p. 8). This is particularly so, given how most African governments have been accused of developing policies that further disfranchise marginalized groups (mostly due to consultation devoid of feedback) (Agbakwa, 2002; Gaventa & Runciman, 2016; Hanlon et al., 2017; Richter & Panday, 2007).

The African phenomenon where most youth and children have little opportunity to formulate their own opinions is conceptualised as constituting a form of decoration and tokenism, i.e. children are either used as adornments for pre-set agendas or are only involved through pseudo-participation (Hart, 1992). Tokenism holds, at the core, a belief that the child participation methods and strategies currently employed and chosen by adults are adequate; however, the failure of some adult-initiated programs and policies have proven that this is not always the case (Campbell et al., 2009; Gibbs et al., 2010). Under tokenism, the use of age and ability (charisma or eloquence), as preconditions for participation, is argued in the theory as undermining the interests of the youth (Hart, 1992, 2008, p. 21). This is a major concern in Zimbabwe where, apart from there being limited platforms for young people to be engaged, there is also no rapport, i.e. what is termed engagement with the more experienced members of the community. The risk of children and youth’s participation being used for political leverage is therefore a risk that needs to be managed (Rogoff, 1990).

Participatory elements whereby children are given both functional and symbolic roles (assigned but informed), i.e. with the agenda predetermined by adults, are also represented in the model. Hart argues that assuming a peripheral role may not result in the beneficiaries’ ownership of the
final product (Aguilar, 1998, p. 8). Although the sixth rung is adult initiated, there is, however, shared decision making with children which is essential in development programs, i.e. it determines the level of support that a project will receive from community members (Berten & Leisering, 2017). Hart (2008, p. 26) then outlines the need to include groups that may be excluded because of some special characteristic, including age and disability. The debate on youth being a homogenous group is an important one to consider when planning on inclusion strategies (Powers et al., 2014). In the preceding rungs (child initiated and directed) as well as the highest rung, there is a transition towards an environment which acknowledges young people as actors who are capable of making decisions and engaging in activities of their choice (Ofosu-Kus, 2017). There is therefore room to cooperate and flourish with an emphasis on decisions that are child initiated but shared with adults. This model reveals that in the ideal model for children, adults still have an active and crucial role to play. This model is therefore essential to this study as it provides a baseline to assess the participatory nature of structures in Zimbabwe as children and youth will be able to locate themselves within a particular rung.

6. Material and methods
In Zimbabwe, child and youth participation have become a complex problem which cannot be explored effectively using a quantitative design (Creswell et al., 2007; Mbaleka, 2017). In examining the challenge of youth participation in Zimbabwe through the lived experiences of the youth, the study thus adopted an exploratory approach. Undertaken in a rural setting, a qualitative paradigm was most ideal as it not only allowed the researcher to gain understanding of an unfamiliar environment but also empowered the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Ross, 2017). Young people were able to communicate their concerns and share their experiences in a safe space with minimal risk of reprisal. The study also empowered young women to speak about their issues without having a male speak for them as has been highlighted as a key challenge affecting young women in the province (Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust, 2017). Mavungo province was selected due to the history of violence, patriarchy and marginalization that has also affected young people (Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust, 2017). Young people in political groupings have been accused of taking part in violence and this also necessitated the study (Maramba, 2016). The last elections in Zimbabwe continued to have accusations of violence despite the ouster of former President, RG Mugabe. The researchers previously worked with youth-serving civil society organizations within the area and this facilitated entry and acceptance into the area. This background also provided knowledge of local culture which is important in approaching community members and local leadership. This knowledge provided the necessary credibility and acceptance by the local community. To ensure that participants would not be targeted for sharing information, the researcher used safe spaces within the community for meetings and anonymity was maintained for participants.

Due to the high mobility of the youth, the Youth District Office and two civil society organisations operating in the ward assisted in mobilizing Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants who had lived in the community for at least 2 years prior to the study. Participants in the FGD were drawn from two local villages nearest to the community centre, i.e. where the FGDS (90 minutes each) were held. With a total of 25 participants (14 males and 11 females), the three FGDS had eight youths in the first one (four females and four males), another 8 youths in the second FGD (five males and three females), then lastly 9 youths in the third FGD (four females and five males) (Longhurst, 2003; Secor, 2010). While the study delimited its focus on the youth, i.e. the 15–35 age group, the terminology “child” was adopted in the study to refer to youths who are below the legal age of majority (15–17 age group) as articulated in Section 81 of the Zimbabwean Constitution (National Youth Policy (NYP), 2000; African Union, 2006). For ethical purposes, however, the study purposively selected FGD participants above the legal age of majority with the final sample having an age range of 18–29-year-old participants. A balance was struck to accommodate youth who participated in VIDCO community meetings as well as those who did not. In depth face-to-face interviews were also conducted with two Youth Ward Coordinators from the ward who worked with youth in local development initiatives, including youth participation in governance structures.
By utilizing a list of registered organizations permitted to work within the politically volatile area, expert purposive sampling was used to select two Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) from the ward. From these NGOs, two key informants (program managers), were purposively selected to add value to the study. Informed consent forms were distributed and signed in all instances. In analysing i.e. identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within all of the qualitative datasets (FGDs and Interviews), the study used thematic content analysis.

6.1. Ethics
Research ethics are an important element of research. Ethical considerations were observed during data collection and analysis. The researchers established appropriate interaction with gatekeepers and community leaders whom they knew and had interacted with in previous studies. The objectives of the study and the focus area were shared with gatekeepers, this facilitated community entry/approval as it was clear the researchers had no ulterior motives. The absence of any financial incentive in the study and the voluntary nature of participation was outlined to gatekeepers. This was important in addressing any misconceptions pertaining to the research. The researchers were also known to have no political affiliations by the gatekeepers and this credibility ensured that permission for the study was given. Participants anonymity was guaranteed and the researcher who was conversant with the local language explained the study's expectations to the participants.

7. Obstacles to youth participation

7.1. Preconditions for participation
Due to how the legal age of majority in Zimbabwe is 18 years of age, the study identified that those below 18 are often excluded from participation, i.e. the 15–17 age group. Disregarding young people's opinions on the premise that they are below the age of majority overlooks their evolving capacity in planning or participation, i.e. the democratic culture may not be fully developed when they reach the age of majority if it is not inculcated earlier. Kurtenbach and Pawelz (2015), concur and argue that youth participation should go beyond just voting every few years. Due to a myopic focus on voting, at the turn of 18 years of age, young people may have a limited understanding of their democratic duty and presume that casting a ballot is the only method of participation. Age restrictions, codified within law, can also encourage the exclusion of young people from participating in governance structures, as is the case with age hierarchies in Ghana (Camino & Zeldin, 2002, p. 213; Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 288). Without the youth voice demanding accountability, a governance framework may prevail where public officials are unaccountable. Without being integrated within the democratic and governance structures at an early stage, young people are at the mercy of extremist groups that often advocate for violent protests or radical modes of participation, which breed instability and threaten socioeconomic development.

Exclusion from participation by females because of their gender as stated by Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 288) was also noted in the target ward in Masvingo. A study done by a youth civil society organization revealed that in Masvingo wards, women are not allowed to speak at a community meeting and can only speak through their husband (Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust, 2017). Young women in the FGDs outlined how a strict dress code was expected for them to even attend a village meeting and this limit them from addressing the community at meetings. The young women felt that the dress codes were restrictive as their socialization in their own families now allows them to wear what they are comfortable with. Young women highlighted that they cannot be expected to dress like the older women in the community for their ideas to be heard. However, they highlighted that some NGO had helped them understand that adhering to the dress code is a small price to pay for their ideas to be heard and this has helped some young women to adhere to the dress code for the meetings.

The FGDs revealed how the majority of the youth who are in VIDCOs are young males, a finding that validates the patriarchal nature of rural Zimbabwe with its associated
repressiveness towards women (Chiweshe et al., 2015; Gordon, 1994; Schmidt, 1991). Furthermore, the revelation that the majority of the young males are relatives of the community leaders suggests nepotism as one of the issues impeding equitable participation in the VIDCOs. The findings also revealed how participating began initially through unofficial roles, e.g., as secretaries and note takers transcribing the proceedings of the meetings. Thereafter, the criteria used to select the youth who would become part and parcel of the committees were unclear. Apart from nepotism, the questionability of the selection criteria used to select youth representatives also poses a risk of creating an elite group, i.e. what Nairn et al. (2006, p. 257) argue as a selection process that is non-representative of the youth demography and is manipulated by adults. In the absence of mechanisms that allow youth to participate in selecting their representatives, the youth representatives on the committees risk rejection. In the area of study for instance, the elite group of selected youth representatives was at risk of rejection by the communal youth, amidst allegations that they were selected by adults. Young people who participated in the FGDs outlined how two councillors had their niece and son incorporated into the VIDCO. Youth then revealed that such youth who are chosen to represent them are as elite as their parents and cannot speak on their behalf due to differences in lived realities. Youth also argued that they doubt the authenticity of such youth as they would not expect them to speak against their own relative who has nominated them thus are not a trustworthy group.

7.2. Pseudo participation and exclusionary threats to participation

While the Zimbabwean Constitution has been progressive in providing for youth participation (as enshrined in Section 20 and 81 of the 2013 Constitution), establishing the effectiveness of VIDCOs and WADCOs as platforms for youth participation illuminates government responsiveness to the youth’s concerns. Supportive legislation and policy, including the National Youth Policy and Transitional Stabilisation Program, provides a supportive legislative framework that helps ensure critical youth participation. The methodology utilized in the study was responsible for encouraging such candid honesty from the participants i.e. an exploratory approach gave participants a semblance of an open/safe platform. As a result, during the FGDs, a 22-year-old male as well as a 26-year-old female, fearlessly gave the following responses that exposed the repressive nature of elderly members and their expectation for government to provide a conducive framework to enable their full participation:

Village Development Committees are headed by the old people who do not appear concerned about youth welfare.

These old people just want us as place holders and as secretaries but never take up our issues of concern.

The responses shared above are representative of the majority of sentiments aired during the FGDs with youths raising complaints of how they were often relegated to note taking and administrative (secretarial) functions within VIDCOs. This is substantiated by studies that identify failures in vertical top-down interventions as principally emanating from an inability to fully engage young people, with the terms, processes and settings of such engagements being determined by adults (Harris, 2006, p. 224; Augsberger et al., 2018, p. 44). Hart’s Ladder of Child Participation discourages pseudo-participation and validates youth’s conceptualisation of their participation as place holders (tokenism) (Hart, 1992). The FGDs also revealed how even when their opinions were solicited, such inclusion was usually ceremonial, with no tangible efforts towards implementing issues that would have long been on the agenda. Consequently, young people in the target ward felt deterred from participating in local governance structures. Hart, through what he terms “decoration and tokenism”, also identified such scenarios where youths are used as adornments of pre-set agendas (Hart, 1992).

The poor attendance of youths in bill hearings around the country (public hearings where information is gathered by a Parliamentary Portfolio Committee so that the publics views are incorporated/considered before the Bill before is passed into law), was blamed by the civil society participants as emanating from exclusionary arrangements, i.e. the inconvenient time that the bill
hearings were held (between 10am and 2pm during school days). This relegated the majority of youth to very peripheral roles in issues pertinent to their future, as they could not contribute to the bills (Aguilar, 1998, p. 8). Secondly, the holding of the bill hearings at centralized urban points further excluded rural youths from contributing, i.e. due to poverty they often lacked the requisite funds to travel. Hart recognises the danger in exclusionary practices and outlines the need to include groups that may be excluded because of some special characteristic. Given how the bill hearings proceeded despite all these challenges that effectively excluded the majority of youth, participants lamented how the entire process seemed to be done to rubberstamp a course of action that they did not have an influence upon.

Other exclusionary threats to participation in Zimbabwe were discernible, for instance, through how the Child Parliament allowed for only a single representative to be selected per constituency. This effectively excluded the majority of young people (Gwirayi & Shumba, 2011). According to Section 20 (1b) of the Zimbabwean Constitution, the State shall ensure youth have an opportunity to associate and be represented in political, social and economic life. This should be reflected in all governance institutions and governance structures available. However, the Child Parliament is neither ward-based nor village-based, thus limiting its reach and influence. Nairn et al. (2006, p. 257), argue that such bottlenecking or exclusionary practices amount to a compromise in participation.

8. Participatory structures: operationalization challenges

8.1. Implementation gaps: structural factors

Given how the discourse on grassroots democracy and participatory planning is shifting decision making from the exclusive domain of professional planners to inclusive community participation, foregrounding the experiences of civil society actors operating within the target ward was very important to the study (Senbel, 2007, p. 455). Camino and Zeldin (2002, p. 213), concur and view the inculcation of inclusive participation as a primary component of civil society’s functions. However, in the target ward, the study identified that the effectiveness of civil society was severely compromised by an existentially conflictive relationship between NGOs and government. Consequently, youth participation programs (by virtue of how they are a politically charged issue) were for the most part left at the mercy and behest of government. Subsequently, the state-initiated youth participation programs in the target ward have since failed to realise their intended goals with “consultation devoid of feedback” being one of their biggest limitations (Agbakwa, 2002; Gaventa & Runciman, 2016; Hanlon et al., 2017; Richter & Panday, 2007).

Youth and child participation in Zimbabwe is also being deterred by a state failure to adopt and fully implement internationally recognized human rights instruments. These include the AU roadmap on the inclusion of youth in decision making, the African Union (2006) Article 11(d), 11(b), 11(e), and so forth (African Union, 2006, 2017, p. 9). While Zimbabwe has ratified the majority of edicts on youth participation, civil society participants claimed that there was little effort from government officials to fully adopt such tenets. A manager of a local NGO operating within Masvingo Rural, said the following:

Zimbabwean leaders just sign and pledge to adopt instruments that they do not understand thereby limiting the full adoption of principles that underly such instruments.

In essence, just as seen elsewhere in other African states, while the Zimbabwean law allows for participatory platforms (Rural District Councils Act Chapter 29:13 and the Traditional Leaders Act Chapter 29:17), the political will from government to promote this participation appears to be missing (Bottrell & Armstrong, 2007, p. 354; Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 290).

The study’s results also revealed that although the legislative arms of government were formulating progressive legislation, such policy reforms were being undermined by a failure to
implement such edicts. This had an adverse effect on the operations of local NGOs as they complained that the administrative vacuum created by governments inadequacies negatively impacted on their mandates, which were specifically “to support the government as opposed to assuming the role of a parallel government”. Similar to the aforementioned studies in Ghana, a disjuncture between policy formulation and implementation alienates the youth from critical engagement platforms (Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 290). Interview participants argued that adequate implementation was stifled by government officials’ limited knowledge of requisite conventions and laws governing youth participation. The Zimbabwean Constitution’s silence on making qualifications mandatory to run for National Assembly, as well as the failure to make possession of prior knowledge of the country’s laws or constitution a prerequisite when running for local authority, etc., have created many structural inefficiencies that have affected child and youth participation. Although councillors and policy makers should receive capacity building through local authorities and parliament, due to a shortage of funds, this training seldomly occurs. Consequently, local authorities and parliamentarians have had to rely heavily on civil society partners to facilitate such training.

The monetary constraints stated above have also meant that youth participatory issues in Zimbabwe have received peripheral priority in the national fiscus. Youth participation in the country is governed by the Zimbabwe Youth Council and the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation, a Ministry that has largely been underfunded with only 53 USD million allocated from treasury for the entire 2019 programming year (shared between the Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation functions). Although government has ascribed the paltry budget allocation to limited resources, this allocation can be challenged as a lack of political will to support youth participation and is partly rationalized by ideas that youth participatory platforms in rural areas are low cost or community based and do not always require funds. In the wake of poor funding, securing finances to fund programs that facilitate youth participation has left the Ministry of Youth with no other viable option but to solicit assistance from NGO (Bornstein, 2004).

8.2. Political interference and generational or ideological conflicts

While the study focused on VIDCOs and WADCOs as independent structures, it discovered that political actors and institutions often interfere with the functioning of such structures ( politicization of governance structures). Although Section 281 of the Zimbabwean Constitution outlines that traditional leaders should not participate in partisan politics or violate the rights and freedoms of any person, there have been many incidents of traditional leaders pledging their allegiance to Zanu PF (Makahamadze et al., 2009). Young people also shared the opinion that the available participatory platforms were only there to facilitate bidding for the ruling party, an issue which calls for the prevention of such institutions from being an appendage of the ruling party.

The FGD participants revealed how seniors often used the name of the ruling political party youth wing to access resources at the expense of the youth league members. Alexander and McGregor (2013) identify this as a common strategy used by African political parties in exploiting local structures for political control, while limiting youth participation. Consequently, the youths in this ward were frustrated in their attempts to participate, with one 28-year-old former youth cell leader complaining that:

Through our party youth wing, we requested for chicks to start a youth poultry project but when the chicks were delivered, senior party members took these for their own use.

Such behaviour has alienated young people from the development discourse, as they are often used as a means to access resources by opportunistic party members. Youth shared that the VIDCOs and WADCOs members are often the same leaders within the ruling party and often have positions which allow them to siphon resources in the name of their village or ward. The idea of community leaders being leading political party members presents youth with a challenge in that if they are not aligned with the same party, it becomes difficult to access opportunities. Youth
highlighted that the situation is even more dire for their age mates who are associated with the opposition parties in their rural area as they cannot access economic opportunities from the VIDCO or WADCO due to their political association. In any case, youth from the ruling party and the opposition all then face challenges in accessing resources and thereby choose to remain either apolitical or switch loyalties as the political tides shift. Youth’s exclusion or impoverishment on the altar of political elite’s self-enrichment has also been discernible in Senegal, Mali and Chad (Hanlon et al., 2017; Resnick & Thurlow, 2015). This also steers the discussion on youth participation towards patronage associated with political kinships. It is therefore fundamental to explore how political parties (as democratic and governance institutions) understand youth participation without romanticizing their role in a democracy. As an antithesis to their democratic mandate, political parties often disempower the youth demographic (Gaventa & Runciman, 2016).

Young people also outlined that they feel frustrated by the approach used by community leaders in addressing issues raised by members during the community meetings. Young people complained that adults often use baroque diction without directly addressing an issue. In contrast, young people directly address an issue without using elaborate diction and expect a straightforward response which adults do not often give. An example that was cited was on discussions of misappropriation of donated food items that occurred in the community. In elaborating on the issue, one male youth said:

These old people waste time in long talks without addressing the issue head on. A prominent community member diverted donated food items but when it was time to discuss the issue as a community, the community leaders failed to openly declare accusations against this community member.

The older community members would not directly address a community member who had misappropriated the donations whilst youth’s confrontational approach presented a divergent methodology. Bottrell and Armstrong (2007) explore how cultural community practices, such as in this given scenario, may limit participation. The practice of African leaders preferring to address each other’s misdemeanours in private, and not in public fora, limits the participatory governance synonymous with a democracy (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Again, this points towards the rules of participation being a vertical or top-down pre-determined process by adults; the resultant programs then fall short of their mandate to engage young people (Harris, 2006, p. 224; Augsberger et al., 2018, p. 44). Youth therefore need to be involved in participatory governance because, apart from being citizens, they also possess the time, energy and enthusiasm to imagine a vastly more just future (Senbel, 2007, p. 459).

As presented by Hart, as a child initiated and directed model, this paper argues for such an arrangement where there is intergenerational dialogue in tackling the expectations of different demographic groups, i.e. what Carlson (2005, p. 221) terms youth and adult partnerships. Ofosu-Kus (2017) conceptualises this as an environment that acknowledges young people as actors who are capable of making decisions and engaging in activities of their choice.

9. Conclusion and recommendations: future participation

Zimbabwe has committed to a devolution process through enhanced participation (outlined in Section 264 of the national constitution). Although this should involve a child and youth cantered urban governance framework, urban planning in the country has been largely tokenistic without any meaningful consideration of children’s issues. The enactment of the 1991 Local Government Code in the Philippines granted planning, financial and administrative autonomy to local government units which enabled local government to pursue pro-child urban governance. This could serve as a best practice for Zimbabwe as it seeks to decentralize government functions while promoting communities where young people have the right to manage their own affairs. However, it is crucial to note that political will is required to ensure that local government and communities fully enjoy their ability to self-determination.
Apart from a lack of political will, the segmented nature of service delivery also hinders equal participation, i.e. it is difficult to engage all the various service providers towards a unified promotion of youth participation. There is also a lack of coordination on service delivery within certain countries, which makes it difficult to find one body that can be strategically engaged to tackle youth exclusion. Zimbabwe’s devolution process promises to decentralise service provisioning to local councils and local authorities thus providing an opportunity to have improved youth participation in local governance in line with the UNICEF and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI). There is therefore a need to move beyond child friendly cities to child friendly communities which would encompass rural settings in Africa. In establishing VIDOCS and WADCOs as mechanisms to facilitate meaningful participation for all young people, the realities of patriarchy and overbearing political influence from political parties need to be taken into consideration as they ultimately have a bearing on society’s ability to fully democratize such participatory structures (Chiweshe et al., 2015; Gordon, 1994; Schmidt, 1991).

Given how some cultural elements go against liberal policies and participatory institutions, an open and inclusive approach that is not adult centric or male-dominated needs to be developed. An open village or ward committee would be one where young people are free to express their views because even though the processes of engagement may be adult initiated, there can still be shared decision making with children (Berten & Leisering, 2017). Supportive legislation and political will, to facilitate youth participation at the community level, will also be required and this can be done through adequate budgetary allocation for youth programs, training, etc. Carlson (2005) argues that successful youth participation is determined by strong youth and adult partnerships, as well as the continual viewing of young people as resources in ongoing programs. Government therefore needs to commit to reengaging young people with a view to genuinely taking their issues into consideration, i.e. there is a need to ensure that young people’s perspectives in the VIDOCs and WADCOs are considered, so that such structures effectively serve their function of ensuring citizen participation. In nurturing and developing a democratic culture, there is also a need for political will amongst adult actors to ensure that children and youth are involved in a peaceful manner. Available platforms have vast potential but need to be improved so that they are accepted by segments of the population that they are meant to serve.

Funding
The authors received no direct funding for this research.

Author details
Sikanyiso Masuku
E-mail: sikanyiso.masuku@gmail.com
Tafadzwo Macheko
E-mail: tafadzwo@zetw.net
1 Centre for Social science research (CSSR), University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, South Africa.
2 Advocacy and Research department, Youth Empowerment Trust, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Citation information
Cite this article as: Policy making and governance structures in Zimbabwe: examining their efficacy as a conduit to equitable participation (inclusion) and social justice for rural youths, Sikanyiso Masuku & Tafadzwo Macheka, Cogent Social Sciences (2020), 7: 1855742.

References
African Union. (2006). African youth charter. https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter_e.pdf15October1542

African Union. (2017). AU roadmap on harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth. Retrieved October 15, from https://aouyouthenvoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/AU-2017-DD-ROADMAP-Final-EN.pdf

Afrobarometer. (2018). Addressing the needs of the youth. Retrieved May 23, 2019, from http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis/analyse-online

Agbakwa, S. C. (2002). Reclaiming humanity: Economic, social, and cultural rights as the cornerstone of African human rights. Yale Human Rights and Development Law Journal, 5(1), 177–216.

Aguilar, M. I. (1998). The politics of age and gerontocracy in Africa: Ethnographies of the past & memories of the present. Africa World Press.

Alexander, J., & McGregor, J. (2013). Introduction: Politics, patronage and violence in Zimbabwe. Journal of Southern African Studies, 39(4), 749–763. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2013.862100

Amapanda, J. S. (2018). The African Union (AU), the African Youth Commission (AYC) and the Pan-African Youth Union (PYU): Sabotaging or bureaucratizing the youth? Retrieved May 23, 2018, from http://repository.unam.edu.na/handle/11070/2500

Appell, A. R. (2009). The pre-political child of child-centered jurisprudence. Houston Law Review, 46 (3), 703–757. Washington University School of Law Working Paper No. 09-09-02.

Assembly, G. (2013). Sustainable development goals (SDGs) transforming our world: the, (2030).

Augsburger, A., Collins, M. E., & Gecker, W. (2018). Engaging youth in municipal government: Moving toward a youth-centric practice. Journal of
Community Practice, 26(1), 41–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2017.1413023

Bennell, P. (2007). Promoting livelihood opportunities for rural youth. Paper for IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) Governing Council Roundtable: Generating Remunerative Livelihood Opportunities for Rural Youth. Knowledge and Skills for Development. Retrieved September 14, 2019, from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.360.2874&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Berten, J., & Leisering, L. (2017). Social policy by numbers. How international organisations construct global policy proposals. International Journal of Social Welfare, 26(2), 151–167. https://doi.org/10.1111/1jsw.12246

Björnsdóttir, P., & Einarsdóttir, J. (2017). Child participation in Ghana: Responsibilities and rights. In E. Oinas, H. Ondøra, & L. Suurpää (Eds.), What politics? Youth and political engagement in Africa (pp. 285–299).

Bornstein, E. (2004). The spirit of development: Protestant NGOs, morality, and economics in Zimbabwe. Routledge.

Bottrel, D., & Armstrong, D. (2007). Changes and exchanges in marginal youth transitions. Journal of Youth Studies, 10(3), 353–371. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260701342616

Camino, L., & Zeldin, S. (2002). From periphery to center: Pathways for youth civic engagement in the day-to-day life of communities. Applied Development Science, 6(4), 213–220. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0506048

Campbell, C., Gibbs, A., Maimane, S., Nair, Y., & Sibiyá, Z. (2009). Youth participation in the fight against AIDS in South Africa: From policy to practice. Journal of Youth Studies, 12(1), 93–109. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260802345757

Carlson, C. (2005). Youth with influence: The youth planner initiative in Hampton, Virginia. Children Youth and Environments, 15(2), 211–226.

Chacón, S. M. (2007). Adolescent participation in impoverished urban communities: The case of the Jovenes de la Cuadra group. Children Youth and Environments, 17(2), 126–146.

Chifamba, E. (2013). Confronting the challenges and barriers to community participation in rural development initiatives in Dhuhera district, ward 12 Zimbabwe. International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review, 1(2), 01–19.

Chiweshe, M. K., Chakona, L., & Helliker, K. (2015). Patriarchy, women, land and livelihoods on A1 farms in Zimbabwe. Journal of Asian and African Studies, 50(6), 716–731. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909614541083

Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. The Counseling Psychologist, 35(2), 236–264.

Cushing, D. F. (2015). Promoting youth participation in communities through youth master planning. Community Development, 46(1), 43–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2014.975139

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Strategies of qualitative inquiry vol. 2. Sage.

Dewa, D., Dziva, C., & Mukwashi, K. (2014). Exploring local governance challenges in Zimbabwe under the government of national unity era and beyond. International Journal of Political Science and Development, 2(8), 188–196.

Egbo, R. (2012). Technologies of governance: An examination of youth participation in development discourses. Canadian Journal of Development Studies/ Revue Canadienne D’Études Du Développement, 33 (1), 77–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2012.660873

Eguren, I. R. (2008). Moving up and down the ladder: Community-based participation in public dialogue and implementation in Bolivia and Guatemala. Community Development Journal, 43(3), 312–328.

Gaventa, J., & Runciman, C. (2016). 12. Untangling economic and political inequality: The case of South Africa. In World social science report, 2016 challenging inequalities: Pathways to a just world (pp. 70). UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and ISSC (International Social Science Council).

Gey, E., Lee, M., & Ngwenya, P. (2017). The demographic dividend in Africa relies on investments in the reproductive health and rights of adolescents and youth. Population Reference Bureau (PRB) Policy Brief. Retrieved September 2, 2019, from https://assets.prb.org/pdf17/AU620Brief.pdf

Gibbs, A., Campbell, C., Maimane, S., & Nair, Y. (2010). Mismatches between youth aspirations and participatory HIV/AIDS programmes in South Africa. African Journal of AIDS Research, 9(2), 153–163. https://doi.org/10.2989/16085906.2010.517482

Gordon, R. (1994). Education policy and gender in Zimbabwe. Gender and Education, 6(2), 131–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/095402594006203

Gwirayi, P., & Shumba, A. (2011). Children’s rights: How much do Zimbabwe urban secondary school pupils know? The International Journal of Children’s Rights, 19(2), 195–204. https://doi.org/10.1163/157181810X513199

Hanlon, T. M., Richmond, A. K., Shelji, J., & Myers, G. (2017). Cultural identity in the peri-urban African landscape: A case study from Pikine, Senegal. African Geographical Review, 38(2), 1–15.

Harris, A. (2006). Introduction: Critical perspectives on child and youth participation in Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa. Children Youth and Environments, 16(2), 220–230. INCLUSIVEPICTURE*/varfolders/km/17/32tb0r4f878tkh0byjxjd40000gn/T/com.microsoft.Word/WebArchiveCopyPasteTempFiles/page25image7886160**MERGEFORMATNET

Hart, R. A. (1987). Children’s participation in planning and design. In C. S. Weinstein & T. G. David (Eds.), Spaces for children. Springer.

Hart, R. A. (1992). Children’s participation: From tokenism to the innocent? (Essay no. 4.). International Child Development Centre.

Hart, R. A. (2008). Stepping back from ‘The ladder’: Reflections on a model of participatory work with children. In A. Reid, B. B. Jensen, J. Nikel, & V. Simovska (Eds.), Participation and learning (pp. 19–31). Springer. Holland, H. (2012). Dinner with Mugabe: The untold story of a freedom fighter who became a tyrant. Penguin Random House South Africa.

Jimenez, E. Y., & Murthi, M. (2006). Investing in the youth bulge. Finance and Development, 43(3), 9.

Kubatana. (2019). Chief Charumbira in contempt of court. http://kubatana.net/2019/09/30/chief-charumbira-in-contempt-of-court/

Kurebwa, J. (2014). Rural women’s representation and participation in local governance in the Masvingo and Mashonaland Central Provinces of Zimbabwe.

Kurtenbach, S., & Pawelz, J. (2015). Voting is not enough: Youth and political citizenship in post-war societies. Peacebuilding, 3(2), 141–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2015.1052629

Longhurst, R. (2003). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In N. Clifford & G. Valentine (Eds.), Key methods in geography (pp. 117–132). SAGE.
Maclean, S. J. (2002). The political economy of conflict in Zimbabwe. Third World Quarterly, 23(3), 513–528. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590201384202

Makhamadze, T., Grand, N., & Tavayanago, B. (2009). The role of traditional leaders in fostering democracy, justice and human rights in Zimbabwe. African Anthropologist, 16(1&2), 33–47.

Maramba, G. (2016). Cases of political violence rise in Zimbabwe’s Masvingo Region. https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/cases-political-violence-rise-zimbabwe-masvingo-region

Mbaleka, S. (2017). Addressing the ten commonly asked questions about qualitative research in the Philippines. Qualitative Report, 22(13), 3481–3492.

Moore, D. (2011). Zimbabwe’s media: Between party-state politics and press freedom under Mugabe’s rule. In H. Besada (Ed.), Zimbabwe (pp. 55–79). New York.

Mtemwa, E., & Muchacha, M. (2017). Decolonising childcare practice in rural Zimbabwe. In M. Gray (Ed.), The handbook of social work and social development in Africa (pp. 121–132). Routledge.

Murisa, T. (2013) Democratization and control: Fasttrack and local government reforms in Zimbabwe. Journal of Contemporary African Studies, 32(1), 77–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2013.810904

Nairn, K., Sligo, J., & Freeman, C. (2006). Polarizing participation in local government: Which young people are included and excluded? Children Youth and Environments, 16(2), 248–271.

National Youth Policy (NYP). (2000). Zimbabwe national youth policy Retrieved May 23, from http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Zimbabwe_2000_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

Newsday. (2017, May 17). Over 400 “ghost” youth officers identified in Manicaland. https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/05/400-ghost-youth-officers-identified-manicaland/

Newsday. (2018, October 10). Government targets ghost workers. https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/10/govt-targets-ghost-workers/

Nilson, M., Griggs, D., & Visbeck, M. (2016). Policy: Map the interactions between sustainable development goals. Nature News, 534(7607), 320. https://doi.org/10.1038/534320a

Nyoni, T., & Bonga, W. G. (2017). Population growth in Zimbabwe: A threat to economic development?

Dynamic Research Journals Journal of Economics and Finance, 2(6), 29–39.

Ofosu-Kus, Y. (ed.). (2017). Children’s agency and development in African societies. CODESRIA.

Powers, M. M., Evangelides, A., & Offerdahl, K. (2014). Overcoming youth marginalization: Conference report and policy recommendations.

Resnick, D., & Thurlow, J. (eds.). (2015). African youth and the persistence of marginalization: Employment, politics, and prospects for change. Routledge.

Richter, L., & Panday, S. (2007). Youth in Africa: Participation and protection. Africa Insight, 37(3), 291–307.

Rogoff, B. (1990). Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context. Oxford University Press.

Ross, K. (2017). Making empowering choices: How methodology matters for empowering research participants. Forum Qualitative Sozialisforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 18(3), 17.

Sachikonye, L. M. (2002). Whither Zimbabwe? Crisis and democratization. Review of African Political Economy, 29, 91,13–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305624020868581

Schmidt, E. (1991). Patriarchy, capitalism, and the colonial state in Zimbabwe. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 16(4), 732–756. https://doi.org/10.1086/494701

Secor, A. (2010). Social surveys, interviews, and focus groups. In B. Gomez & J. Jones III (Eds.), Research methods in Geography (pp. 194–205). Wiley-Blackwell.

Senbel, M. (2007). Engaging youth to engage community in sustainable grassroots planning. Children, Youth and Environments, 17(2), 454–460. INCLUDEPICTURE "\var\folders/km/1732tb0m4fd87tkh08yxxj4d00000gnT\com.microsoft.Word/WebArchiveCopyPasteTempFiles\page28image7954384*.MERGEFORMATINET"

Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust. (2017). An assessment of issues influencing youth participation in elections and decision making in Zimbabwe. (pp. 23–24).

Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organizational governance.
