

Evaluating Public Participation in a Project Review: A Nigerian Case Study

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Background: Rooted in national and international laws regarding project planning and implementation is public participation. However, it is unclear whether public projects are enabling sufficient public input or are likely to be able to meet future management planning needs; particularly in developing countries.

Purpose: We assessed people's experiences when contributing to a public project decision-making in order to understand the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threat to effective public participation.

Setting: We conducted this assessment with a sample of people who contributed to a public project planning and review in a Nigerian city.

Intervention: Not applicable.

Research design: Appraisal criteria are based on the principles of public participation as laid down in the law and consists of the following elements: respondents' profile, their involvement in the project; purpose of participation, availability of information, feedback mechanism and overall view of the participatory planning process. Information collected consists both quantitative and qualitative data and these were analysed using descriptive statistics and narrative techniques of reporting.

Findings: Findings show that public participation was far below the minimum requirement of the law and not demographically representative. The most important reason respondents participated was to protect an interest in land, although some saw participation as a democratic right. Results show that attending public hearings was the commonest way of participation in a project review. Nevertheless, three-quarters of the respondents thought the final plan did not take their observations and advice into consideration. Respondents confirmed that the process was reasonably notified with opportunities for consultation meetings. Nevertheless, findings suggest some bias actions as significant proportions of respondents held absence of transparency and political interference flawed the project planning and review process.

Keywords: *stakeholder engagement; project evaluation; transparency; universal design; equality*

Introduction

Project development, if well thought-out, has always been a veritable tool through which cities bring about improvement in the well-being of their citizens. In early years of industrialization, project developments have tended to focus on supply and information transfer to beneficiaries through the 'top-down-approach' (Nguyen Long, Foster & Arnold 2019). That is, a method where project initiatives emerge out of actors from top levels or by actors within the governmental structures. This situation underlines the planning theory-practice gap (Berardo & Holm 2018; Nguyen Long, et al., 2019) and several years of public project funding have demonstrated the failures of this approach (Berardo & Holm (2018). In fact, the United Nations ([UN], 1978) observes that many development plans failed because initiatives emerge out of actors within governmental structures and the people and direct beneficiaries are not effectively engaged in need and resources assessments of the project. This understanding has led countries across the globe to legislate management system that ensures people are effectively engaged in project planning and management and this method is called public participation. This strategy emphasizes on understanding people's values for places and ensuring the proposed project reflects public needs and expectations.

The public right to participate in project development plan and review is warranted in international laws and conventions. One of such is the UN World Charter for Nature, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982. This was further expanded in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, otherwise called Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. As well, the responsibility to participate is a widely recognized human right, incorporated in for instance, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Nigeria is not left out in legislating management system that ensures citizens are effectively engaged in project planning. Indeed, one of the most

remarkable features of the country's numerous landuse and management laws is public participation. For instance, the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree No. 88 section 13 and 16 of 1992 and Environmental Impact Assessment Decree No. 86 section 7 of 1992 emphasizes transparent physical plan processes and everyone's equal opportunity to participate in the project planning and management process.

These laws and conventions demonstrate efforts to promote collaborative project development process between the government, civil societies, community groups and general public. Nonetheless, it is observed that there is low public participation (Blackman, 2003; Maroula, Diofantos, Phaedon & Konstantinos, 2016) in most part of developing countries (Muse, 2014) such as Nigeria (Adedoyin, 2014). Many scholars argued that despite the provisions of the law, public participation practice has been unsuccessful to some large extent in developing countries (Nguyen, Le & Tran, 2015; Nhlakampho, 2010) owing to macro and micro factors. The macro factors are the obstacles emanating from government while micro forces are exclusively from individual as residents of the community affected by the project development (Jiman, Foziah & Zayyanu, 2016). Besides, the challenges of public participation are more complex in the traditional cities of Nigeria, owing to many constraining forces such as socio-cultural, historical and behavioral pattern of the local people (Ojigi, 2012). Some have argued that the military type of government in Nigeria has been the cause of low public participation (Oloyede, 2010). Lemanski (2017) argued that the democratic government has potentials to support participatory project planning since its programmes share similar principles that establish democracy. In the case of Nigeria, democracy is the current structure of government and it is expected to support effective public participation programmes. Conversely, recent study by Jiman (2017) shows that power sharing in participatory planning process is yet to be effectively adopted between citizens, planning agencies and the government in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the government has recently undertaken a number of project plan reviews, and at present, is embarking on an intensive

period of implementation and construction. As part of its statutory planning processes, the government agencies must engage in public consultation, particularly, with the concerned community. However, there has been rising concern from affected members of the public for government to engage in meetings on its proposed project plans and management strategies, and to improve its consultation practices. Through the media, queries have been raised by stakeholders as to whether existing physical development processes are too restrictive in terms of encouraging effective public involvement. At the same time, there is concern that while there may be increased consciousness by some people for the need to be involved in these processes and for their opinions to be appropriately heard and considered, a few people actually make the effort to become involved. It is unclear whether the government's current public project planning and reviews processes are enabling sufficient public input or are likely to be able to meet future management planning needs. However, all these are mere reports and yet to be empirically substantiated. The effects such media shrieks have on public perception of developmental projects can be weighty and in reality, beg the question: "Do local communities have the opportunity to take part in the formulation of decisions affecting their environment?"

This study, taking advantage of the above gap, provides substantiated information on how the citizens are engaged in public project plan and review process. It investigates participants' views and experiences in a project plan review. Unlike previous studies which used perception survey, this study collected data from the actual contributors to a public project review in a Nigerian setting. Besides, the study adopted a case study of a physical development project. The identity of the reference physical development project is not revealed. Nonetheless, the endorsement to carry out this study was obtained from appropriate authority in the study area. The selection of the project was accomplished using carefully defined criteria such as legal requirement of such project dimension and location within the large urban area. Also, spread over more than a thousand square kilometres, the project is one of the largest physical development in Nigeria at present,

that when completed, will serve at least, four communities. Besides, the project has some of the most severe, but mitigable environmental, physical, social and economic impacts on the host communities. The project, at present, is being implemented at around 50% completion. Thus, it is expected that public inputs have been taken into consideration.

This study gives insight into public participation matters and uses the information from project contributors to inform enhancement and recommendations of international best public participation practices. Furthermore, issues identified in this study are likely to be pertinent to other statutory planning and management review processes. For that reason, it is expected that this study would help the government, public agencies, related departments and ministries to better understand the weakness and opportunities to an effective public participation. The remaining parts of this article are organized as follows: the next section focuses on the legality of public participation. Next to this is a discourse on principles of public participation. This is followed by the methods and approaches applied in collecting and analyzing the data. Later, results are presented and this is followed by discussion of findings and policy implications. Lastly, conclusion and implication for future research is discussed.

The Legality of Public Participation

Before presenting the legal interpretation of public participation, it is important to understand the concept of public participation. The International Association of Public Participation ([IAP], 2014) describes "public participation" as any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and uses public inputs to make decisions, with "public" describes as any individual or group of individuals, organization or political entity with an interest in the outcome of a decision. When physical development projects are reviewed, public participation is a way of putting a ball in the court of the community and reconsidering the direction of project management. The Urban and Regional Planning decree understands public participation as an individual's or a

group's right to take part in and influence public assessment and decision-making processes. This means that those who live in a community get involved in planning its future. The main aim of public participation is to encourage the public to have meaningful input in the planning decision-making process (IAP, 2014). The public in participatory process refers to both formal and informal. It is informal as individuals and formal as representatives of collective interest of affected groups, that is; people, community associations, and private organizations (IAP, 2014).

Public participation is not without legitimate back-up. The right of the public to partake in public project management and decision-making is warranted in local, state, national and international laws and conventions. One of the first international mechanisms that proclaimed this standard was the UN World Charter for Nature, which was later adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982. Paragraph 23 of World Charter for Nature states that:

All persons, in accordance with their national legislation, shall have the opportunity to participate, individually or with others, in the formulation of decisions of direct concern to their environment, and shall have access to means of redress when their environment has suffered damage or degradation...

Later, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, otherwise called Rio Declaration on Environment and Development describes the standard of public participation in principle 10 as follows:

Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative

proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided...

The description of the philosophy of public participation as laid down above makes it clear that it consists of three elements: participation in decision-making processes; access to information, and access to administrative and judicial proceedings. These three elements have been described as the pillars of environmental democracy (Hunter, Salzman, & Zaelke, 2007). The first element suggests that individuals, groups, and organizations have the opportunity to share their views and interests in the making of decisions that have or may have an impact on their environment. Such decisions include the drafting of plans, the enforcement of such plans, and environmental impact assessments (EIA). It includes a participation in decision-making on local, state, regional, sub-regional, national and international plans, both on long-term and short-term. Access to information consists of two components: the availability of information and the mechanisms of public authorities to provide information (Shelton, Bankobeza & Ruis, 2006). Information in this regards includes facts on materials and activities that have or potentially have a serious negative impact on the environment (Duvic-Paoli, 2012). The following duties are considered concrete duties of government authorities or her agencies concerning access to information: collecting and updating relevant information, responding to demands for information within a reasonable limit of time, maintaining low costs for obtaining information, and ensuring equal access for everyone to the information (Richardson & Razzaque, 2006). Access to information is essential to public participation, because it enables the public to obtain knowledge about factors such as the decision-making processes, the decisions to be taken, and the relevant facts and interests necessary to make an informed personal choice (Magraw Jr. & Ruis, 2006).

The third element of the principle of public participation is access to judicial and administrative proceedings. This is important to make rights of individual and groups effective. A right is worthless if there are no mechanisms available to protest when the right is not respected. Access to judicial and

administrative proceedings enables individuals and groups who suffer damages from environmental harm to initiate actions before the law court, tribunal or any appropriate administrative and judicial authorities to obtain a form of prompt and adequate compensation (Shelton, et al, 2006). Similarly, when physical development information is sought but not provided, there should be a review procedure available to ascertain if the requested information was legitimately denied (Saladin, 2003). Government and concerned authorities can therefore be held accountable by the public for failing to meet their obligations. Thus, through judicial and administrative review, public participation may influence public projects' plans.

Public participation also forms a share of the body of several human rights. For instance, the right to participate is a generally recognized human right, incorporated in article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 23 of the American Convention on Human Rights, and article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. In addition, international human rights bodies developed a right to participate in situations in which there is a risk of severe environmental damage. Taking such rights as the right to health, private life and home, culture, and property, the international human rights bodies (such as the UN Human Rights Committee, the European Court of Human Rights, the African Commission on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights, and the Inter-American Court on Human Rights) recognized that individuals and groups of individuals have the right to access environmental information, the right to participate in decisions which affect their environment, and the right of effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including compensation and remedy (Ebbesson, 2007).

Particularly remarkable, is the human rights case law on local peoples' rights (because this case law contains participation rights for local peoples in decision-making that affects their local lands). The local peoples' survival depends on these customary lands often are rich in biodiversity and natural resources. The local peoples therefore are affected by environmental degradation and

industrial activities that take place on, or close to these lands and that have a profound impact on the environment, such as natural resource extraction and the construction of infrastructure. The human rights bodies have acknowledged this particular vulnerability of local peoples to environmental degradation. The right to an effective public participation in decision-making on activities that might have an impact on local peoples is one of the requirements that must warrant that the human rights of local peoples are not indiscriminately violated (e.g. The Social and Economic Rights Action Center and the Center for Economic and Social Rights v. Nigeria, Comm. No. 155/96, Afr. Comm. on Human and Peoples' Rights, 53 [Oct. 13-27, 2001]; Saramaka People v. Suriname, Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations, and Costs, Judgment, Inter-Am. Ct. H.R. [ser. C.] No. 172, 129, 133-34 (Nov. 28, 2007).

The effective enjoyment of established human rights such as the freedom of expression and the freedom of association furthermore, is essential for efficient participation in decision-making of developmental projects. Public participation is also linked to the right of non-discrimination, because all potentially affected individuals and parties should have equal access and equal opportunities to participate in the decision-making (Ebbesson, 2007). In summary, the human rights law and administration strongly confirms that public participation is an essential element of environmental and decision-making process (Duvic-Paoli, 2012).

Localizing some of these legislations, the Nigeria Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree 88 of 1992 requires facilitation for the general public to participate in planning processes. Public participation is described specifically in Section 13 and 16 of 1992 and the Environmental Impact Assessment Decree No. 86 Section 7 of 1992. Indeed, sections 13, 15 and 21 sub-sections 2 actually give a legal backing to what, in the planning profession, is generally known as public participation at the Federal level while section 25 likewise gives legal backing to public participation in the preparation of regional, sub-regional plan and urban/master plan at the State level. The broad participation is divided into two general provisions and implementation provisions. For

general provisions, the project proposer must facilitate participation in all plans and must ensure active participation of groups who require special facilitation while the planning authority must facilitate participation in the regional planning strategy and should facilitate participation in the municipal planning strategy.

In terms of implementation, the provisions are that the project proposer must; design a plan for participation in the planning programme; circulate the planning programme for comment and present it for public scrutiny within a stipulated time limit; facilitate electronic presentation of the planning process; and facilitate an exchange of ideas at all stages. The planning authority must ensure that a special arrangement is established to safeguard the interests of children and young people in the planning process; must facilitate information of significance for the predictability in the planning process; the regional planning authority should have a regional planning forum for participation and interaction and the municipality must make sure participation has been implemented. Section 13, in fact provides in part, for this all-important method of public participation in an unequivocal statement thus:

The Commission shall during the preparation of the Physical Development Plans call for non-governmental organizations and interested member of the public whose contribution shall serve as part of the input towards the preparation of a draft National Physical Development Plan...

In addition to the above is that after the preparation and during the period of exhibition of the draft policy, public participation is also highly encouraged under section 15 which equally provides in an unequivocal statement, that:

Any member of the public, Federal, State, Local Governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations and professional bodies, during the period of exhibition of the Draft National Physical Development Plan may submit to the Commission a written statements of their objections to anything appearing in the

said plan and they shall define the nature and reasons for the objections, and suggest alterations and amendments to be made to remove the objections...

For the purpose of having an effective public participation, Section 14 goes further to empower the Commission to appoint a Technical Committee to analyze the collated submissions received under Section 13. In addition to analyzing the collated submissions, the Technical Committee shall evaluate the proposals submitted and shall also prepare and exhibit the Plan. Section 15 however provides for the submission of the objections to the exhibited draft plan by members of the public to the Commission. The Commission, in compliance with section 16, shall prepare a summary of the objections and comments and submit to the Technical Committee to enable them prepare a revised draft plan that will take account of these objections and comments. After this, the draft Plan, together with the accompanying schedule of objections and comments will be scrutinized by the Commission. And lastly, section 18 talks about the submission of the Final Draft Plan to the appropriate legislative body for approval after considering all objections and comments on the revised plan. After the approval of the plan by the legislative body, the approved plan is now referred to as an Operative Plan and a notice to this effect shall be published in the Gazette and in at least, two widely read national daily newspapers. Thereafter, copies shall be made available to the Federal, the States and Local Governments and also for sale to members of the public.

In summary, it is obvious that public participation is widely accepted and firmly embedded in the international and national environmental and physical planning framework. Public participation, without prejudice, is therefore, the statutory obligation of the government or her agencies or proposer of development project and civil responsibility of the citizen. That is, the government is under compulsion to set out the process of public participation while citizens must take part in the process. Besides, one consistent provision of these law and conventions is that all stakeholders and affected individuals, parties and groups should be able to participate on an

equal basis. Moreover, it is obvious, from these provisions, that public participation can take many forms and procedures, but some principles and guidance should be mentioned. These are briefly discussed in the next section.

Characteristics of a Well-Facilitated Participatory Project Review

Public participation processes need a balance between involvement in project planning process on the one hand, and efficient project planning process on the other hand. Public participation can take many forms and procedures (IAP, 2014), but some principles and guidance should be mentioned. For meaningful involvement in project planning process by affected groups and stakeholders in a society, one might look at the four ideologies, which are: transparency, efficient management, universal design and equality. These principles are being used in a number of public policy practices and can help secure flexibility and predictability in the project planning and review process.

The principle of transparency means that everyone, whether they are directly affected or a stakeholder, must have equal access to the information necessary to protect their interests or present their views. Transparency is a necessity if the parties affected are going to trust the planning system. Realistic milestones and deadlines must be managed throughout the consultation process. It is also important to allow sufficient time for meaningful consultation with the public. An efficient management principle is needed because of a time of short development possibilities, with many active interests and strict requirements for economic results (Marais, Quayle & Burns, 2017). It is also important to secure adequate involvement of the general public at an early stage of project planning and review process. If there are hidden conflicts in a planning matter, adequate facilitation and information concerning the challenges may add to better administration, thereby making the decision-making process more flexible and predictable.

Participatory planning must also be universal in design. For instance, a planning process which has a low threshold for

participation from affected parties may ensure creating a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the project planning situation. A process that paves the way for universal design at all levels of the planning process enhances the opportunity to develop a local community which includes everyone. Furthermore, a well-facilitated participation process must ensure equality. That is, participation on equal terms, with affected members of the community. For instance, unorganized entities and business interests, is a key principle in the planning process (McCabe, 2016). The greater the complexity and participant diversity in the project planning situation, the more important it is to have orderly and inclusive planning processes right from the commencement of the project.

The IAP (2006) created a set of vital principles of public participation practice. These principles are: the public should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect its members' lives; public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision and public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-making agencies. Others are: public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision; seeks input from participants in designing how they participate; provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way and, communicates to participants how their input affected the decision. Johnson (2001) argues that the key principles imperative to public participation were that: the public is involved early; the full range of views and values is exposed; opportunities for participation are effective and matters of concern to the public are considered in the final decision. Similar to Johnson (2001); Ronmark (2005) develops a set of principles for assessing public participation. Ronmark reflects that public participation should be fair, efficient, and informative. Accordingly, public participation should occur at an early stage; all interested and affected people should be represented, and public contribution should be used in the development and evaluation of alternative

plans. Furthermore, Ronmark states that project review process should involve shared decision making. That is, interested parties should be able to participate on an equal basis with administrative officials and technical experts.

In addition to the above are that a well-facilitated participatory planning process must: collaborate with internal and affected technical departments; ensure participation by the political figures throughout the process; ensure that all individuals and groups concerned are represented from the beginning of the process; commence with the public perspective and ensure active facilitation measures as required; provide a clear agenda in order to secure a meaningful process; ensure a good start by commencing public involvement activities as early as possible; allow for flexibility in the application of the techniques so that modifications are possible; allow for creativity and opportunities during the planning process; and ensure that contributions and outcomes from all parties involved are made open (Adedoyin, 2014; Jiman, et al., 2016; Nabatchi, & Amsler, 2014; Marais, et al., 2017).

Public participation that is carried out, bearing in mind all these principles has many benefits. First, it provides the opportunity for discourse between agencies making decisions and the public. This communication can be an early warning system for public concerns, a means through which accurate and timely information can be disseminated, and can contribute to sustainable decision-making (IAP, 2014). These benefits apply when public input is a two-way process: where both the government and the public can learn and gain benefit (IAP, 2014). Second, effective public contribution allows the public's values to be identified and integrated into decisions that ultimately affect them (IAP, 2014). On the other hand, public participation is not without shortcomings. Public participation can be time-wasting and sometimes, costly. To do it effectively therefore, the government, project proposers and organizations have to build capacity, train and retrain public participation experts and urban planning personnel. The opportunity cost is that public participation processes can result in, for instance, loss of confidence in the government or planning agency when done poorly. Besides, a negative

experience of the process may lead members of the public to have undesirable perceptions of the final outcome, and they may be less likely to take part in future public project review processes.

Based on the provisions of the law and characteristics of a well-facilitated participatory planning discussed earlier, evaluation criteria for this study are developed. These include respondents' participation in decision-making processes; access to information and judicial proceedings; transparency, universal design and equality of the process. In other words, the study provides answers to the following questions: What is the level of public involvement in this project? Who are the participants and what is their motivation to participate? Can we establish the representativeness of the participants? Do individuals, groups, and organizations have the opportunity to share their views and interests on a project that have impact on their environment? How were there views and submissions delivered to the project proposer? Is relevant information available to guide participants' suggestions and contributions? Was the community well informed? What mechanisms were used by the planning authorities to provide relevant information? Is the public participation process within a reasonable time limit? Are concerned agencies (will be) held accountable by public for failing to meet certain requirements? Are all participants (will be) satisfied with the process, either by recognising their own input or by appreciating other views or arguments?

Methodology

The Population Empowerment Survey (PES) was used to gather the data. This survey is designed and implemented by Population Welfare and Empowerment Foundation (POWEF) and the authors. The POWEF is a non-governmental organization established in 2014 and based in Ile-Ife, Osun-State with a mission to promote population empowerment across Nigeria. To collect data, a survey of stakeholders who participated in the public engagement with respect to the reference project was conducted using questionnaires. The criteria of evaluations in this study are

based on the philosophy of public participation as laid down in the law and consist of the following elements: participants' profile, their involvement in the project review; purpose of participation, availability of information, feedback mechanism and overall view of the whole participation process. A catalogue approach was taken in that all individuals, groups or organizations who participated in the project reviews process were physically contacted through the address submitted during the public participation meetings and consultations. In all, 275 participants were contacted but some were annulled because of incorrect address ($N = 45$); the participants was already dead as at the time of carrying out the survey ($N = 10$) and participants were not interested in being part of this study ($N = 12$). Thus, a total of 208 participants completed the questionnaire.

In order to ensure adequate understanding of different aspects of public participation and obtain more detailed information on participants' experience, some respondents were further engaged in discussions and oral interviews. Respondents were asked to comment on the specific aspects of the public participation process. To reduce the respondents' bias, closed-ended questions were preferred (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003) except question on overall perception of the project review process. This study upholds the avoidance of harm, confidentiality and informed consent during data collection. The purpose of the study was to provide a collective understanding of barriers and facilitators to guide improvements to practice; therefore the results are reported on the total survey population. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. For those engaged in further discussion, information elicited were analyzed using narrative techniques of reporting.

Findings

This section summarizes the key outcomes from the survey of people who participated in the project. This section first examines the profile of respondents. It then discourses on different aspects of respondents' involvement

in the project review process. The section concludes with findings on respondents' views of the overall project review process. Survey findings are as discussed in the following subheadings. Unless where otherwise stated, the tables and figures through which facts and findings are summarized are the products of the survey carried out in 2016.

Participation Profile

Findings show evidence of community engagement in the project planning and review process. But, it was a low level of public input as only 275 stakeholders participated in the review of a project that affected 51,344 people (see Table 1). This proportion (0.53%) is far below the minimum requirement of both national and international laws.

Table 1
Public Participation Rate

Population Affected	Total Participation	Participation
51,344	275	0.53%

Public participation must involve a broadly representative sample of the affected public. This means that all parties with an interest in the project issues and outcomes of the process are involved throughout the process. A sound process ensures that the full spectrum of the public's opinions and values is exposed. This is why James (1990) distinguishes between two types of representation: demographic representation and interest representation. From the summary presented in Figure 1, findings show that most respondents took part in the public input as an individual (47%), rather than as a representative or member of an organization or community group (27%). Some proportion of respondents participated as both an individual and a representative of an organization or a community group (14%), although some 12% identified that they participated outside these two categories, probably as a proxy to an organization, group or individual.

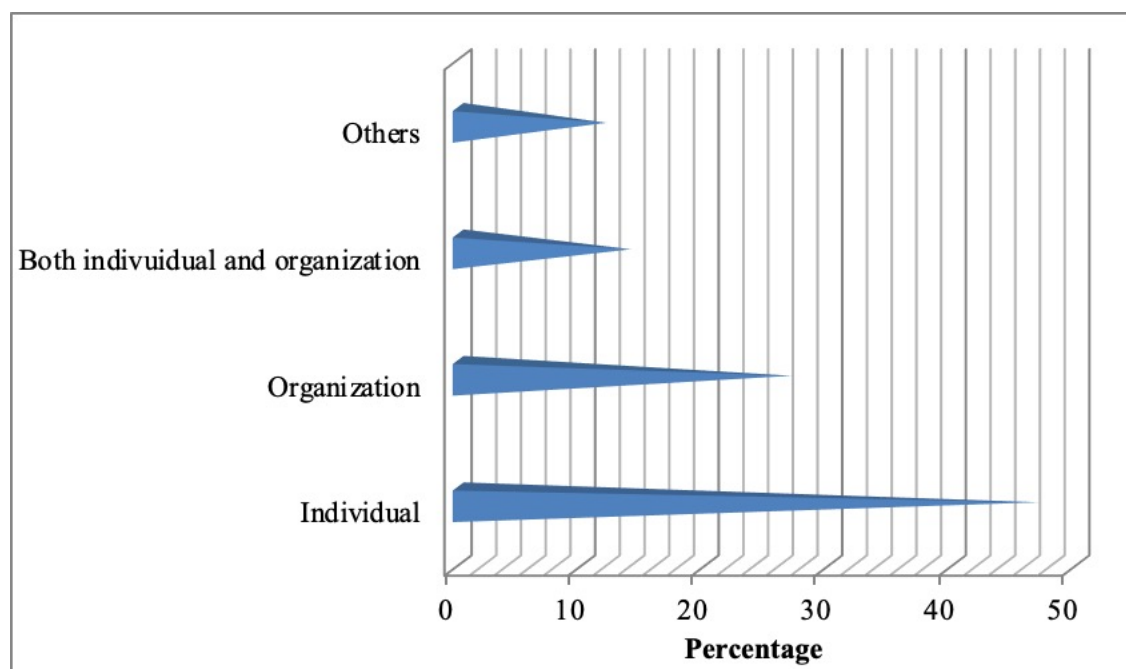


Figure 1. Representation in the planning process.

From the summary presented in Table 2, findings show that associations of landlords have the highest (17%) group representation. Next to this are business organizations, enterprises and association of traders (14%). Of those who completed their public input on behalf of an organization or group, 9% did so as representatives of civil society and non-governmental association (NGOs), 8% each as representatives of environmental sanitation and protection groups, religious bodies, association of artisans (fashion designers,

automobile technicians among others) and other groups and organization not listed while 7% was for the association of community youth. Findings show that association of community women was least represented. Thus, there is a general indication that many of the groups who get involved in the project review process have real property or financial interest, or a strong sense of stewardship, and want to contribute to the implementation and future management direction of the project.

Table 2
Distribution of Group Representation

Group/Organization	Frequency	Percentage
Association of landlords	39	17.0%
Business organizations, enterprises and association of trade men and women	33	14.0%
Civil societies and Non-Governmental Association (NGOs)	21	9.0%
Environmental sanitation and protection group	18	8.0%
Religious bodies	18	8.0%
Association of artisans (fashion designers, automobile technicians among others)	19	8.0%

Others	18	8.0%
Association of community youth	16	7.0%
Local and state government	12	5.0%
Cultural and heritage association	12	5.0%
National Union of Road Transport Workers and Employers (NURTW)	10	4.0%
Federal government	08	3.0%
Association of community women	06	3.0%
Total	*230	100%

Note: Organization or group representation is 27% (n = 56). *Total is more because of multiple responses.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Profile of Respondents

From the summary presented in Table 3, results show that slightly above three-quarters of respondents were male (75%) and 25% were female. Differences in male and female participation was found significant at chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 57.217$; $p = 0.000$). This pattern is consistent with traditional community structure and gender role in Nigeria. That is, the traditional structure of the country may not allow females to fully take part in public issues such as this. Nonetheless, that the female accounted for

one-quarter of the participants is an evidence that they are gradually waking up to their responsibilities outside matrimonial communities. The distribution of respondents by age group shows that 29% of respondents were between 22 and 40 years old, 41% were aged 60 years plus, and 30% were between 41 and 60 years old. It seems therefore, that as age increases, involvement in the project review process increases. In other words, there is a direct relationship between the ages of participants and their involvement in the project review process. Variation in participation by different age groups was statistically significant ($F = 17.509$; $p = .000$).

Table 3
Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable (N = 208)	Respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	164	79.0%
Female	44	21.0%
Education background		
None	21	10.0%
Primary school	42	20.0%
Secondary school	52	25.0%
Post-secondary school	94	45.0%
Income group (in Naira)		
Below 18,000 (Min wage)	17	08.0%

18,000-40,000	27	13.0%
41,000-60,000	35	17.0%
61,000-80,000	31	15.0%
81,000-100,000	56	27.0%
101,000 and above	42	20.0%
Age group		
22-40 years	60	29.0%
41-60 years	62	30.0%
Above 60 years	85	41.0%
Ethnicity		
Yoruba	125	60.0%
Hausa-Fulani	23	11.0%
Igbo	42	20.0%
Others (Nigerian)	17	8.0%
Non-Nigerian	125	01.0%
Main source of income		
Employed as full-time salary earner	46	22.0%
Self-employed/Business owner	108	52.0%
Retired/ Pensioner	54	26.0%

Results further show that slightly above a half (52%) of the participants were full-time self-employed business owners with full-time salary earners accounting for 22% only, and slightly more than one quarter (26%) were retired, earning pensions. Results show that only 8% of the respondents earned an average monthly income below the national minimum wage of N18000.00k (equivalent to US\$50, as at September, 2016), while 20% were earning a monthly income above N100000.00k (US\$278). Largest proportion (27%) of the respondents earned a monthly income between N810000 (US\$225) and N1000000 (US\$278). Results display a dominant involvement of high income earners. For instance, the proportions of the low (below N18000 to N40000), the medium (N41000 to N80000) and the high (N81000 and above) income groups were given as 21%, 32% and 47% respectively. Thus, as income increases, involvement in review process increases.

Specifically, there is a direct relationship between income of participants and involvement in the project review process. Differences in participation among income groups was statistically significant ($F = 4.707$; $p = .001$).

As shown in Table 3, respondents consist of virtually all ethnic groups in Nigeria even though majority (60%) of the respondents were Yoruba natives. This is logical, since the focus project is located in southwest Nigeria. The Southwest is one of the Nigerian six geopolitical zones created in 1996. The Southwest dominates the lands of the Yoruba, the second-largest tribe in Nigeria after the northern Hausa-Fulani. The main ethnic composition of the Southwest zone is mainly Yoruba. A significant proportion (20%) identified as Igbo while 11% and 8% respectively identified as Hausa-Fulani and other ethnic groups. Only 1% identified as non-Nigerian. Variation in ethnic composition

of participations was also found significant at ($X^2 = 88.911$; $p = 0.001$). From the summary presented in Table 3, findings show that 45% of respondents had a post-secondary school education with 10% lacking formal education. The proportions of participants with primary and secondary school education were 20% and 25% respectively. This indicates that individual participation increases as the level of education increases as variation in public participation with respect to educational level was found significant at ($X^2 = 68.411$; $p = 0.001$). In terms of demographic representation therefore, this study found that participants were predominantly Yoruba natives, older people, high income earners and male while their counterparts such as ethnic minorities, younger people, low income earners and women were significantly under-represented.

Participants' Involvement in the Physical Development Plan

This section describes how respondents became aware and involved in the project

planning and review process, as well as the ways in which they participated in the overall review process. At first, various mechanisms use by the concerned agency to get participants become aware of the project reviews is listed for respondents to choose from (allowing multiple responses). Findings show that respondents get involved through one or more of these mechanisms. Respondents became involved in the project planning and review process majorly through public notice and media statement on radio and television (20%), public notice in the newspaper (18%) and through group meetings, club activities and hangouts (18%). Furthermore, findings show that 14% of the mechanism through which respondents became involved in the project planning and review process was after receiving a hard copy of invitation letter directly from the town planning agency and after seeing a public notice in the town planning agency's website (4%). Thus, despite that information were provided on the agency's website, this was least used by the participants.

Table 4
Mechanisms by Which Respondents Became Aware of the Plan Reviews

How respondents became aware of the development plan reviews	Frequency	Percentage
Through radio and television	175	20.0%
Through the newspaper	161	18.0%
Through group meetings, club activities or hangouts	157	18.0%
Through an invitation letter from the planning office	122	14.0%
Through family, friends and neighbour	98	11.0%
Through notice in the physical planning office	51	6.0%
Through direct contact with a planning officer	43	5.0%
Through notice on the planning agency website	33	4.0%
Through article or commentary in the newsprint	39	4.0%
Total	879*	100%

Note: *Total is more because of multiple responses.

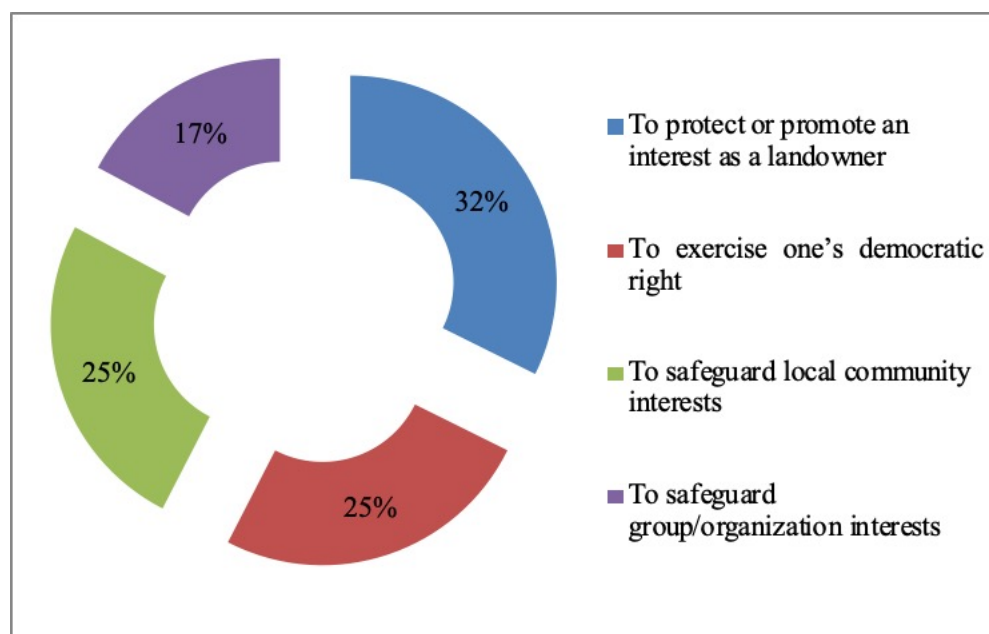


Figure 2. Reasons for getting involved in the development plan review process.

While questioned to provide the most important reasons for getting involved in the project planning and review process (permitting multiple responses), findings show that the most important reason respondents participated was to protect or promote an interest in land as a property-owner in the area (32%). Furthermore, having accounted for some 25% of the reasons for getting involved in the project review process, exercising of legitimate right and civil responsibility was the second most important reason. This is an evidence that some people are aware of their rights, responsibilities and privileges as entrenched in the constitution. In a statement by one of the participants, he said:

...this community and project belongs to the residents of this city, whether you are an indigene or non-indigene. This project affects us. It affects my people. Therefore we have a right to say how it is planned and managed. Because this project affects us as Hausas, we have the right to express our opinion regarding these places...

Findings further show 25% of the reasons for participation was to safeguard local community interests (25%) while that of the groups and business organization's interest (17%) was the least reason for participation in the review process.

Table 5: Type of information received

Type	Frequency	Percentage
A brochure outlining the programme and the review process	150	31.0%
An information pack outlining key planning issues	120	25.0%
A discussion document	91	19.0%
A copy of certain sections of the new project plan	75	15.0%
A copy of the existing approved physical development plan	50	10.0%

Total	486*	100%
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Note: Sample based on those who received information. Total exceeded because of multiple responses.*

In order to effectively participate, respondents were asked if they receive any information from the planning agency to aid their input in the project review process. Findings show that just above three-quarters (78%) of respondents received some form of information or a discussion document outlining the key issues for the review of the proposed project (see Figure 3). From the summary presented in Table 5, the commonest information many received was a brochure or an information pack outlining the project and the review process discussion document ($N = 150$). Thus, all those who received initial information received this. Furthermore, findings show that one quarter of the information received (25%) was through a brochure or an information pack outlining key physical planning implications of the project and almost as many (19%) information received by participant was a discussion document. Furthermore, some 15% of the information received by participants was a copy of certain sections of the proposed project as it was being drafted. The least information received by the participants was a copy of the existing approved physical development plan for the area (10%). Findings show that just over half (55%) of respondents who received preliminary information indicated that the information was very relevant to their contributions to the project review process, and 45% indicated that the information was supportive in understanding the salient issues covered in the proposed project (Figure 4). Those who indicated that the information was irrelevant criticized that the material was not easy to understand. A respondent said:

...there are too many technicalities in the information pack. For some of us, it was too difficult to comprehend. In fact, I misconstrued certain aspects of the project until when I went for the public hearing that I discovered my views were incorrect ...

As shown in Figure 3, only 40% of the respondents provided comments and suggestions on the proposed project. This is low as compared to those who received some form of information or discussion document outlining the key issues for the review of the proposed project. Presented in Table 6 is the summary of the ways respondents contributed to the physical development review process. Respondents were provided with a list of four items to choose from (permitting multiple responses). Results show that the commonest way through which respondents provided comments or contributed to the project review was to attend a formal public hearing to present an oral submission on the proposed project (38%). In this case, the town planning agency representatives' records and/or writes down comments and suggestions as participants speak. Next to this was to make written suggestions on what should be included and/or excluded in the project proposal. This accounted for 28% of the total ways respondents contributed to the project plan reviews. While findings show that some respondents contributed through preparation of a written submission on the proposed project plan, being approached for advice by the concerned planning agency (16%) was the least way respondents contributed to the project proposal.

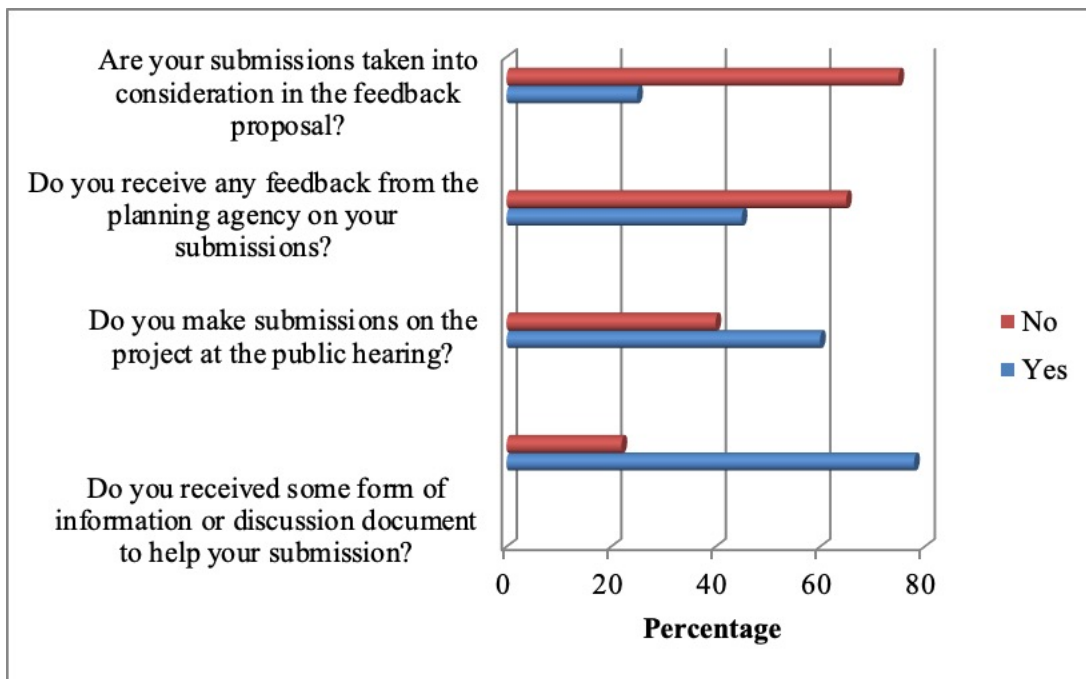


Figure 3. *Information, submission, feedback and consideration.*

The study further collected and described respondents' views on the usefulness of feedback provided after the submission of their input. From the summary presented in Figure 4, findings show that 35% of the respondents who made submission, reported receiving feedback about their submission on the proposed project with well over half saying they had not received any feedback on their submission (65%) as at when this survey was conducted (Note: feedback is not likely to be provided again as the project is already under construction). Of those who had received feedback, one-quarter (25%) believed the project review took a number of their views into account, but the remaining three-quarter (75%) held that the project review did not take their opinions into account (see Figure 3); thus views that the project as "already concluded"

and the whole review process as mere 'fulfilling all righteousness' as remarked by one of the participants. In fact, a number of respondents were distrustful about the project review process and felt that often, the planning agency was paying 'lip-service' to them. One of the respondents describes his view as follows:

...I have little confidence in the public participation process. They [the planning agency] have to do it but they don't have to pay attention or take note of our submissions. I and most of my co-residents making suggestions did it for just record sake believing it was a futile process, but then, we thought our opinions should be added to the project...

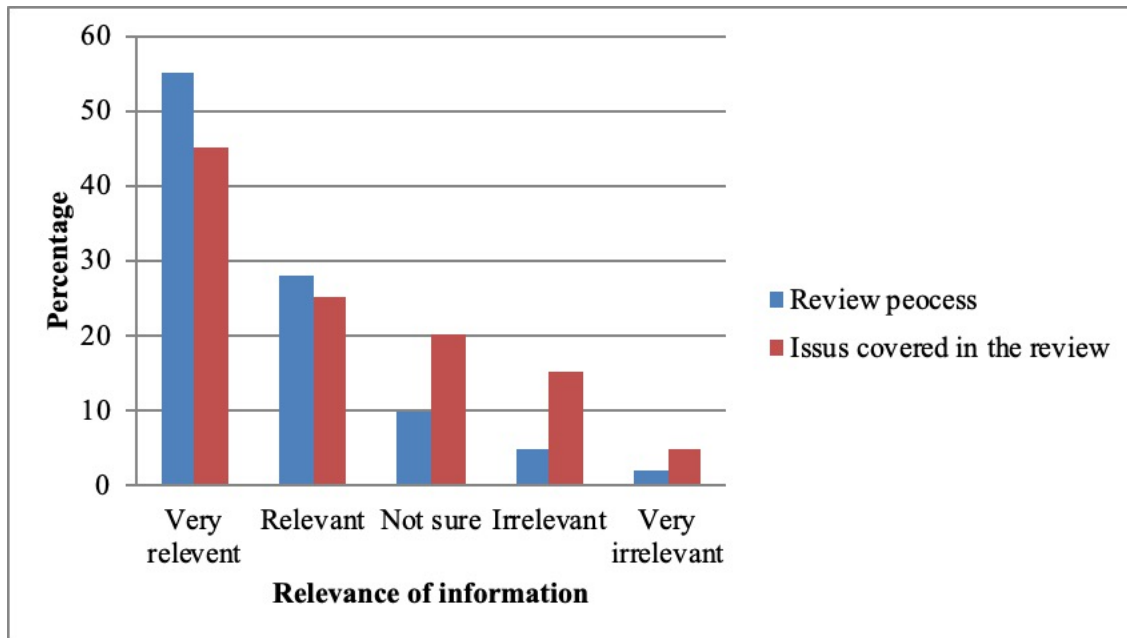


Figure 4. Respondents' assessments of how helpful information received.

Table 6
Ways Respondents Submitted their input to the Programme

Submission of reviews	Frequency	Percentage
By attending a formal hearing to present an oral submission	205	38%
I made written suggestions	151	28%
I prepared a written submission	95	18%
I was approached for advice or views by planning agency	87	16%
Total	538*	100%

Note: *Total is more because of multiple responses.

Findings show that across majority of the respondents, a common opinion was the need for feedback as part of the formal project review process. Some respondents mentioned that it took them a lot of consultations, time and resources to prepare and present comments and submissions and they would appreciate feedback from the planning agency. A number of respondent shared that it was important to provide feedback in order to create confidence and buy-in to the process as follows:

...planning agency needs to let people know how their suggestion contributed to the project. This will help to create shared ownership...

Another respondent said:

...It would be interesting to get feedback from planning agency on why some comments are good and some, not good for the project. And then, to also get feedback on comments that were accepted and altered. However, what you see are final decisions and notification letter approved only stating that the plan has been approved ...

Furthermore, the importance of providing feedback was seen in the comment of this respondent:

... At first, I was excited about the process of public participation but saddened to see that we didn't receive any feedback. We haven't even been told what's next but activities ongoing are pointing to the commencement of the project already. What a blow! I participated as 86 year old man; it was a big task to go for meetings, make comments, write submissions, and attend public hearings. Not updating us, as elders in this community, is a big blow and insolent...

It is obvious that there are some forms of dissatisfaction with the public participation process. As one of the principles of public participation, there is an opportunity for right

of appeal. Thus, the aggrieved respondents (particularly, those who do not receive relevant information; those who the project review did not take their opinion into account and did not receive any reason for such action and those who did not receive feedback at all) were asked if they have appealed the project review process in the court of law. Interestingly, findings show that no petition had been filled by any individual, community group or organization as at when this survey was carried out. However, when asked if there was any plot to access judicial proceedings in the nearest future, a little above half (52%) of the respondents in this category ($N = 142$) declined while it was the case of indecisiveness for the remaining 48% (see Figure 5). Not a single respondent said "yes" to petitioning the project review process in the nearest future.

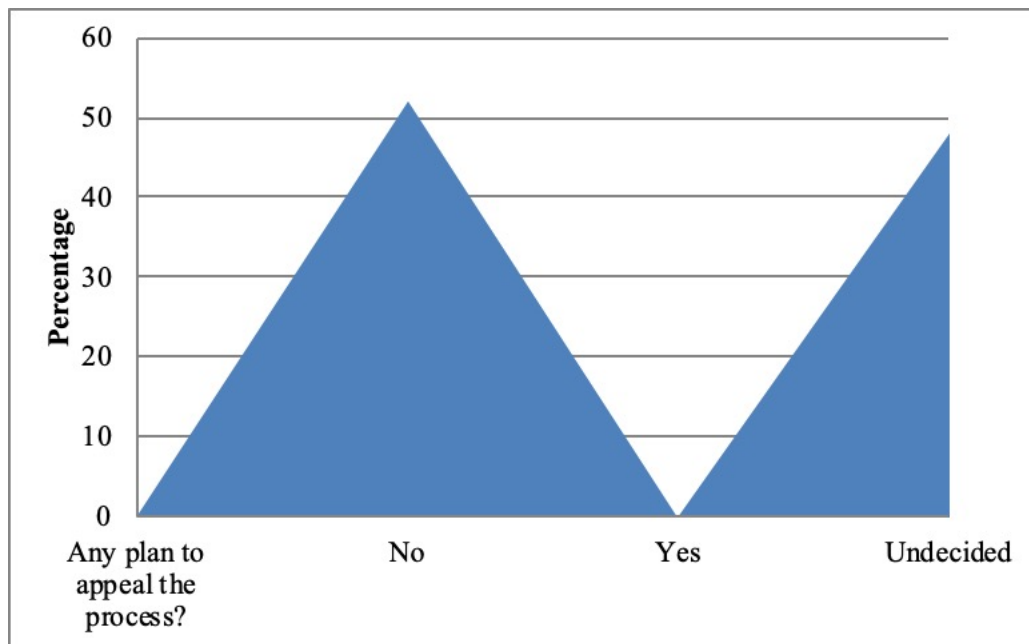


Figure 5. Respondents' plan to appeal the review process.

Probing this thought-provoking result further, there was an indication that some respondents were not even aware of the right to appeal as one of the respondents said astonishingly "...Can we file a petition? I'm not even aware of this..." Moreover, it appears as

if some had lost confidence in the court process:

...In this part of the world, justice is a mirage. We have seen cases where petitions stay as long as 'Methuselah' in the law

court. By that time, the project would have been completed, delivered, utilized or in-use and even depreciating. This is a case with the government and at the same time, the government is the judge. I think the outcome is crystal clear from the beginning. The court process is not likely to be different, in any way, from the project review process itself...

For some, it was lack of resources and time for court processes and proceedings:

...I and my group don't have the money to pursue any petition. Even if the money was available, I don't think I will have the time. Court proceedings are too arduous here. I cannot leave my business and family and be a petitioner or witness to a case that we likely know the end from the beginning...

while personal safety and security of family members and friends were the concerns of some respondents:

...appealing a public project like this is just putting your life and that of your love ones at risk. You are either being threatened by armed forces or by local thugs and hooligans. To worsen the matter, when local community leaders have compromised, you can be harassed spiritually with all kinds of black-magic and witchcrafts...

On the final note, the participants' general opinions on the prospects for public involvement was measured, using open-ended questions, to highlight the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the public participation process, and also to give opinion on how they believed the process could be improved. The views on what were the key strengths of the project review process were fairly evenly divided across a number of ideas, though, the most frequently mentioned strengths across the respondents were that: there was open-door for anyone who desire to participate (38%); the project review process was reasonably notified (32%) and there were opportunities for public hearings and consultation meetings (19%). When participants were asked what the key weaknesses of the process was, the common opinions were that: there was political interference in the process (36%); the duration

and stipulated time of the review (31%); there was also lack of opportunity to engage and debate the issues thoroughly (26%), probably as a result of time and there were issues with stakeholder representation and inequality between participants (22%). The three main ways in which respondents felt the future project review process could be improved were to: make the process more transparent, and to have less political interference (35%); have fairer stakeholder representation and equality of participants (30%) and provide better feedback mechanism to the participants (27%) and disseminate comprehensive and easy-to-understand information to the participants (25%). Note that this section also allows for multiple comments from participants despite the fact that it was open-ended. That is, each respondent was allowed to make as many comments as possible.

Discussion of Findings and Policy Implications

This study evaluates public participation in a project plan and review process in a Nigerian setting with a view to identifying areas that could be improved. The study used contributors to a physical development project as respondents. Findings show that the public contributed to the project final plan. That is, public participation in decision-making process with respect to this public project was obviously observed. Thus, the project conformed with the law as provided by the UN World Charter for Nature (UN General Assembly, 1982 paragraph 23); the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 otherwise called Rio Declaration on Environment and Development as well as the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Decree 88 of 1992. Remarkably however, findings show a very low level of public participation in the overall process. Results are therefore, in line with previous studies which have upheld low public participation in physical development projects in developing countries (Nguyen, Le & Tran, 2015; Muse, 2014) and in Nigeria in particular (Adedoyin, 2014).

The study is also in line with Hatley (2013); Neidhart (2013) and Magee (2012) who have

shown a low level of public input in physical development plans processes in developed countries. In addition, it is expected in this study, that since democracy is the existing structure of government, support for public participation should be high. Nonetheless, it seems the opposite is the case in this study; thus, contradicts Oloyede (2010) who have argued that the military type of government in Nigeria has been the cause of low public participation and Lemanski (2017) who argues that democratic government has potentials to support public participation. Instead, the present study posits that neither the military nor democracy increase public participation. Rather, forces outside the system of government are most likely to be the cause of low participation in Nigeria. There is therefore, the need to identify these factors and vigorously pursue public participation in future projects. Those people or groups in the society who did not participate probably because of a lack of means, knowledge, or motivation, may need to be assisted (through more sensitization, technical advice, social and humanitarian support, incentives among others).

In terms of representation, participants contributed more as individuals, compared to representing organizations and/or community groups. That is, participatory planning process in the study area is more informal as individuals when compared to formal as representatives of collective interest of affected parties such as community groups and private organizations. In terms of demographic representation, this study found that survey respondents were predominantly Yoruba native, educated, older, and male residents. Women, younger people, and other ethnic groups were significantly under-represented. This is not in line with the description of the philosophy of public participation as laid down in the international law as well as the Urban and Regional Planning law of Nigeria. However, this pattern is in line with the findings of previous researches (Jiman et al, 2106; Ho, Liao & Rosenthal 2015; Hatley, 2013). These patterns may be attributed to many reasons. First, the dominance of Yoruba native is expected because of the locality of the study area. Second, the fact that older people are retired and have leisure time. On the contrary, since many younger people are at the

initial stage of their careers, they could have family commitments that require them to work longer hours and not have extra time to get involved in community matters outside their careers. Third, women are likely to be hindered because of their traditional gender role. Furthermore, higher income earners are more likely to participate, probably because it takes some personal expenses to participate (e.g. transportation to public hearing venue, documentations among others). It is equally important to note that Jiman et al (2106); Ho, et al., (2015) and Hatley (2013) have found that socio-economic characteristics affects public participation in project planning process. The attributes of socio-economic characteristics are education qualification, minority marginalization and income.

The survey found that in relation to interest representation, landlord associations and business groups were the largest group type represented. The findings from the study suggest that public participation processes are not demographically representative, and all interests are not sufficiently represented. Thus, government agency needs to decide to have fair demographic representation. A narrow participant base may lead to inadvertent biasness (James 1990), with those groups that are knowledgeable about processes and decision-making; organized and articulate; predictably having an advantage over others. Ensuring that there is a broad representation will help to reduce the potential for unequal influence. As Nigerian government begins an intensive period of project development reviews, having adequate public and interest representation will become increasingly relevant. Public agencies need to be more informed on the demographic make-up of the people and communities. Physical planning specific population profiles should be developed, and planning agencies should use these to assist in understanding the communities with which it needs to engage in project review. These demographic profiles are necessary for planners to ensure that they understand possible changes in their communities, and to enable appropriate stakeholders and public representation. Those people or groups in society who do not participate may need to be assisted or specially encourage to participate (e.g. by

technical advice, social incentives among others).

Many respondents became involved in the process through their membership of a community group, after hearing the public notice and media statement on radio and television, or after seeing a public notice in a newspaper or other publications. Only 4% saw a notice on the planning agency's website. There appears to be opportunities here for government agency to increase public involvement in the planning processes by building relationships with a wider range of community groups, clubs and organizations. Furthermore, much of the information and advert on development plan proposal was available in traditional outlets (radio and television) and printed outlets (daily newspapers) as opposed to modern electronic media used by younger people. Although the way government agency communicates with the public will increasingly depend on its understanding of the audience, new and more modern approaches may be required, particularly to engage the youth. Improved communication will require effective communication design, and styles appropriate to the various demographic groups and the review process itself. For example, citizens and interested parties should be able and be encouraged to access more information through various types of media including the web, blogs, social media and mobile phone applications. Encouraging e-participation among the public can be of help here. That is, using the information and communication technologies (ICTs) to engage stakeholders in project design, feedback and decision and delivery. Also, at the commencement of the participation process, people should be provided with relevant information to assist them in understanding the process. At the end of a public hearing process therefore, people will need to be informed about how their contributions affected the project and what is next. It is important that this communication line is clearly planed-out; otherwise, public participation loses its values.

Generally, just above half of those who participated in the project review found the information provided them to be relevant with far less than half (45%) indicated that the information was helpful in understanding the issues covered in the proposed project even

though some majority considered that the information is relevant to enable them give a suggestion. While above two-thirds (78%) received some form of initial information to guide contribution, survey results show that only 44% provided suggestions to the project plan. This is a fairly low return rate and not in line with the philosophy of public participation as laid down in international laws as well as the Urban and Regional Planning law of the country. Findings show that attending a formal public hearing was by far the ideal way respondents participated in the project review, as they recognized that attending a formal hearing was the statutory way to contribute into the process and thereby, the major way to have influence. Those who indicated that the information was irrelevant complained that the information was not easy to understand. Thus, low feedback rate from the public may be as a result of information supply and the way respondents participated in the project review. Thus, planning agency needs to improve on the information they release to the public and approaches through which members of the public contribute to future proposed project. Aside, organizing a widespread public hearing, there is a potential for the planning agency to proactively engage the public in black and white submissions and the use of online (e-participation) which were less used.

Opposing the description of the philosophy of public participation, findings suggest at least some perception of bias in the project review process even though respondents commented that there was open-door for anyone who desired to participate in the review process. This is evident as some significant proportions of respondents thought political interference was the main weakness of the project review process. Some significant proportion of respondents recommended that, as an improvement in the future, the process should be more transparent with less political interference. While there was some sense of unequal involvement and political influence in the process, this seemed to be associated more with the lack of feedback provided by the town planning agency, so that participants did not know whether or how their input had been incorporated to the project. Majority of the respondents said they did not receive feedback on their submission while the majority of those

who received feedback believed the project review did not take their views into consideration.

The lack of feedback was already identified as a concern in previous studies. For instance, James (1990) has found out in his research that participants were dissatisfied with the lack of feedback after they had made suggestions. Poor feedback influences members of the public to judge their participation experience negatively (James 1990). Thus, adequate feedback should be provided to participants after suggestions and contributions have been received. Where submissions are not taken into consideration, contributors should be provided with superior arguments for not including the comments. Providing updates on the progress, probably on the agency's website or media may be a useful tool but this would need to be accompanied by direct contact with the participants. Planning agency must provide feedbacks and include updates on progress with the process, acknowledging public comments and submissions, and details of how submissions were considered (this can be a general response sent to all participants or a specific response to each individual and groups). The planning agency will need to provide participants with information on how individual submissions were considered, and what has been changed and/or accepted in the final plan. If there is one point that participants really don't agree with, then they can access judicial proceedings. This is important to make rights of individual and groups effective and the process more transparent.

The length of time for the project to be finalized was cited as a significant weakness of the process. Sequel to the above, this disapproval is heightened by people not receiving feedback on how their suggestions were used. It may be difficult for participants to understand the lengthy timeframe involved in the project planning process, particularly when they are not sent feedbacks. The sluggish process and shortage of feedbacks are likely to result in people losing interest to participate in subsequent project planning and review processes. While still allowing sufficient time for people to be able to participate effectively, more effort needs to be made by the town planning agency to ensure

that the project review processes do not drag on and also should not be used as an excuse to avoid comprehensive consultations with the public. It is essential that the time periods for project planning and reviews process are reasonable. In this regards, areas where enhancements are recommended include increasing resources and allocation to planning agencies and introducing an unambiguous, clear and specific statutory timeframe for public project review into Urban and Regional Planning law. This is because the length of time it takes for a project plan to be finalized was often attributed to ambiguities in constitutional time frame, leaving planning agencies to determine what is appropriate; a lack of resources and low priority given to town and country planning in Nigeria (Adediran, 2017).

Conclusion and Implications for Future Analysis

In summary, public participation in Nigeria is still far below expectation. To this end, many important findings and policies implications have been discussed. However, it needs to be reminisced that public participation is not an end in itself but rather, a means to an end. Its purpose should be to ensure the policy-maker is fully informed and that statutory project review processes lead to improved outcomes, in the widest sense. Effective public participation provides a means to including people's values into decisions that affect them, and enables meaningful input into the project plan and decision process. For any public participation to be successful, issues of concern to the public and of relevance to the decision at hand must be taken into account in reaching a decision. Public participation is used in the development and evaluation of project options and the public contribution has a genuine impact on the final decision. It is important to ensure that stakeholders and public participation is, as much as possible, on an equal basis. The participation process must be driven by a shared purpose amongst the participants and with the nature and scope of the participation task clearly defined. This includes ensuring that the process is transparent so that the public can see what is

going on and how decisions are made. Also, participants must have the information they need to participate in a meaningful way. High-quality and understandable information must be made available. The public participation process communicates to participants how their input affected the decision, and how the process is progressing-this is participatory planning.

The study is not without limitations. The major shortcoming of this study is that not all features and aspects of public participation were evaluated in this study (for instance: views of the planning agencies were totally excluded). These could be explored in future analysis. Town Planning agencies' views will give more insights to specific management plan in the project review process. For instance, is planning agency under compulsion to include all submissions? This and many more should be examined in future studies. Another area of prospect for expanding this research is the development of more case studies. This single case study did not allow for comparison of developmental projects and environments. The evaluation of these cases in different settings will provide better understanding of this subject. In terms of data analysis approach, future studies should consider more robust techniques. For instance, future studies may use: z-scores or minimum or maximum normalization; validation of factors influencing public participation using factor analysis or regression among others. Future statistical analysis should conduct relevant diagnoses of the residuals check for more statistical interactions. The survey was conducted in 2016. It should be noted that participation rates and several socioeconomic factors may have changed since then. However, the objective of this study was to look at public participate in a project and management review process in a Nigerian setting, and hence, these changes are proportional and do not affect the information presented in this analysis. Regardless, the study was not conducted across Nigeria; therefore, the findings cannot be generalised at a national level. While this study is of limited generalizability (in term of the study area), it could serve as the basis for future across-the-board surveys in Nigeria and abroad. Findings of this study are timely and meaningful,

contributing to public policy and participation literature, and are pertinent to understanding public participation process in the Nigerian context.

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