

ABSTRACT

This study explores the challenges of urban planning for poverty reduction that are faced by public institutions in urban Kenya. The existing studies in urban planning show that very little is known about these challenges. However, it is well acknowledged that globally urban poverty has increased at rates much higher than rural poverty. Indeed, poverty presents a dilemma for policy makers and citizens in Sub-Saharan African cities such as Nairobi and raises questions as to why poverty continues to grow despite the implementation of urban plans, policies and poverty reduction programmes.

As a largely uncharted research area, it was necessary to explore the problem in significant depth; thus a qualitative research methodology was adopted to explore the case study of the Local Authorities Service Delivery Action Plans (LASDAP) in Nairobi's Viwandani ward. Data were gathered and triangulated by means of focus groups and in-depth and semi-structured interviews. These were supplemented by key informant data, document reviews and an extensive review of urban planning and political science literature. A total of ninety-nine people including sixty-six men and thirty-three women participated in this study. The respondents were drawn from communities in Viwandani, city planners and other staff from the City of Nairobi, central government, and politicians. To analyse these data, a range of analytical techniques, namely a hybrid of categorisations, data displays, pattern matching and in some cases theoretical propositions were applied. These generated a set of themes for discussing the challenges of urban planning from the case study. The results were cross-checked with interview respondents and key informants and then validated in key feedback consultations in the study communities.

This study shows that a long tradition of "*power over the constitution*", embodied by the notion of an imperial presidency not only imposes one's will over the people, but also can virtually destroy institutions. This study also finds that the legal framework for urban planning in Kenya is anchored in stakeholders' involvement that only pays lip service to citizen's participation

and to accountability. Since the old Constitution was not supportive of participation and accountability, the planning predictably restricted space for citizen participation and did not provide for significant accountability by public officers. Therefore, the participation in the LASDAP in Viwandani was simply a sophisticated form of manipulation of citizens that is conceptualised as facipulation in the study. Facipulation here refers to the facilitation of a project to give the impression that citizens have the power to influence decisions of the state while at the same time being manipulated to ensure that the covert interests of powerful actors in the state are not undermined.

The study reveals that challenges which public institutions face in urban planning for poverty reduction are both multi-layered and complex. The results show that the institutional framework for implementing the LASDAP in Kenya was by design defective in planning for poverty reduction. The study further reflects that the processes of constitutional development affect the form and types of political institutions established for urban planning. To achieve an urban planning framework for poverty reduction, therefore, institutional reform processes should be cognisant of and address the insidious power represented by the reluctance to shift the current institutional framework away from the *status quo*. The framework should also be aligned to the aspirations as expressed in the recently promulgated Constitution. In this Constitution citizens of Kenya are vested with all sovereign power and power is to be exercised only in accordance with the Constitution.