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Contents

ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the extent to which civil society communicative platforms can be regarded as public sphere. This study seeks to establish how civil society communicative spaces, particularly public meetings, have been used to create a public sphere in the Habermasian sense. In other words, the study sought to establish the kind of public sphere that is consummated when citizens meet and engage on issues that affect them at public meetings. The research used Bulawayo Agenda as a case study. This organization is a Bulawayo based civil society organization that focuses on democracy, governance and human rights. It uses public meetings as the main mode of engagement. The research was mainly guided Jurgen Habermas' public sphere theory. It used questionnaires, interviews and document analysis to gather data. The research mainly used thematic and discourse analysis to analyze the data. The research noted that, Bulawayo Agenda is a communicative space that can be regarded as a public sphere platform. However, it was also noted that some elements of this communicative space are not in tandem with the Habermasian public sphere. It was also noted that, the public meetings which Bulawayo Agenda uses as the main mode of engagement still remain a vibrant and relevant, public sphere platform, despite the proliferation of new media technologies However, it was noted that Bulawayo Agenda has a number of short comings as a public sphere platform. For instance, the research noted that, the organisation has been hijacked by 'hegemonic forces' such as political parties, pressure groups and western donors which tend to impose their agendas on the public sphere platform. Therefore, there are a lot of changes that need to be ushered into Bulawayo Agenda's communicative space, to make a more vibrant people's public sphere. Having noted the need for some changes, the researcher put forward recommendations. These recommendations seek to turn Bulawayo Agenda into a more viable public sphere platform. If these recommendations are implemented Bulawayo Agenda can be transformed into a 'Zimbabwe Agora', a Zimbabwean version of the famous Greek Agora' of ancient Greece.

CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

This chapter presents a general overview of evaluating civil society as public sphere, with particular reference to Bulawayo Agenda. In addition to contextualizing this study, this chapter outlines the background to the study, articulates the statement of the problem, highlights the objectives of the study and touches on the significance of the study. Research questions, the scope, delimitations, limitations and assumptions of the study are also given. The chapter gives a definition of key terms.

1.1   Background to the study

"The citizen is the keystone of all democratic institutions" (Burgon 2008). The issue of citizen participation in public affairs has been viewed as the cornerstone of democracy by several scholars. Habermas (1989:231) conceives and identifies the public sphere as a place where:

"The Citizen Acts as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion: thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely and express and publicize their opinion freely". The centrality of the citizen participation in the realm of the public sphere is also aptly summed up by Dahlgren (1993:2) who asserts, "The public sphere represents the focal point of our desire for the good of the society, the institutional sites where political will should form and citizens should be able to constitute themselves in the political process. This is further enunciated by Coronel (2004:1) who advances that, "Democracy requires the active participation of citizens; ideally the media should keep citizens engaged in the business of governance by informing, educating and mobilizing the public". However in the Zimbabwean context, the notable reality is that, the mainstream media does less educating, informing or engagement of the public, often choosing to advance partisan ideas instead of mobilizing people to voice their unfettered opinions. Faced by multiple problems, the government radically shifted the communication spaces. It did so by emasculating the mainstream national media, attempting to influence public opinion in its own favour by directing the state owned newspaper oligopoly to

serve out government propaganda, by regulating the reception of the flow of information in the country (Ndlela : 2007). This scenario has created a shrinking public sphere. Although the shrinking of the Zimbabwean public sphere can be traced back as far as the early years of independence, it became even more pronounced around 1999 when a major opposition party (Movement for Democratic Change) was formed in Zimbabwe and political environment became even more polarized. Manganga (2008) sums it aptly when he asserts that, since 1999 the government has been trying to articulate and sustain a 'grand' and 'dominant' narrative resulting in the shrinking of the democratic space. The land reform programme which started in 2000, also led to a crackdown on the media as the ruling party sought to promote and defend the programme. Chikwanha (2006) advances that, the land reform created a situation that led to violation of basic rights including information rights. This crackdown on information was supported by a number of harsh legal provisions such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA).

 The Media Institute of Southern Africa Annual Report (2002) argues that, "these two acts have contributed to increased assault on the private media and denial of freedom of expression in Zimbabwe". The Government of National Unity (GNU) which was formed after the disputed 2008 elections promised to usher in a more democratic media environment. However, the media reforms done in this era were half-hearted and did not significantly solve the problem of a shrinking public sphere. Chuma (2010) aptly sums up the half-hearted nature of the GNU era media reforms when he advances that, "one sector which best manifests the contradictory character of this transition is the media, where the promise of reform has been followed through by a series of half measures which while pointing toward increased freedom, betray the grip of the past on the present and future". The efforts that are being made to reform the media and information sector in the current post GNU era have not yet yielded tangible results.

Therefore, it can be argued that, the Zimbabwean Communicative Space is still stifled. Due to the scenario described above Civil Society Organization (CSOS) have consequently become alternative communication platforms where citizens can get alternative sources of information and express their opinions as well. Zimbabweans in general and Bulawayans in particular have embraced civil society communication platforms such as public meetings, print and online media for civic engagement and democratic participation in public affairs.

In line with the above assertions, this study evaluates the efficacy of Bulawayo Agenda Communicative Platforms as public sphere, which can be viewed as alternative platforms to the traditional mainstream media in the engagement of citizens to actively participate in civic affairs

1.2 Bulawayo Agenda's Organizational Profile

In this study it is pertinent to situate the Bulawayo Agenda in its historical and contemporary context, therefore it is necessary to give a brief outline of the organization's profile. According to the Bulawayo Agenda website www.byagenda.org, Bulawayo Agenda is a nonprofit organization that was founded and registered as a trust in October 2002. The organization was founded mainly to create a platform for the people of Bulawayo and its hinterland to participate in national policy dialogue. The organization works mainly with rural communities in Matabeleland as well as urban areas in the South-western part of Zimbabwe. To date Bulawayo Agenda has established twelve chapters, these being Binga, Gwanda, Gweru, Lupane, Matobo, Masvingo, Mutare, Nkayi, Plumtree, Tsholotsho, and Victoria Falls. Bulawayo Agenda's main target group is the general public in rural and peri-urban areas who are often ignored or miss inputting into key local and national policy discussions. Traditional leaders, heads of government departments and leaders in church and community based organizations form part of the target group in nurturing a mutual state-citizenship relationship.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In Zimbabwe, freedom of expression is curtailed with impunity, and communicative spaces have shrunk as a result of the government's policy of shutting down all avenues of access to the political public sphere. Alternative discourses are silenced, marginalized and isolated (Ndlela: 2007). The scenario described above points to the fact that there are very few communicative spaces. It further points to the fact that, even the existing mainstream media platforms are not ideal public Sphere Spaces. As the Media Institute of Southern Africa Annual Report (2013) advances, Zimbabwe mainstream media is largely viewed as elitist and as quoting the same political and business voices at the expenses of marginalized communities and groups. In such a stifled communicative space, civil society communication platforms potentially offer citizens space to acquire and articulate alternative views.

In light of the above, this research aims to evaluate the extent to which civil society is a viable public Sphere platform that, serve as alternatives to the mainstream media. This is to be done with particular reference to Bulawayo Agenda.

1.4 Objectives

The following specific objectives guided the research:

1. To examine concepts of public sphere and civil society.
2. To evaluate civil society's role as a public sphere, with particular reference to Bulawayo Agenda.
3. To analyze the autonomy of Civil Society Communicative Spaces.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is a public sphere?
2. How can the concept of civil society be understood?
3. To what extent can Civil Society communicative spaces be considered as public sphere?
4. How autonomous are civil society communicative spaces?

1.6 Significance and Justification of the Study

This study provides meaningful knowledge not only to the researcher but to the entire social science field. A number of studies have been carried out to evaluate the mainstream media as public sphere, however very few studies have focused on civil society as a public sphere. It is also envisaged that, this study assists civil society's organizations such as the Bulawayo Agenda to measure their impact in the realm of the public sphere. The study will also provide recommendations, which civil society organizations can utilize to come up with strategies of becoming more viable public sphere platforms. The findings of the study provides policy makers such as the central government and local authority leadership with valuable insight into how they can effectively utilize civil society communication platforms for civic engagement with their constituencies. Last but not least the citizens of Zimbabwe in general and Bulawayo in particular are set to benefit from this study as it reveals the opportunities that civil society communication

platforms offer as alternative means of engaging local leadership, hence ensuring accountability and responsive governance.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses specifically on evaluating civil society as a public sphere, with particular reference to Bulawayo Agenda. Although the work of civil society organizations such as Bulawayo Agenda can be evaluated from various angles, this study specifically focuses on civil society as public sphere. This study focues on the activities of Bulawayo Agenda in the realm of the public sphere in the period between 2008 and 2014. This study focuses more on public meetings, since these happen to be Bulawayo Agenda's main mode of engagement with citizens. However, other public sphere platforms are also briefly evaluated. Since they complement the public sphere role of public meetings. The Bulawayo Agenda has established many chapters right round the country. These include Binga, Gwanda, Gweru and several other chapters. However this study will focus specifically on the Bulawayo Chapter.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The issue of limited time is a major problem to this study as the researcher has work and family commitments. However, the researcher tries by all means to make maximum use of the limited time available. The study also suffers from limited funding as the researcher shoulders all the expenses without external funding. However the researcher sacrifices and channels as much resources as possible to the study. Due to limited time and resources the researcher will not study the entire population of the study. However the researcher tries to come up with a fairly representative sample that can be generalised to the entire population. The polarized political environment that currently characterises Zimbabwe, makes it difficult to obtain some information, which Bulawayo Agenda deems to be sensitive. However, this dissertation makes use of a key informant interviewee. This a person considered to be knowledgeable on the topic, who will provide some information that, the Bulawayo Agenda may be reluctant to provide.

1.9 Assumptions of the study

This study is founded on the following assumptions:

That authority to conduct the research granted at the start of the study is not going to be revoked at a later stage. It is assumed that the Zimbabwe Public Sphere continues to be elitist and stifled for the duration of the study.

Further, the various level of staff in the different sections of the Bulawayo Agenda organization are going to co-operate with the researcher by freely volunteering information and answering questions accurately, sincerely and objectively with a seriousness of purpose and also provide the requisite documentation as and when required by the researcher when the situation so demands.

1.10 Definition of terms

Citizen   -   A person who legally belongs to a certain place or country.

Civic   -   Relating to a community or city.

Democracy   -   The belief in the freedom and equality of mankind.

Mainstream media – Traditional media such as radio, television and newspapers.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research topic. The background to the research was given and the statement of the problem was articulated. The main objectives of the research and questions to be addressed by this study where highlighted in this chapter. Furthermore, the justification, delimitations, limitations and assumptions of the study were spelt out. Having introduced and contextualized the topic, the next chapter looks at literature related to the topic. It will specify the

gaps left by these literary works as a means of justifying the need for this study showing how this study seeks to contribute towards closing the knowledge gaps of this topic. The chapter shall also give the theoretical framework underpinning this research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2   Introduction

This chapter will review literature related to this thesis. The first session defines literature review. In order to situate the study into its proper theoretical perspective from the onset, the chapter will first of all discuss the public sphere theory, before venturing into the review of various scholarly debates and opinions which underpin this study.

2.1 Literature Review

Hart (1998:4) notes that literature review refers to "a body of text that aims to review the critical points of current knowledge including substantive findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic". Mpedzi (2001) refers to literature review as the first procedure done in a research and it includes scanning through a number of publications in the field you want to investigate. Mabika (2007) argues that literature review is a legitimate and publishable scholarly document carried out to display various authors opinions about specific area of study. This study reviews an extensive range of works by various scholars on civil society as public sphere. One of the key functions of literature review is to identify the relevant theories that underpin a particular study. This study shall be informed by Jurgen Habermas' Public Sphere Theory.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 The Public Sphere Theory

The concept of the Public Sphere has been critiqued from various angles since its popularization by the writings of Jurgen Habermas. Despite the massive changes heralded by the emergence of new media and communications technologies, the concept of the public sphere remains effective in discussions on media, communication, civil society and democracy. In light of the above this section of the research provides a synopsis and

critique of Habermas' concept of the public sphere, in order to situate the research in its theoretical context. Jurgen Habermas' concept of public sphere was first published in 1962. Jurgen Habermas, a product of the Frankfurt school, investigated ways in which a discursive public sphere had emerged during the time of enlightment and the revolutionary era in the United States of America and France (Gripsrud:2009). One of the most important characteristics of the public sphere as existed in the eighteen century was the use of logic in reasoning. All public issues were open to critical debate. In the classical public sphere, private interest was to be overcome in order to discover public, common interests and finally came societal consensus. In the public sphere, individual groups could shape public opinion. They could render a direct expression of their needs and interests while at the same time influencing political practice (Calhoun, 1992).

The public sphere was hence made up of vibrant organs of political discussions such as parliament (later in the 17th century), political clubs, literary saloons, public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, meeting halls and any other places where social economic and political discussions took place (Habermas, 1984). The other feature of the public sphere was the firm establishment of civic rights guaranteeing the individual freedom of expression and association. As Kellner (2010) aptly puts it public sphere was institutionalized in constitutional orders which guaranteed a wide range of political rights and which established a judicial system that was to mediate claims between various individuals and groups of the state. The classical Habermasian public sphere was also characterized by inclusivity. Habermas (1984) aptly sums it up, when he argues that, in the public sphere, areas of unrestricted interaction were dominated by discussion on issues affecting people such as taxes, duties and issues of governance as well. Habermas further depicted how the public sphere was cultivated through the media and how the public was capable of influencing society and politics (Kellner, 2010)

Habermas' later work show that the public sphere declined as result of consumer culture and the influence of mass media or transformation of the public from reasoning to a consuming one. As a result the media became a channel for political players and advertisers, instead of a platform where the public get political ideas.

Critique of The Public Sphere Theory

The Habermasian Public sphere theory has been criticized for neglecting gender issues. Habermas was silent about women in the public sphere. Ryan (1992) puts it aptly, when he notes that, not only did Harbermas neglect women's public spheres, but marks the decline of the public sphere exactly at the period when women were starting to gain political power and assume the role of participation in the public sphere. The Habermasian Public Sphere theory, has also been criticized for overlooking the existence of Subaltern, sub-cultural public spheres that marginalized groups would form as a result of foreclosure from the mainstream public sphere. In other words critics argue that, Habermas never fully considered the fact that working class, plebeian, women, slaves, migrants and criminal public spheres developed alongside the bourgeoisie public sphere. Furthermore, Habermas' public sphere theory has been criticized for not taking into consideration complexities associated with meaning production as well as concrete social setting and cultural resources at work.

The other fundamental flaw of the Habermas' public sphere theory was the assumption that political debate will be conducted by rational men, in a public sphere where also participants would be equal. It can be argued that, such an assumption makes theory less applicable in modern world, which is characterized by a public sphere dominated by political elites and corporates. Kelner (2008) argues that, due to increasing corporatization in every sphere of production, citizens have become primarily consumers of goods, services, political administration and spectacle. Due to these flaws critics, have therefore argued for counter public spheres to Habermas' public sphere. Fraser (1990) advances that marginalized groups formed their own public spheres and term this concept a "Subaltern Counter public" or counter publics.

However, despite the limitations of his analysis, Habermas is correct that in the era of the democratic revolutions a public sphere emerged in which for the first time ordinary citizens could participate in political discussion and fight against oppressive authority (Manganga, 2008). It can be further argued that, the strength of the Habermasian Public sphere theory is that is a useful normative guide of the ideal public sphere, which should be a mediator between society and state. Doules (2001) puts it aptly when he notes that, the public sphere ideally is a mediator between society and state, the source of opinion needed to state and challenge and legitimize governments and authority.

Narrowing down this study the public sphere theory discussed above is an arena where citizens freely express their opinions on matters of affecting them. In light of the above modern civil society organizations (CSOS) can be viewed as alternative public spheres to the mainstream public spheres such as television radio and state controlled print media. In line with the above assertions, this study evaluates the extent to which Bulawayo Agenda is a public sphere platform that mobilizes citizens to participate in civic affairs.

2.1.1 The Concept of Civil Society

The concept of civil society is contested and there are many definitions to the concept as there are scholars on the subject. Most theorists of civil society argue that the concept no longer includes the "economy". Its institutional core is non-governmental and non economic connections and voluntary associations that anchor the communication structures of the public sphere in the society component of the life world. Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations and movements attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life sphere, distil and transmit such reactions in the amplified form to the public sphere (Habermas, 1996). The above definition is along the same lines with that of Sachikonye (1995) who defines civil society as an aggregate of institutions whose members are engaged primarily in a complex of non-state activities, economic and cultural production, voluntary associations, and household life, who in this way preserve and transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressures or controls upon state institutions. Van Rooy (1998:30) understands the concept of civil society in a manner almost similar to the scholars cited above, he advances

that, civil society is generally understood as "the population of groups formed for collective purposes primarily outside of the state and market place"

The common thread running through literature cited above is that scholars generally view civil society as a segment of society that is outside state control or in other words autonomous of the state. However, Boadi (2006:2) deviates from the perception that the civil society is totally autonomous from the state when he advances that, civil society can be broadly defined as, "the realm between household family and the state, populated by voluntary groups and associations formed on the basis of shared interests and are separate and/ or largely but not necessarily completely autonomous from the state". Writers such as Jonathan Moyo takes this perception a step further and totally reject that civil society is something outside the state, Moyo (1993) clearly asserts that, the view that civil society is outside the state is wrong. His view is premised on the notion that both the state and civil society belong to one public realm. This study aims to unpack this contentious subject of civil society autonomy from the state and other institutions. The study critically analyzes whether civil society organizations such as Bulawayo Agenda are autonomous from the state and other institutions of power.

It can also be seen from the above discussions that there is generally consensus among scholars that civil society is opposed to institutions of power, in other words scholars view civil society as a counter-hegemonic force. This notion is aptly advanced by Gellner (1991). In his historical definition of civil society Gellner argues that, the notion has been used to refer to plurality of social groups that exist in contradistinction to the dominance of a particular monopolistic social system. Gellner further asserts that the various social systems which have been targeted for opposition by civil society in political history have included savagery, anarchy, the church, the monarchy, the party, the state and market economy. This thesis examines the extent to which civil society organizations have opposed the state in the process of offering citizens the platform to utter counter-hegemonic discourse.

The other common thread running through literature on civil society cited above is that, civil society is a grouping of people with collective or similar purposes. Sachikonye (1995) argues that for most of Africa, civil society would include trade unions, professional associations, church organizations, residents, students, business and other special interests associations, the media and various types of non-governmental organizations (NGOS). The present study wills apply this notion of civil society to emphatically situate Bulawayo Agenda in the civil society realm.

2.3 Civil Society as Public Sphere

2.3.1 The Global Civil Society as Public Sphere

It can be argued that, there is a public sphere in the international arena (Volkmer, 2003). It exists within the political/ institutional space that is not subject to any sovereign power but instead is shaped by the variable geometry of relationships between states and global non state actors (Guidry, Kennedy and Zald, 2000). It is widely recognized that a variety of social interests express themselves in this international arena: multinational business, world religious, cultural creators, public intellectuals, and self-defined global cosmopolitans (Beck, 2006). There is also a global civil society (Kaldor, 2003) and ad hoc forms of global governance enacted by international conational, and supranatural political institutions (Nye and Donatime 2000, Keohane 2002). However, the forms and process of construction of the international public sphere are far from clear. This is because a number of simultaneous crises have blurred the relationship between national public spheres and the state, between states and civil society, between states and their citizens and between states themselves (Bauman 1999, Caputo 2004, Arsenault 2007). The crisis of national public spheres makes the emergence of an international public sphere particularly relevant. Without a flourishing international public sphere, the global sociopolitical order becomes defined by the realpolitik of nation-states that cling to the illusion of sovereignty despite the realities brought by globalization (Held, 2004).

The literature on global civil society as public sphere cited above, will pave the way for a deeper understanding of the role of civil society organizations such as the Bulawayo Agenda in the realm of public sphere. This assertion is premised on the notion that the structure and operations of the global civil society in the realm of the public sphere certainly have an impact on how civil society organizations operate at the local level.

2.3.2 Civil Society as Public Sphere: An African Perspective

The role played by African civil society as public sphere has been acknowledged repeatedly at regional and international levels (Nduwimana, 2004). On the other hand, Diamond (1997) aptly sums up the role of civil society as public sphere in an African context when he asserts that civil society performs many crucial public sphere functions for democratic development and consolidation, limiting the power of the state and challenging its abuse of authority, monitoring human rights, strengthening the rule of law, monitoring elections, civic engagement, incorporating marginal groups into the political process and opening and pluralizing the flows of information. However, the views of Shami (2009) differ from those of scholars cited above, he advances a more pessimistic view of the role of African civil society as public sphere when he argues that the impact of civil society as an alternative public sphere may be extremely limited (as in Egypt for example) and also raises contentious and difficult questions regarding the proper balance between state building and civil society/ nation building.

The views discussed above, join a growing literature that explores civil society as public sphere from an African perspective. It offers valuable insight into the role that; the African civil society is playing in the realm of the public sphere. However, a comprehensive and critical evaluation of the role of the African civil society as a public sphere is the missing chapter in this field. There has been a tendency by scholars to focus on highlighting the role of civil society in the public sphere, without critically evaluating the extent to which civil society in Africa performs this role. In this study attempts are made to overcome this deficiency by using research instruments such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews and

document analysis to measure the width and depth of the public sphere role of Bulawayo Agenda.

2.3.3 Civil Society use of Alternative Media as Public Sphere Platforms: A Zimbabwean   Context

(i)Understanding Alternative Media

Some theorists have argued that there can be no meaningful definition of the term alternative media(Abel: 1997). However, (Ndlela:2007) advances that, Alternative media denotes any media which fall outside the formal corporate mainstream media, and for media to be considered "alternative they must embody the Gramscian notion of counter hegemonic.

Alternative media can also be expressed in different forms, both printed and electronic, creative writing, art, music and video. Alternative media can also be expressed in terms of perspectives that hardly appear in dominant media (Ndlela:2007). The present study shall consider the Bulawayo Agenda public meetings to be part of the alternative media basing on the above notion of viewing alternative media in terms of perspectives that hardly appear in the dominant media. It can be argued that civil society public meetings such as those of Bulawayo Agenda, though different from normal media channels utter counter hegemonic perspectives that hardly appear in the mainstream media. Therefore they can be viewed as an alternative media in line with the assertions of (Ndlela: 2007) cited above.

2.3.4(ii)Understanding an alternative public sphere

In situation where a society's communication structures are heavily tilted toward mainstream discourses, civil society resort to alternative media hence creating an alternative public sphere (Ndlela: 2007). The above assertion is in line with that of Woo-Young (2005) who argues that, an alternative public sphere is a space in which counter discourse is produced and consumed by counter publics, who had their expression or voices

suppressed by the existing social order. Since the alternative media are not controlled by government, they revitalize the public sphere by giving access to civil society groups that could not easily access the formal public sphere.

In light of the above assertions, the present study seeks to evaluate the extent to which civil society alternative media platforms such as those of Bulawayo Agenda create an alternative public sphere for citizens.

2.3.5(iii)Zimbabwe's Restricted Communicative Space and the Civil Society's Shift to Alternative Media

Civil society not happy with the suppression of their voices and restricted access to the public sphere are increasingly turning to the alternative communicative spaces. They have emerged as active contributors of news and information disseminated via alternative media (Ndlela: 2007). The manner in which a restrictive communicative environment leads to the birth of alternative media is aptly summed up by Nyamjoh (2005: 204) who argues that, however repressive a government is and however profound the spiral of silence induced by standardized global media menus, few people are ever completely mystified or wholly duped. In other words there is always room-sometimes through radical or alternative media. The restrictive communicative space in Zimbabwe has generated an array of alternative media and alternative public spheres. Civil society organizations are turning to Information communication technologies (ICTS), especially the internet and radio stations hosted in foreign countries for remedies (Ndlela: 2007)

2.3.6Zimbabwean Civil Society's Appropriation of Alternative Radio Stations

Disgruntled by lack of access to mainstream media, civil society movements, especially those which are prodemocracy have turned to alternative radio stations, mostly with the support of western governments advocating regime change in Zimbabwe (Ndlela: 2007). Alternative radio stations, referred to as Clandestine radio by Nicholas and Soley (1987) are defined as "unlicensed radio stations designed to create political change within countries targeted by their transmission" (Zoller). These situations appear in countries

experiencing political crisis and where opposition forces have limited access to mainstream media. Prodemocracy civil society movements have thus turned to alternative radio stations. The main objectives is advocating for political change and offering alternative explanations to the crisis in the country. These radio stations include Studio 7 a radio news channel launched by the voice of America in 2003. Another alternative radio is Radio Dialogue, whose original aim was to have a community broadcasting license for Bulawayo and surrounding areas. Radio Dialogue in partnership with civil society organizations embarked on a project of diffusing community views by other methods, which do not rely on radio transmission technology. These methods include meetings to plan advocacy issues around democracy, the rule of law, human rights and discussion forums (Ndlela: 2007).

From the above discussion, it is clear that, there is still a dearth of up-to-date information on the alternative media or communication platforms created by Zimbabwean Civil society organizations themselves. Research in this area has been dominated by studies depicting how civil society have turned to radio stations and other alternative media which are not creations of civil society organizations themselves. This study will fill this gap by specifically evaluating the role of alternative media platforms such as public meetings, print media platforms and online media platforms created by the Bulawayo Agenda itself.

2.3.7 Zimbabwean Civil Society's Appropriation of the Internet and Alternative New Media Spaces

The repressive media environment in Zimbabwe has sparked rapid growth of political news Web sites hosted in foreign countries, mainly Southern Africa, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The main aim of the news sites is to expand the shrinking communicative space. (Ndlela :2007). Commenting on the popularity of these websites, Johwa (2007) notes that, with repressive media laws continuing to stifle the mainstream media in Zimbabwe, these online websites have become an increasingly important source of alternative information for many Zimbabweans. The popularity of these websites is also due to the fact that a significant number of Zimbabweans live in foreign countries, where access to internet is better than in Zimbabwe. (Ndlela: 2007) the

manner in which the Zimbabwean civil society has appropriated these websites is aptly summed up by (Ndlela: 2007) when he advances that, the news websites are linked and sometimes financed by various social movements and Non-governmental organizations (NGOS) that are sympathetic to certain factions in Zimbabwe's polarized politics.

The literature cited above paints a clear picture of how and why the Zimbabwean civil society have adopted new media spaces to create an alternative public sphere. However, like most literature in this area, it concentrates on how the Zimbabwean civil society have appropriated websites hosted in foreign countries. The literature therefore, fails to focus on how Zimbabwean civil society organizations have created their own home grown websites to create an alternative public sphere. The current study will fill this gap by evaluating the extent to which the Bulawayo Agenda website, created by the Bulawayo Agenda itself is an alternative public sphere in Zimbabwe.

2.3.8 Evaluating the Role of Alternative Media as Civil Society Public Sphere Platforms

The alternative media constitutes alternative communication spaces independent of cohesive apparatus of the state and are thus positioned to challenge the dominant socio-political order. The alternative media offer platforms for advocacy to civil society movements (Ndlela: 2007). One may argue that, the notion that alternative media constitute alternative public sphere as asserted above is true. However the notion that alternative media are independent of cohesive state apparatus is highly debatable. In light of the above, the present study shall evaluates the extent to civil society alternative media platforms are autonomous of the state. Some writers who point out the democratization role of alternative media, take a step further to caution about short comings of alternative media. (Bolton: 2006) advances that, the democratic potential of alternative media is, however not without shortcomings, despite the fact that alternative media are often hailed as having the potential to enhance democracy and citizenship. (Ndlela: 2007) further argues that alternative media provide platforms for the marginalized groups who are not represented in the mainstream media.

These marginalized groups can be classified as the Subaltern. Louai (2012) asserts that, "the subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci's words to any 'low rank' person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite that denies them the basic rights of participation as active individuals of the same nation. Spivak (1988) focuses on the Indian women whom she considers misrepresented, oppressed, marginalized and suffer from exclusion from the patriarchal community. Spivak (1988:77) however, argues that "the oppressed can know and speak for themselves". In other words he argues that the Subaltern can speak. In the context of this study civil society can be viewed as offering the oppressed groups a platform to speak through alternative media.

Placing the subaltern analysis in colonial discourses, Spivak (1988:82) observes that " in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as a female is even more deeply in shadow". Proponents of subaltern studies like Spivak (1988) and Said (1978) argue that the media have a tendency of subjecting marginalized groups like women into passive citizens. The present study shall adopt subaltern concepts to evaluate the participation of women and other marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities in Bulawayo Agenda's communication platforms.

Still on the shortcomings of alternative media as communicative spaces, Bolton (2006) argues that while internet does provide a space for more participation the social distribution of know-how discriminates against full participation online. This line of thinking is in line with that of Ndlela (2007) who argues that there are a number of social, political and cultural factors that limit the effectiveness of alternative media as communicative spaces in Zimbabwe. Ndlela (2007) goes a step further to point out three factors that limit the effectiveness of alternative media. First, the alternative media movement is created by self-exiled professionals and students based outside the country. The ruling elites perceive this group as composed of supporters of opposition. Therefore, despite their capacity to generate political debate, the government has ensured that little of these discussions reach the grassroots in Zimbabwe by, for example, jamming the radio frequencies, confiscating

radio receivers and generally dissuading those in the diaspora from participating in local discussions.

The literature cited above focuses on how the state has disempowered those in the diaspora through annihilating their voices. However, the present study shall evaluate the extent to which the state has prevented locally based Zimbabweans from engaging in political debate through civil society communication platforms. Secondly, Ndlela (2007) argues that due to the prevailing economic situation in Zimbabwe, most people cannot afford the cost of internet services. He therefore, concludes that, this renders internet public sphere an exclusionary and elitist public sphere. However, the above assertion is highly debatable in the current dispensation, characterised by a significant increase in access to internet mainly through mobile phones. Despite the limitations of the above analysis, the notion an elitist and exclusionary public sphere that it raises is central to understanding and evaluating the role of civil society organizations such as the Bulawayo Agenda in the realm of the public sphere.

The third factor which limits the effectiveness of alternative media according to Ndlela (2007) is that, the alternative media with reformist agendas often tend to be elitist. Studies of the UK activist's newspaper *SchNews* have shown that while at first glance the paper appears to amplify "ordinary" voices, closer examination reveals a "counter-elite" (Bolton : 2006).

The present study will apply the notion of an elitist public sphere, as discussed above to evaluate the Bulawayo Agenda as a public sphere. In line with the above notion, it will seek to evaluate whether communication practices used in Bulawayo Agenda do not reveal hegemonic tendencies. Following the above assertion, it will critically examine whether the organization's communication practices do not serve to silence the same voices that the organization claims to amplify.

2.3.9 The Nature of the Zimbabwean Mainstream Media Environment from the Colonial to Post Colonial Period.

The Zimbabwean mainstream media are characterised by contradictions which have roots in the colonial period, when both print and electronic media mainly served the needs of colonial administrators. Although the post colonial Zimbabwe government grew out of liberation movement founded on the democratic agenda of majority rule, in a clearly contradictory manner, their media policy was party influenced by authoritarianism inherited from the colonial state. This Section will review literature on the nature of the Zimbabwean mainstream media environment.

In this section, it is essential to define key terms such as media policy, legacies, democracy and authoritarianism. A full understanding of term media policy is essential in this section. According to *www.freeonlinedictionary.com* media are storage and transmission channels or tools used to store and deliver information or data. On the other hand, *www.freeonlinedicitonary.com* defines policy as a plan or course of action, as of a government, political party or business intended to influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters. Therefore, basing on the above definitions, media policy can be defined as a plan or course of action a country takes to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters concerning its media systems.

On the other hand, the term legacies is derived from the word legacy which according to the Collins English Dictionary (2011) means anything handed down from the past, as from the ancestor or predecessor. The term democracy is a bit problematic and defined in so many ways. However, according to dictionary.com democracy is a form of a government in which the supreme power is vested in people and exercised directly by them or their elected agents under a free electoral system. Authoritarianism, has ideals that oppose those of democracy. www.britannica.com defines authoritarianism as any political system that concentrates power in the hands of a leader or small elite that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people.

In order to understand how the dual legacies of democracy and authoritarianism influence the post –colonial media policy in Zimbabwe, a basic appreciation of the media policy in colonial Zimbabwe is essential. The media policy in colonial Zimbabwe was largely authoritarian and

mainly designed to serve the needs of colonial administrators. In the colonial era, the media reflected the settler – colonial ideology of the state and social division along racial lines. Saunders (1999) sums it aptly, when he asserts that, in the colonial era, whites dominated the press and put across views that consolidated the political and economic ideologies of whites, without saying anything on behalf of colonised blacks.

However, the media policy in colonial Zimbabwe was to an extent contradictory. Despite the largely authoritarian nature of the media policy, it contained some elements of democracy. This point of view is put cross aptly by Ronning and Kupe (undated) who assert that , in spite of the authoritarian character and oppressive nature of the Rhodesian regime, there existed a semblance of pluralism and openness under UDI. It was to a great extent   confined to white society, but it constituted a form of civil with a public sphere. Ronning and Kupe (undated) further assert that, apart from a white public sphere, there was an African public sphere consisting of a variety of magazines, papers and so on which were partly linked to churches, partly linked to unionism and aptly linked to nationalist movements. This shows that in a clearly contradictory manner, civil society structures had evolved in a largely authoritarian colonial Zimbabwe.

The legacy of democracy can also be understood, from the perspective of the bitter armed struggle that anti-colonial movements, fought to end authoritarianism in the media and other spheres of colonial Zimbabwe. However, despite fighting to bring about democracy, the post-colonial Zimbabwean government, like most post- colonial African governments adopted authoritarian media policies, which contradicted the democracy , that they fought for. As   Ronning and Kupe (undated) aptly put it, the democratic agenda of the liberation movements was to be found in the demands for majority rule, however the democratic implications of this demand were often contradicted by authoritarian post- colonial media policies.

The legacy of authoritarianism in the post – colonial Zimbabwean media policy is revealed by the manner in which the ruling elite have controlled the media since independence. This tight control of the media is clearly a colonial   legacy. As Mukasa (undated) advances the blatant control of the press is a defining characteristic of the legacy of colonialism in the post- colonial state in Africa. The control of the media by the ruling elite in Zimbabwe began soon after independence,

when the ruling ZANU PF adopted a socialist ideology. Mukasa (undated) sums it aptly , when he asserts that, the post colonial Zimbabwe government depicted the revolutionary ideals of the emergent black political regime whose ideology of socialism placed Zimbabwean under an authoritarian state. Mukasa (undated) further asserts that, in a clear reversal from the nationalist campaign promises for a free press and free expression in post colonial Zimbabwe, during this period the press was coerced to support the government. The authoritarian and socialist or Marxist character of the Zimbabwean government soon after independence, is also aptly described by Ronning and Kupe (undated) when they advance that though the liberation movements had fought for democracy, the democratic ideals were contradicted by an authoritarian ideology which often comprised a mixture of soviet -type Marxist ideology and Africanist one − party satism. As alluded to earlier on, during this period the Zimbabwe government adopted an authoritarian media policy, which forced the media to support Marxist ideology.

The government's control of the media soon after independence was characterised by a partisan or biased coverage of political events in the public media. This biased coverage of political events, is clearly illustrated by Zaffiro (1984) who advances that Zimpapers clearly give a blatantly skewed, or scant and non-existing, reporting of opposition to the government and ruling party.

This tight government control on the print media led to the dismissal and removal of editors and journalists in Zimpapers. The type of press that emerged in the early 1980s was a partisan press headed by government appointed editors. Most of these editors were committed to serving the interests of the ruling party. The few editors or journalists who published stories deemed to be unfavourable to the ruling ZANU PF were either demoted or fired. This dismissal of editors is well illustrated by Ronning and Kupe (undated) who describe how the then *Chronicle* editor Geoffrey Nyarota was relieved of his editorial position and moved to an administrative post at the headquarters of Zimpapers in Harare. This was after the *Chronicle* had exposed Willovale scandal , in which ministers and other high ranking officials abused their right to buy cars from the Willovale Car Assembly plant and resold them at a higher price. The corruption exposure led to President Mugabe setting up a commission of inquiry under Justice Sandura in 1989. It can be argued that, Geoffrey Nyarota had overstepped the ruling party's limits of press freedom.

However, according to Ronning, Kupe (undated) Geoffrey Nyarota was not the only editor in Zimpapers to be removed from his position because he had exercised editorial freedom. In 1983 popular Zimbabwean journalist Willie Musarurwa was fired as editor of *The Sunday Mail* for giving prominent coverage to the then opposition ZAPU. According to Ronning and Kupe (undated) in 1987 Henry Muradzikwa , then editor of *Sunday Mail* published an article that was critical of the treatment of Zimbabwean students in Cuba at a time when the then Cuban foreign minister was visiting Zimbabwe. He was punished by being " promoted" to group projects manager at head office. Ronning and Kupe (undated) give a further example of Tommy Sithole who was removed from his post and "promoted" to director business projects and public relations at Zimpapers head office. This was due to the fact that *The Herald* under his editorship was deemed to have become somewhat critical of the ruling ZANU PF.

The colonial legacy of authoritarianism in Zimbabwe's post- colonial media policy, is also reflected by the tight control of broadcasting that the post –independence government adopted from the colonial era. Soon after independence, the post- independence government started using broadcasting as a tool for political control and manipulation of the ordinary people, in the same manner as their colonial predecessors. According to Saunders (1999) the post – colonial government maintained the monopoly status of the state broadcaster, further government control of broadcasting through Ministry of Information remained unchanged, and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation remained both politically and financially dependent upon the government. The colonial legacy of authoritarianism in Zimbabwe's post- colonial broadcasting policy is also aptly summed up by Ronning (1999) who argues that, the obsession of those in power to maintain tight control of broadcasting and use it as a tool for perpetuating political dominance continued despite some changes.

The colonial legacy of authoritarianism did not shape media policy in the early years of independence alone. In fact, the influence of the colonial legacy of authoritarianism on post-independence Zimbabwe's media policy, continued into 1990s. The authoritarianism became even more pronounced when the movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai was formed in 1999. According to *www.hrforumzim.org* The formation of the MDC in 1999 led to increased infringement of information and expression rights in post- colonial

Zimbabwe. The land reform programme which started in 2000, also led to a crackdown on the media as the ZANU PF government sought to promote and defend the programme. Chikwanha (2006) advances that, the land reform created a situation that led to the violation of basic rights, including information rights. It can be argued that, the authoritarianism described above to large degree continues to characterise Zimbabwe's current media policy.

The colonial legacy of authoritarianism in post- colonial Zimbabwe's media policy, is betrayed by harsh media laws. A number of harsh legal provisions were borrowed from the colonial government, slightly modified and renamed to suit the new media environment. The harsh media laws were mainly adopted after the formation of MDC and the commencement of the land reform programme. These harsh media, laws were meant to curtail media freedom in order to counter the opposition MDC and promote the ZANU PF land reform programme. These laws include, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Broadcasting Services Act, among others. In reference to POSA and AIPPA, the Media Institute of Southern Africa Annual Report (2002) argues that, these two acts have contributed to increased assault on the private media and denial of freedom of expression in Zimbabwe.

The restrictive legal environment has resulted in the closure of newspapers. For instance, the Daily News was closed in 2003 for failure to register as per provisions of AIPPA. Before, its closure the newspaper's printing press had been bombed, in a clear case of increased intolerance to press freedom. The *Tribune* newspaper was also closed in 2003, by AIPPA created Zimbabwe Media and Information Commission. According to the last issue of the *Tribune* (11- 17 June 2003) The Zimbabwe Media and Information and Commission shut down the Tribune on the 10th of June 2003 dealing a major blow to press freedom in post independent Zimbabwe.

The repressive media laws have also resulted in the arrest and torture of a number of journalists in Zimbabwe. These arrests became pronounced when the ZANU PF government felt that, their hold on power was under threat, after the formation of the MDC. For example, according to Chiumbu and Mazango (2000) in January 1999, Mark Chavunduka and Ray Choto, editor and reporter of the Standard were arrested and allegedly tortured by military police after writing a strong about

a   coup attempt. The two journalists were charged with contravening section 50 (2) (s) of the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act. In a relatively recent example, according   to the   Standard (29 April – 5 May 2011) Standard journalists were   arrested in 2011. These include editor, Nevanji Madanhire and reporters, Nqaba Matshazi and Nqobani Ndlovu, who were arrested on criminal defamation charges. This clearly shows that, repression of the press is the order of the day in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

The restrictive legal environment has also curtailed the democratisation of the broadcasting sector. The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) continues to be the dominant player in the Zimbabwean Broadcasting sector due to the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) (2001) that does not encourage the entrance of new players into the sector. As Moyo (undated) advances the BSA contains several clauses that make it difficult for new players to enter the broadcasting market. Only a few players, aligned to ZANU PF managed to enter the broadcasting sector in recent years. Media analysts raised concerns in 2011, when Zimpapers' Star FM and Supa Mandiwanzira's ZIFM, won the country's commercial private radio licences. Part of the concerns were that, the two institutions are closely linked to ZANU PF. Commenting on the move by the Broadcasting Services Act created, Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe to award licences to Star FM and ZIFM Nhlanhla Ngwenya, the   national director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa was quoted by *The Standard* (29 April - 5 May 2012) saying the illegal Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe   issued licences to its ZANU PF allies, instead of genuinely aspiring independent broadcasters. The restrictive broadcasting legislation has even made it difficult for community broadcasting to be established in Zimbabwe. According to *Daily News* (30 June 2011) a number of community radio stations such as Bulawayo's   Radio Dialogue and Masvingo based Wezhira have been denied licences by the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe.

The authoritarian nature of Zimbabwe's post- colonial media policy is epitomised by the government's   tight control of the public media after the formation   of the MDC and in the land reform period. This tight control resulted in the public media becoming extremely biased towards the ZANU PF government. For instance public newspapers such as the Herald and Chronicle supported   the land reform programme and campaigned for ZANU PF in the 2000, 20002, 2008 and 2013 elections. The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) has been even more blatant,

in its support for ZANU PF from the land reform era to the present. The partisan nature of ZBC's reportage during the land reform era is aptly summed up by Moyo (undated) who advances that, ZBC was used as a tool for legitimising the land reform programme and mobilising the masses to rally behind the Third Chimurenga – as the land reform came to be known. During this era liberation war programmes, songs and jingles supporting the land reform became the order of the day. The partisan reportage is still a prominent feature of public media reportage. For example, in 2013 elections the public media openly campaigned for ZANU PF.

However, just like its colonial predecessor, the Zimbabwean post–colonial media policy is contradictory, in the sense that despite its authoritarian nature, it has some elements of democracy. At independence, the ruling ZANU PF, which fought for democracy, attempted to fulfil its pre-independence media democratisation promises through some democratic reforms. One of the post-independent government's greatest initiatives towards democratising the post – colonial media policy was the establishment of the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) in 1981. According to Saunders (1991) The Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) was created by the government in January 1981 as a pronunciation of the post- colonial government's media policy. The establishment of ZMMT was premised on the belief by the government that the press should be free, responsible, accessible, people- oriented and non partisan in content. Saunders (1991) further asserts that, the ZMMT was constituted as a non – governmental, non party, non profit making trust with a non partisan board of trustees. The ZMT also acted as the major shareholder in the country's largest "private" media enterprise – Zimpapers. Saunders (1991) aptly sums up the democratisation role of ZMMT when he asserts that, at inception ZMMT may be interpreted as being, the most practical expression of ZANU PF's intention of democratising the media. Thus, it can be argued that, the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) concept brought a semblance of democracy to the post- colonial Zimbabwean media policy, despite the fact that it was later on hijacked by ZANU PF to achieve its hegemonic aims.

The semblance of democracy inherent in Zimbabwe's post – colonial media policy can also be depicted by the reforms that took place in the broadcasting sector soon after independence. It can be argued that, at independence the nationalist government sought to preserve the legacy of democracy they had fought for, through bringing in some level of democracy in the

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broadcasting sector. At independence the new government adopted a broadcasting system that had been designed to serve minority interests. The post – colonial government immediately transformed Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) into an institution that served the democratic needs of the majority. As Zaffiro (2002) advances, the nature broadcasting content on both television and radio become more reflective of the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Zimbabwe. The new government also embarked on structural changes to the broadcasting sector, which was meant to improve people's access to broadcasting services. According to Saunders (1999) Radio 4 and Radio 2 were deployed to serve the developmental needs of marginalised rural communities and a second television channel TV 2, was introduced in 1986 to serve the people's education and information needs. This it can be argued that, at independence Zimbabwe's broadcasting sector underwent democratic reforms both in content and structure.

The other factor that betrays the democratic element in Zimbabwe's post- colonial media policy was the emergence of a vibrant private print media sector, which was critical of the government. In the 1980s and 1990s private sector press included newspapers such as *Zimbabwe Independent, Financial Gazette, The Daily News* and *Sunday Standard*, as well as magazines such as *Horizon* and *Parade*. The role of the private media in democratising the media space during this period is aptly summed by Mukasa (undated) who argues that, private newspapers such as the *Zimbabwe Independent* and *Daily News* blazed the way in the struggle for a free press, by tackling major issues which main stream papers had only superficially handled. On the other hand, the impact of magazines in democratising the media landscape, is aptly illustrated by Kupe (1997) when he advances that, an interesting illustration of the opening up Zimbabwean media is the changing styles and content of monthly magazines Parade and Horizon , which in the 1980s and 1990s under the editorship of Andrew Moyse developed a hard- hitting investigative political style of journalism , which exposed and criticised a number of political and economic scandals in Zimbabwe. It can be argued that, the fact that, this private media sector was allowed to flourish, despite being critical of the government, reveals the partly democratic nature of Zimbabwe's post- colonial media policy.

The media reforms that were undertaken under the Government of National Unity (GNU) also reveal the post- colonial government's desire to preserve the legacy of democracy upon which post

– colonial Zimbabwe was founded. Although the media policy reforms done during this era were half -hearted, at least they point towards a more democratic dispensation in the Zimbabwean media landscape. Chuma (2010) aptly sums up the nature of media policy reform in the unity government era, when he advances that, one sector which best manifests the contradictory character of this transition is the media, where the promise of reform has been followed through by a series of half measures which while pointing toward increased freedom, betray the grip of the past on the present and future. Chuma (2010) goes further to illustrate some the little democratic reforms that took place during GNU era such as the scrapping of import duty on newspapers, which made it easier to distribute newspapers printed outside the country, such as *The Zimbabwean* and *Mail and Guardian*. He further points out important democratic developments in the GNU era such as the establishment of the Zimbabwe Media Commission, which licences newspapers and regulates media practice. Chuma (2010) also lauds the licensing of three daily newspapers by the Zimbabwe Media Commission in the GNU era as a positive development. Thus, it can be argued that despite the fact that media reforms under GNU were inadequate, the GNU government will go down in history as having brought a semblance of democracy in post-colonial Zimbabwe's media policy.

The post- Government of National Unity (GNU) era in Zimbabwe still betrays a desire by the government to embrace the legacy of democracy in formulating media policy. It can be argued that the prevailing media environment is much more democratic than the one in the "crisis years" before the formation of the GNU. For instance, there are a lot of new private newspapers such as the *Zimbabwe Mail* and *Weekend Post*. Even the broadcasting sector is no longer a total monopoly of the state there are new independent players such as Bos television.

Consequent to his reappointment as the Minister of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services, Professor Jonathan Moyo has set out to make a number of democratic reforms to the Zimbabwean media policy. The Minister has announced that Zimbabwe media landscape will soon be diverse, with a number of newspapers, television and radio stations. In a move likely to bring democracy to the media sector, Minister Moyo is currently reviewing the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and Public Order and Security Act (POSA). This move to reform AIPPA and POSA is aptly revealed by Stobart cited in the Chronicle (29

March 2014) where he points out that, the Minister of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services , Professor Moyo has come up with brand spanking new polices which are designed to usher in positive reforms to POSA and AIPPA which should remove labels such as "draconian" and "notorious" from the two acts. These democratic reforms and promises of reform, clearly betray the ushering in of democracy to a media policy that has been largely authoritarian.

The literature cited above, largely reveals the authoritarian nature of the Zimbabwean mainstream media environment. The current study takes cognizance of this authoritarian nature in evaluating the public sphere role of civil society communicative spaces. In such an authoritarian environment, civil society communicative platforms become alternative spaces through which citizens can express themselves. The study therefore seeks to measure the extent to which Bulawayo Agenda is playing the role of being an alternative space for citizen engagement

2.4. Participation, Governance and the Public Sphere

The public sphere is an arena where citizens can participate in governance issues. They participate through engaging public officials on matters that affect them. In light of the above, this section will review literature on participation and governance, since the appreciation of these concepts is a prerequisite for a full understanding of the public sphere concept.

2.4.1 Understanding the various forms of Governance

The terms governance and government are being increasingly used within development literature. Governance refers to "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented yet government is the institution, the administrative machinery for effecting policy" (Weiss, 2000:22). However, the quality of the decision making process is governance, it is a higher level outcome and goes beyond the traditional services of government which also needs to align to ethical and democratic standards (Rhodes, 2000:2). Governance implies "going beyond the legal authority, and implicitly implies that there will be some form of validation or judgment of

activities to see whether these do align to the values of good governance" (Weiss, 2000:23). Given the need for validation, it requires sound monitoring and evaluation to indicate whether or not this ideal is achieved.

Santiso (2001) brings clarity to the issue of governance by arguing that as a concept it is relatively new, as it emerged in 1989 in the World Bank`s report on the crisis of governance in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the capacity, ability and willingness of political authorities to govern effectively in the common interest was highlighted. The governance question has also been illustrated as important for Africa by Amuwo (2000) who argues that with globalization African countries, previously on the margins of the good governance networks, were brought in through African driven initiatives like NEPAD, to align these countries with international good governance values.

In support of the above argument Gudberg 2008:13 observes that:

> When governance is perceived in a narrow sense as government, the focus is more on the management of the public sector and it`s legal and administrative capacity whereas when governance includes politics the focus is more on the way power and authority are exercised, the management of a country`s affair, the relationships between rulers and ruled, how conflicts are resolved, how interests are articulated and rights exercised and so on.

This signifies that within the more narrow definition (governance equals government), the promotion of governance or the ensuring of good governance only concerns the public sector, whereas the whole society is incorporated in governance in the broad definition which makes the area of analysis in ensuring good governance that much clearer and larger.

According to Mardiasmo (2007) a good governance system also requires that the process of decision making and public formulation is transparent and accountable. "It extends beyond the capacity of the public sector to the rules that create a legitimate, effective and efficient framework for the conduct of public policy" (Mardiasmo, 2007:12). Clearly this implies managing public affairs in a participatory, transparent and accountable manner. It entails effective participation in public policy making, the prevalence of the rule of law and an independent judiciary, institutional checks and balances through horizontal and vertical separation of powers and effective oversight agencies.

Participatory Governance

The question of what is participatory governance has been interrogated by influential academics foe some time (Brady, 2009).

Participation, engagement and involvement often used interchangeably although sometimes they are used distinctly. In Hawkins, Weston and Swannel (2005) these three words have similar meanings, yet engagement and participation are distinguished from each other in a series of scholarly research efforts by Mardiasmo, 2007, Weiss, 2000 and Rhodes, 2000. Furthermore, the combination of "civic" with "political" causes more confusion in defining civic and political participation.

2.4.2 Public participation, citizen participation and political participation

2.4.2.1 Political participation

In recent studies, political participation is surely one of the central concepts of mass politics. Basically, through political participation, people can voice their needs, concerns and problems to their local authority or governments (Brady, 2009). The obvious question then becomes, what are the determinants of political participation? A voluminous literature offers a wide range of definitions and measures of political participation (eg Olson, 1965; Verba and Nie, 1972; Miller et al, 1980; Dahl, 2009; Schlozman and Brady, 2005).

Among the many definitions, Verba and Nie`s (1972) is more frequently accepted and regarded as the classic definition. They state that "political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and /or the action they take" Verba and Nie, 1972:2). As Verba and Nie define it, political participation requires action (activities) by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political participation requires action (activities) by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcome such as setting, deciding, implementing and changing public policies. Similarly, Brady (2009) argues that almost all definitions of political participation include four basic concepts: activities or actions, ordinary citizens, politics and influence.

2.4.2.2 Political Engagement

Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry (2006) posit that political engagement comes close to the notion of autonomy, understood as the authorship of one`s life in the social context with a bundling of identity and interest, where people are capable of choosing their own actions. Political engagement is like autonomy in the sense that autonomy implies the ability to be self-governing. This suggests that each Schlozman and Brady`s (2005) definition of political participation which comes from their resource model of political participation also emphasizes the action element and that political participation is a function of individual resource. For example, citizens are more likely to participate if they have more resources, including skills, knowledge, time and money or if they are more psychologically engaged. Thus, in this study, the Schlozman and Brady (2005) emphasis on political activity is accepted as the key component of the definition of political participation.

Citizen participation, however, is distinct political participation because citizen participation lays emphasis on the person rather than the state in the participatory relationship. Public participation is not synonymous with citizen participation mainly because public participation is a wider concept which may include citizen participation. The reason is that the word public in public participation refers to all the people whether or not they possess the rights and obligations of citizenship (Langton, 2008:20). For purposes of this article public participation is taken to include citizen participation.

2.4.2.3 Participation in Civil Affairs: Public Participation/Engagement

The primary usage of the term "civic" has to do with the activities of citizens, particularly with their rights and duties in relation to this legal status (Mardiasmo, 2007). Citizen participation is the direct participation of ordinary citizens in public affairs. In the policy management cycle the individual citizen is often neglected in favour of interest groups and more prominent participants. This is unfortunate because the individual often does seem to make a difference. For purposes of this article citizen participation may be defined as "purposeful activities in which people participate in relation to a local authority are of which they are legal residents (Langton, 2008:23).

Political participation/engagement cannot always be sharply distinguished from other forms of civic participation/engagement. In the conventional view, political participation does not include direct service volunteer work or other endeavors not connected to a concern about the causes of

social or policy problems and that are not undertaken with the conscious intention of provoking broader social or institutional change. In contrast to political participation, civic participation is defined as "organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others. It includes a wide range of work undertaken alone or in concert with others to effect change" (Zukin, 2007:34).

While remaining cognizant that civic engagement or participation cannot substitute for political engagement/participation or vice versa, Zukin, Keeter, Andonilina, Jenkins and DelliCarpini (2006) emphasize that the "gold standard" for a democratic policy would be equitable and substantial participation in both the civil and political spheres and the "gold standard" for a democratic citizen would be someone whois facile in both types of engagement.

Recent research by (Beaumont, 2004:13) suggests the need to more carefully differentiate between political participation/engagement and the broader umbrella of civic engagement. In Beaumont`s (2004:13) political participation/engagement can be understood as a specific subset of civic engagement focused on "a narrower sphere involving formal and informal processes and institutions involving political concerns – political issues, public opinion, public policies and decision making and governmental institutions."

Public participation has to do with a two way exchange of information between the public and their local authority, it is essentially dialogue not monologue. Public participation could be political participation in public affairs, which is the participation of the public in the policy management cycle through the elected member in the local government council. Public participation could also be executive participation by the public through interest groups in the implementation of policies by local authorities (Hanekom, 2007:33). Public participation is thus the act of taking part in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies by interest groups through formal institutions. Examples of interest groups include associations such as trade unions, pressure groups, professional institutes, staff associations, chamber of commerce and churches. Interest groups have the potential to supply public managers with much information about the nature and possible consequences of policy proposals (Anderson 2000:60).

To a greater or lesser extent the shaping of public policies is always influenced by public opinion and participation by the public in matters which they believe will affect them directly. A number

of specific arguments have been identified to explain why participation in public management is considered important (Hanekom, 2007).

Foremost in the argument is the fact espoused by Bryson (2003) that public participation is a means of obtaining information about local conditions, needs, desires and attitudes. This information may be important to achieve informed and implementable decisions in the policy management cycle. Further, participation is a means of providing those people whose lives will be affected by proposed policies with the opportunity of expressing their views and of attempting to influence public managers as to the desirability of the suggested policies (Hanekom, 2007).

Zimmerman(2002) adds to the debate by saying participation is a means of involving and educating the public. The benefit of involvement is that people are more likely to be committed to a project, programme or policy if they are involved in its planning and preparation. They can identify with it and even see it as their plan (Conyers, 2002). Studies by Zimmerman (2006), Conyers, (2002) have indicated that the quality of life is better in a local authority are with a well-developed sense of community. The benefit of education is the enhancement of the quality of citizenship in that the educated citizen is enabled to exercise his or her judgment to contribute to the debate about planning and is aware of societal problems and the difficulties of finding solutions to them.

Participation provides a mechanism to ensure the democratization of the planning process in particular and the public management process in general. In most countries participation in local government is considered a basic democratic right of the people (Benveniste, 2009). This is linked to the notion of popular sovereignty, in that local government should be a creation of the citizenry rather than a separate entity standing above it (Rosenbaum, 2006). As such participation should therefore be the norm in any striving towards a democratic form of government.

In Faludi (2002) opinion participation has a creative potential in that the planning process is being linked to the outside world. The researcher`s view is that this has the potential tocreate a network which could enable a much more divergent form of thinking to take place. Added to this participation is a means of fostering equality. This is based on the democratic principle that all citizens should have an equal opportunity to exert influence through participation in the planning process of the local authority if they choose to do so (Atkinson, 2002).

Last but not least is the view by Atkinson (2002) that participation is a means of balancing the demands for central control against the demands for concern for the unique requirements of local government and administration. The more distant and form of government is from public accessibility, the more likely that the planning of unpopular projects, programmes or policies becomes the order of the day. Participation in public management allows outside participants to play a watchdog role. Openness and participation in the public management process tend to reduce the possibility of corruption and may help to maintain high standards of behavior (Benveniste, 2009). Participation in the policy management cycle may empower citizens vis-à-vis public officials, which in turn may help to overcome possible bureaucratic dysfunctions because of citizen involvement.

2.4.3 GOOD GOVERNANCE IMPLEMENTATION VARIABLES THAT EXIST AT LOCAL LEVEL

A number of dilemmas of participation, which originate from both the local authorities and the people, have been identified. It is important, for a clear understanding, to investigate the factors which lie at the basis of these dilemmas. Although the notion of citizen participation has been proclaimed as a means of perfecting the democratic process and meeting the demand for open government, one has to accept that every citizen cannot participate in all the public management activities of local government (Burke, 2008).

Another dilemma is the demand for both participatory democracy and expertise in public management, it must be emphasized that in the vast majority of cases participation in public management by citizens will be by people without the necessary technical competence. The fact that technical competency is required in public management makes it impossible to maximize both value preferences (Jaakson, 2002). The complexity of public management may serve as a barrier to effective citizen participation and may even serve to discourage people from such participation. People who are lacking in expertise, or who lack confidence, may be intimidated by the prospect ant therefore exempt themselves from the process (Bonovetz, 2002).

The extent or degree of participation in public managemet presents another dilemma. In Faludi`s (2002) view participation can be limited to the mere sanctioning of plans and policies and to the acquisition of respectability by the local authority in the community. This strategy indicates that

citizens react to the proposals of local authorities more often than they propose their own concepts of future action and involves a mere exchange of information with the purpose of forestalling anticipated protest from vociferous civic groups. This is merely a gesture to try to satisfy the demand for participatory planning when the local authority has no intention of taking any notice of the results of the participatory exercise. This is a dangerous strategy and local authorities should not ask for people`s views unless they are prepared to give them very serious consideration (Cinyers, 2002). On the other hand, participation may evolve into a situation where public dictation of polict that enhances the vested interests of pressure groups may occur. This dichotomy in the view of Faludi (2002:34) "may cast some doubt on the credibility of the end product of the planning process".

In some countries like South Africa and Indonesia, negative factors like the erosion of the social fabric of society, economic decline and the rising tides of turbulence and violence. Esterhuyse, (2002), posits that this could impact adversely on the degree to which people feel obliged to participate in the public management of local government affairs. Participation may also be hampered by obstacles such as the fragmented nature of some cities and the growing presence of informal housing settlements. How to accommodate these people meaningfully in the participatory process produces a unique dilemma.

Another dilemma in the degree to which people may feel obliged to participate in public management is based on the variety of diversions for citizens which occupy their non-working time, barriers such as age and the illiteracy of some citizens and the fact that some segments of the population may have little exposure to the media which could inform them of problems and possible solutions (Zimmerman, 2006). In view of this, one should be realistic about the number of people who will be able to play an active role in the planning process.

It should also be noted that full citizen participation has the effect of slowing the planning process. The requirement of citizen participation in this process has the potential to demoralize creative public officials and may even prevent them from utilizing their expertise and experience in solving problems. Thus local authorities may become cynical, or even disillusioned about participation (McConnell, 2001). Impatience with the supposedly slow planning process with full citizen participation may then prompt local authorities to ignore, or even to circumvent, the consultations required by the notion of transparency in local government (McConnell, 2001).

Unfulfilled expectations may be yet another dilemma of participation. One can predict that people who feel that their participation will have little or no effect on the activities of local government will be reluctant to participate in planning (Conyers, 2002). This attitude may also be the result of people`s past experience, in which they have participated but have not had any noticeable effect on the course of events. The most obvious reason for this behavior may be that because of inadequate information people believe that their participation will achieve much more than it actually will (Conyers, 2002).

Langton (2008) on the other hand views citizen participation in the planning process as being very costly unwieldy and time-consuming. The challenge to local government is therefore to make citizen participation in the planning process less expensive, more timely and less demanding on its supporters. To overcome these dilemmas they should be viewed as a challenge to both the frames and leaders of local government in any local authority to find ways of achieving optimum levels of participation in the public management process. Positive thinking is needed. The bigger the challenge, the more important it is to meet it, and the more worthwhile the efforts to overcome it will be.

2.4.4 STRENGTHENING THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ELEMENTS OF THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN

Public participation is the area where the Open Government agenda that has made the least headway and that holds the greatest potential benefit for communities and the nation. Planned structured participation has been shown to have the following benefits:

- Raising the level of civility and trust in public discourse
- Reducing government costs through closer public oversight and better understanding of citizen needs and attitudes
- Creating more realistic budgets either by raising "taxing morale" building support for spending cuts or both
- Generating new policy ideas and tapping the problem-solving capacity of citizens
- Breaking through legislative gridlock on high profile policy questions

In Fakudi`s (2002) view participation has different benefits and challenges at the local level, which is closest to citizens` daily concerns and goals and the state and national levels where it has a much broader potential impact. Evidence suggests that participation is most compelling to people when it allows them a range of opportunities and reasons to engage, on different issues and different levels of governance. Beginning by "going where the people are" – in neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, on social medial and in existing online forums – is a foundational premise of successful public participation.

But unlike some countries such as Brazil and India, some countries lack an established national participation infrastructure to facilitate the kind of multi-faceted, citizen-centered engagement that links citizens to local, state and federal issues. Instead, at the federal level a variety of face-to-face and online tools have been developed and used, usually in a piecemeal fashion.

Measuring participation

The challenge of measuring public participation is complicated by the question of whether an agency or community is launching a single engagement activity or implementing a well-rounded participation plan. The use of any single participation tool or technology on its own is likely to be disappointing because there is no "magic bullet" method or apparatus and because citizen interests are divers and multi-faceted. There are some participation indicators that are simple and versatile enough however, that they can be applied to both single activities and comprehensive plans (Stapenhurst, 2007). The most basic benchmarks track the number and diversity of participants and the depth of their participation. These indicators include:

- Number of participants
- Diversity of participants, according to demographic factors such as age, racial and ethnic background and income level
- Diversity of participants according to ideology and party affiliation
- Number of participation hours spent per participant

According to Stenpanhurst (2007) a second set of indicators focuses on the quality of the participation experience, these are more likely to reflect the presence of a broader participation plan (or the absence thereof). These measures include:

- Level of participant satisfaction with the process
- Extent to which participants took public action of some kind (voting, volunteering, engaging in advocacy, working with others to solve a public problem, running for public office, etc) as a result of the experience
- Quantity of interactions between participants and between participants and public officials and employees
- Quality of deliberation within the process, including analytical rigor, equality of participation, level of activity and consideration of values and viewpoints.

The third category of measurement deals with how participation impacted the participants, public officials and employees, the policymaking process and problem solving (by both governmental and non-governmental actors) on the issue being addressed. These measures are highly dependent on the presence of a broad array of participation opportunities and so on the political context surrounding the participation:

Impact of the experience on participants` feelings of trust in government, community attachment, interest in public affairs, confidence in their capacity to effect change and openness to the views of others

Impact of the experience on public officials` and public employees` feelings of trust in the public, confidence in their capacity to effect change and openness to the views of others

Level of similarity between the recommendations of participants and the public policies eventually adopted

Number and ultimate success of new problem-solving efforts (involving citizens, government, non-governmental organizations, or some combination) to emerge from the process.

Perhaps the most significant opportunity in this area is to find ways of involving citizens in the work of tracking, measuring and analyzing public participation. Just as well-structured participation taps into citizens` capacity to understand and solve public problems, it should capitalize on their ability to improve participation itself. New on-line tools that allow citizens to gather and analyze data along with evaluation methodologies such as action research, suggest new directions for innovation (Stepanhurst, 2007).

Effects of poorly planned public participation

Public participation that is poorly planned and structured can waste time and resources and do more harm than good. The riskiest initiatives are those that:

- Do not utilize a proactive, network-based recruitment process to ensure a large number and wide variety of participants
- Present a partisan or one-sided view of the issue, and do not allow citizens to consider a range of arguments, background information and data on the issue being addressed
- Request policy ideas from citizens that cannot reasonably be implements by government (particularly if the initiative does not include a plan or procedure for citizens and other actors to help with implementation).
- Produce opinions and recommendations from a divided public, without providing an opportunity for people on different sides of a policy debateto talk with each other and find common ground
- Fail to build in meaningful opportunities for public managers and other leaders to respond to citizen input, both during the process and further along in the policy making cycle.

A comprehensive participation plan can minimize these risks and raise the overall chance of success for several reasons: 1) it is likely to employ more than one tool or opportunity for engagement, 2) as a sustained effort rather than a one-off activity, it allows for learning and improvement over time, and 3) it should establish an infrastructure for participation that eliminates some of the duplication and wasted effort of occasional, temporary initiatives.

Over the long term, agencies and communities are likely to be more participatory and effective if they:

- Create cross sector coalitions of organizations that are committed to the idea of participation and recognize that the private, non-profit, faith and philanthropic sectors have active roles to play in supporting it.
- Provide face to face and online opportunities for participation, keep the growing use of mobile devices in mind when designing online participation processes.

- Avoid the failed formats of traditional, podium-dominated public hearings and town hall meetings and ensure that participation opportunities are carefully structured and facilitated so that every participant has a meaningful role to play.
- Assemble a large and diverse critical mass of citizens (in certain situations, a smaller, demographically representative set of people can be convened to serve as a proxy for the larger population).
- Find ways of keeping this critical mass mobilized through social media networks, neighbourhood meetings or other formats that are convenient and compelling for citizens.

Give people the chance to compare values and experiences and to consider a range of views and policy options:

Give people time to participate and respond – time to think, consider, evaluate, listen, learn and engage.

Produce tangible actions and outcomes; these can include policy and planning decisions, changes within organizations and institutions, actions driven by small groups of people, individual volunteerism and changes in attitude and bahaviour (Stapenhurst, 2007).

Effective tools for online engagement

Within the context of a long range strategic public participation pla, there are different short term online tactical tools that will make sense in different scenarios. The most common scenarios in which public managers seek to engage the public, suggests the tactic and online tools that make the most sense for those circumstances and identifies the situations where face to face interaction may be crucial.

2.4.5INTERNATIONAL GOOD GOVERNANCE BEST PRACTICE

In the past the classical forms of democracy did not provide anyrole for citizens aside from being voters and consumers of government services. However, with the paradigm shift from "government" to "governance" and the rise of civil society during the third wave of democratization, the terms "civil society," "citizen participation" and "governance" are commonly heard today. Stepanhurst and O`Brien (2010) says the institute of development studies (IDS) in

the UK has completed a useful matrix classifying the ways in which civil society and government interact. On a continuum from civil society voicing to government frameworks, these forms include: awareness-raising and building capacity to mobilize, research and information generation for advocacy lobbying to influence planning and policy formulation, citizen-based monitoring and evaluation, partnership and implementation, auditing, joint management of sectoral programs (including co-production schemes) and government frameworks for participatory planning.

A good example is the role of civil society in governance in Indonesia which ranges from overseer to advocate to formal facilitator of civic meetings. Community engagement in governance affairs can take a variety of forms and is a prerequisite for sustainable social change. During the last few years, a large number of practices, standards and experiments have emerged, some supported by donors but most initiated by reform-minded government officials in partnership with civil society organizations. It is through such involvement of civic society organizations that citizens have been conscientized on such concepts as accountability and transparency.

2.4.6 Accountability and transparency and responsiveness the cornerstone of good governance

Accountability is one of the cornerstones of good governance, however, it can be difficult for scholars and practitioners alike. While Stapenhurst and O`Brien (2010) argue that it has not been easy to navigate the myriad of different types of accountability, they however acknowledge that there has been a growing discussion within both the academic and development communities about the different accountability typologies.

Accountability defined

The notion of accountability is an amorphous concept that is difficult to define in precise terms. However, broadly speaking, accountability exists when there is a relationship where an individual or body and the performance of tasks or functions by that individual or body are subject to another`s oversight, direction or request that they provide information or justification for their actions (Stapenhurst and O`Brien, 2010:5). What is clear though is that accountability is not a punitive response but the quality or state of being answerable, an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility for one`s actions (Gudberg, 2008:3).

Two distinct stages of accountability

Therefore, the concept of accountability involves two distinct stages, answerability and enforcement. Answerability refers to the obligation of the government, its agencies and public officials to provide information about their decisions and actions and to justify them to the public and those institutions of accountability tasked with providing oversight. Enforcement suggests that the public or the institution responsible for accountability can sanction the offending party or remedy the contravening behavior. As such, different institutions of accountability might be responsible for either or both of these stages.

Why accountability is important to governance?

Evaluating the ongoing effectiveness of public officials or public bodies ensures that they are performing to their potential, providing value for money in the provision of public services, instilling confidence in the government and being responsive to the community they are meant to be serving (Faludi, 2002).

Types of accountability

The concept of accountability can be classified according to the type of accountability exercised and/or the person, group or institution the public official answers to. The present debate as to the content of different forms of accountability is best conceptualized by reference to opposing forms of accountability. As such the main forms of accountability are viewed as horizontal and vertical accountability.

The prevailing view that institutions such as parliament and the judiciary, provide what is commonly termed horizontal accountability or the capacity of a network of relatively autonomous powers (i.e. other institutions) that can call into question and eventually punish, improper ways of discharging the responsibilities of a given official. In other words, horizontal accountability is the capacity of state institutions to check abuses by other public agencies and branches of government or the requirement for agencies to report sideways. Alternatively, vertical accountability is the means through which citizens, mass media and civil society seek to enforce standards of good performance of officials.

While parliament is typically considered as a key institution in the horizontal accountability constructs the same institution is also important in vertical accountability. This is because citizens and civil society groups can seek support of elected representatives to redress grievances and intervene in the case of inappropriate or inadequate action by government (Mardiasmo, 2007). In addition Faludi (2002) argues that through the use of public hearings, committee investigations and public petitioning, parliament can also provide a vehicle for public voice and a means through which citizens and civic groups can question government and seek parliamentary sanctioning where appropriate.

Political versus legal accountability

Parliament and the judiciary act as horizontal constitutional checks on the power of the executive. The role of these institution can be further delineated in that parliament holds the executive politically accountable, whilst the judiciary holds the executive legally accountable. These classificationsstem from the fact parliament is a political institution, while the judiciary can only adjudicate on legal issues. Together, they provide ongoing oversight in order to keep the government accountable throughout its term in office. They may also be aided by other institution such as supreme audit institutions, anti-corruption commissions, ombudmans`s offices and human rights institutes (Stapenhurst and O`Brien, 2010). These secondary autonomous institutions of accountability are typically designed to be independent of the executive in the case of supreme audit institutions, anti-corruption commissions and ombudsman offices they often report to parliament while in the cases of of supreme audit institutions in Francophone countries and human rights institutes, they may be part of the judiciary. Political accountability usually manifests itself in the concept of individual ministerial responsibility, which is the cornerstone of the notion of responsible government.

Another school of thought: Horizontal versus Vertical Accountability

A minority of commentators (Bovens, 2005; Faludi, 2005) diverge in their opinion as to what constitutes horizontal and vertical accountability. An alternate conception of horizontal and vertical accountability between parties to determine whether one party exercises horizontal or vertical accountability over the other. In instances where there is a classic top-down, principal agent relationship, whereby the principal delegates to the agent, the agent is accountable to their

direct superiors in the chain of command and this constitutes a form of vertical accountability (World Bank institute, 2005). For instance the public official answers to the department/agency minister, the minister answers to parliament (in particular systems), and parliament answers to citizens.

Parliament is again a key actor. In terms of holding government officials to account, parliament is the principal and the official the agent. Parliament, as principal, requires the government and its officials, as agents to implement the laws, policies and programs it has approved – and holds the government and officials to account for their performance in this regard. Parliament is also an agent in that the electorate (the principal) elects legislators to enact laws and oversee government actions on their behalf. The electorate then hold legislators to account at election time and in a few jurisdictions, through recall, where dissatisfied voters can recall their elected representative and vote for an alternative (Boverns, 2005).

The absence of the direct principal- agent relationship relegates the accountability relationship tone of horizontal accountability or social accountability. In order for there to be social or horizontal accountability relationship is generally lacking between actor and forum, as are any formal obligations to render account.

Social accountability, the doyen of participatory governance

The prevailing view of social accountability is that it is an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, namely a situation whereby ordinary citizens and or civil society organizations participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability. Such accountability is sometimes referred to it as society driven horizontal accountability. The term social accountability is, in a sense, a misnomer since it is not meant to refer to a specific type of accountability. Mechanisms of social accountability can be initiated and supported by the state, citizens or both, but very often they are demand-driven and operate from the bottom-up. It is generally accepted that social accountability mechanisms are an example of vertical accountability. However, a minority of commentators (Boven, 2005; Goetz and Jenkins, 2005) argue that, with respect to social accountability, a hierarchical relationship is generally lacking between actor and forum, as are any formal obligations to render account. Giving account to various stakeholders occurs basically on a voluntary basis with no interventions on the part of the

principal. Therefore, social accountability would be a form of horizontal accountability. Social accountability initiatives are as varied and different as participatory budgeting, administrative procedures acts, social audits, and citizen report cards which all involve citizens in the oversight and control of government. This can be contrasted with government initiatives or entities such as citizen advisory boards, which fulfill public functions.

Often overlooked in considerations of social accountability is the role that legislators can play in providing weight to such grass roots accountability mechanisms. For example, a member of parliament can represent the concerns of his/her constituents by questioning a Minister during Question Period in parliament or by requesting information directly from a government ministry or department.

Diagonal accountability

The concept of diagonal accountability is far from settled with two groups of commentators adopting different definitions. The literature does not support a convergence of their ideas. Although, there is conjecture as to what constitutes diagonal accountability, the prevailing view is that diagonal accountability entails vertical accountability actors. Generally speaking diagonal accountability seeks to engage citizens directly in the workings of horizontal accountability institutions. This is an effort to argument the limited effectiveness of civil society`s watch dog function by breaking the state`s monopoly over responsibility for official executive oversight.

The main principles of diagonal accountability are

- o Participate in Horizontal accountability mechanisms

Community advocates participate in institutions of horizontal accountability, rather than creating distinct and separate institutions of diagonal accountability. In this way, agents of vertical accountability seek to insert themselves more directly into the horizontal axis.

- o Information flow

Community advocates are given an opportunity to access information about government agencies that would normally be limited to the horizontal axis, for instance internal performance reviews etc. Furthermore, they have access to the deliberations and reasons why horizontal accountability

institutions make the decisions they do. meanwhile, community advocates bring first hand experience about the performance of the government agency to the accountability process.

Compel Officials to answer-

Community advocates so-opt the horizontal accountability institution`s authority to compel a government agency to answer questions (as the example given above of an MP questioning a Minister about issues of concern to his/her constituents) and

  o Capacity to Sanction

Community advocates acquire the authority of the horizontal accountability institution to enforce the findings or influence elected officials. Some argue that civil society can strengthen the effectiveness of horizontal accountability institutions by pressuring existing agencies to do their jobs more effectively (Stapenhurst and O`Brein, 2010). This type of participation in accountability is not direct action against wrongdoing as with vertical accountability, but rather society driven horizontal accountability such as citizen advisory boards that fulfill public functions like auditing government expenditures or supervising procurement. More generally, active citizens and civil society groups can work with elected representatives to enhance parliament`s representation role (Bovens, 2005).

A minority commentators diverge in their opinion as to what constitutes diagonal accountability. Some commentators suggests administrative accountability, exercised primarily through quasi-legal forums, such as ombudsmen, auditors and independent inspectors reporting directly or indirectly to parliament or the responsible minister, is a form of independent and external administrative and financial oversight and control. This form of accountability is different to the classic top-down/principal agent relationship because the administrative accountability institution is not a hierarchical relationship to the public officials and often do not have formal powers to coerce public officials into compliance. It is argued that these administrative agents are auxiliary forums of accountability that were instituted to help the political principals control the great variety of administrative agents and that their accountability relations are therefore, a form of diagonal accountability.

Social accountability versus diagonal accountability

Recent the World Bank argued that social accountability is broad enough to encompass mechanisms of diagonal accountability. It was argued that diagonal accountability mechanisms can also be considered a form of social accountability (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005). Considering social accountability is not meant to refer to a specific type of accountability but rather to a particular approach for exacting accountability, it might be a broader concept than diagonal accountability. This lends weight to the idea that diagonal accountability mechanisms could be a component of the broader approach of social accountability (Cavill and Sohail, 2004).

However, this is in sharp to some commentators who draw a sharp distinction between social accountability and diagonal accountability. They argue that the state is often resistant to citizens poaching its exclusive oversight domain, instead encouraging new forms of social accountability, which they dismiss as being merely a form of outreach that provides an opportunity for civil society to inform government about public perception of government behavior (Cavill and Sohail, 2004.

The literature above, certainly paves a way for a very deep understanding of the issues of governance, participation and accountability. However, there is generally a dearth of analytical literature of these concepts in relation to the public sphere. The current study will attempt to fill this gap by evaluating the general nature of participation at Bulawayo Agenda. It will also evaluate the extent to which Bulawayo Agenda, as a public sphere platform enables citizens to participate in governance issues. The study will further evaluate how the Bulawayo agenda public meeting discussions between the citizens and public leaders promote accountability in governance.

2.4.7 Civil Society Communication Spaces and Autonomy

Funding and how it Threatens Civil Society Autonomy

The 1990s saw increased interest on the part of Western governments in funding civil society in Africa (Barkan : 1994). The United States government development agency USAID (1994: 20) writes "the components of civil society, the broad-based groups…. The network and communication among these groups, are the heart of what USAID and many development agencies are trying to achieve. Indeed Beckman (1993: 20) observes "The liberation of civil society from the suffocating grip of the state has become the hegemonic

ideological project of our time". As Robinson (1995: 70) has pointed out, although some western governments have long supported civic organizations, such activity was peripheral to the main policy agenda. In the 1990s civil society has moved from the periphery to centre stage.

The single most favoured area of civil society assistance is that of advocacy NGOs, such as human rights groups, election monitoring organizations (Carothers, 1997). This view is in tandem with the research carried out by Hearn (1998) which found that the most popular African civil society actors in terms of foreign donor assistance were formal, urban based, professional elite advocacy NGOs such as human rights, governance/ democracy NGOs and conflict resolution groups. However, the above views and findings are in sharp contrast to the views of (Diamond:1997) who argues that, what frustrates most civil society organizations in Africa is that few foreign donors are willing to support the activities of civic groups that are directly involved in human rights and political activities. In this regard, some donors claim that they do not include "democracy" programmes as part of their portfolios, while others view support for human rights and political activists groups as too risky, since it might result in their being expelled from the African country where they feel they are needed (Diamond:1997)

This agrees with the assertion of (Carothers: 1997) and Hearn (1998) and disagrees with (Diamond, 1997) who advances that, the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1990s led to the proliferation of western donor agencies that sought to push the democratization agenda in Africa by channeling resources to civil society organizations involved in human rights, democracy and governance in Africa.

In light of the above, the present study will analyze the extent to which Bulawayo Agenda, whose main focus is governance, and democracy gets support from foreign donors.

The literature cited above does not analyze the impact of donor funding on civil society autonomy. However, there is consensus among a number of scholars that donor funding threatens civil society autonomy in Africa. Diamond (1997) argues that, African civil

society organization's dependence on foreign donors forces them to adjust their political, social and civil agendas, to suit those of their benefactors. In the end, they lose their initial identity and become mere extensions of foreign donor agencies. Consequently they may lose local support and falter in their civic thrust as they are bound to fail to improve the living standards of their members and society at large. The above assertion is supported by Darnolf (1997) who advances that, the majority of African civil society organizations are incapable of sustaining themselves without the support of foreign donors, thus their autonomy is compromised from the start.

In light of the above, the present study seeks to analyze the impact of funding on the nature and conduct of the civil society communication platforms in Zimbabwe with particular reference to Bulawayo Agenda.

2.4.8 State-Civil Society relations: the disenabling of an autonomous African public sphere.

In most of post-Independent Africa, the relations between civil society, especially advocacy groups, and governments soured (Moyo:1993). In Angola, with the outbreak of war in 1975 and the attempted coup in 1977, the ruling party state introduced a one party state. With this, emerged party-created organizations such as women's organizations and the national youth movements and trade unions. In Mozambique the same happened, the same where one party state created mass organizations cooperatives and state farms. Organisations linked to the ruling party dominated the public sphere. In present day Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a coup in 1965 created a defacto one-party state, resulting in social activism being curtailed. The single-party system replaced all forms of association, resulting in the death of civil society as most groups went underground (Moyo: 1993)

Although most African countries later embraced multi-party systems and held periodic elections, and made a number of democratic reforms, their suspicion of civil society still remained (Moyo: 1993). There are a number of writings that illustrate how states have

used repressive legislation to curtail civil society organizations. The World Movement for Democracy outlined its report, how legislation was used to restrict civil society organizations, remarking in 2008 that; in less than a year, more than twenty countries globally have introduced restrictive legislation and regulations aimed at undermining civil society and diminishing the space in which they operate (WMD, 2008). On the other hand, Moyo (1993) goes a step further to give other methods used to curtail civil society organizations such as imprisonment, torture, disappearances and harassment to more sophisticated measures such as arbitrary dissolutions of civil society organizations.

In a Zimbabwean context state civil society relations started souring in the 1990s when students from the University of Zimbabwe demonstrated against rising food prices and the general state of the country. Trade unions soon followed suit leading to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. This was the moment when state civil society relations strained even further. Since 2000, the state has viewed civil society, in particular advocacy and human rights groups, as an extension of the opposition (Moyo: 1993). The role played the state civil society relations in destroying an autonomous Zimbabwean public sphere is aptly summed by Ncube (2010) who advances that, the suppression of civic activity by the state and the hostile working relationship between the state and civics has forced the Zimbabwean civil society out of the public sphere for many years.

The common thread running through the literature on state- civil society relations in Africa and Zimbabwe cited above is that they have been characterised by animosity. The above literature is of vital importance in this study, as it will help in analyzing how state-civil society relations in Zimbabwe threaten the autonomy of civil society communicative platforms with particular reference to Bulawayo Agenda. The above discussion also reveals that, there is a clear need for specific micro level studies to provide a clear picture of how state interference in civil society activities threatens the public sphere. The present study will fill in this gap by specifically analyzing how extent to which state interference in Bulawayo Agenda activities prevents the organization from operating as an autonomous public sphere.

2.4.9 Civil Society, Partisan Politics and Autonomy: A Zimbabwean Context.

Though civil society should theoretically remain non-partisan, in reality Zimbabwean civil society organizations have demonstrated some partisan behavior. Civil groups have remained divided and fragmented along political lines causing them to be disorganized and ineffective (Magaisa: 2009) . Zimbabwean Civil Society organizations (C SOS) have become an extension of the extremely polarized environment they operate in and have demonstrated much polarity in their relations with one another (otti and katema 2011:47). Uncoordinated efforts and failure to unite against common societal ills, such as poverty and general lack of national development , have weakened both the individual and collective efforts of Zimbabwean CSOS by reducing their capacity and effectiveness in being agents of economic and social transformation for the nation (Zigomo:2011)

The above literature is of vital importance as it helps to provide an understanding of how Zimbabwean civil society organizations have been dragged into partisan politics. However, the literature fails to analyze how specific CSOS have become involved in partisan politics and the impact of partisanship on CSOS antinomy as well as clearly in explain. The present study attempts to fill this gap by specifically analyzing the extent to which Bulawayo Agenda is involved in partisan politics. It will go a step further to analyze whether, partisan politics compromises its expected role of being an autonomous public sphere.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework of this study in order to locate this study in its theoretical perspective. The chapter also reviewed literature written by other scholars in order to negotiate the position of this study in regard to the present body of knowledge. The next chapter will discuss the methods that the study used to collect and analyze data

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methods that were used to collect and analyze data. The chapter gives an overview data of the Research design, target population, sampling techniques, research instruments and the data collection procedure. The chapter ends up by explaining the ethical considerations as well as data presentation and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The research design is the glue that holds the research project together (Kothani, 2006). A research design is a plan or protocol for carrying out or accomplishing something especially a scientific experience (Webster: 1995) Blanche and Durrheim (1999:10) concur with the above assertion by arguing that a research design is "a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research." The study used both qualitative and quantitative research design. This mixed approach was chosen because the two approaches complement each other, thereby increasing the depth of understanding a study can yield.

3.1.1 Qualitative Research Paradigm

This study takes qualitative analysis as its main research paradigm. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) qualitative research is research which attempts to increase our understanding of why things are the way they are in our social world and why people act the way they do. According to Mouton (2006:169)"in a qualitative research, the investigator usually works with a wealth of rich descriptive data collected through methods such as participant observation, interviewing and document analysis". Hilde Van den Bluck (2002) posits that qualitative research paradigm makes use of different qualitative concepts such as phenomenology, ethnography, cognitive anthropology , symbolic interactions, linguistic discourse analysis and semiotics. Its tools of data collection are in –depth interviews document analysis and semiotics. Qualitative methods were necessary in that the study aimed to evaluate, explore ,interpret and obtain a deeper understanding

of the extent to which civil society serve as public sphere .The study employed qualitative techniques such as questionnaires ,open ended questions in interviews and document analysis in attaining in-depth information on the research problem under study. The qualitative approach however was found to have its own limits. It was time consuming and very demanding as data obtained through it was voluminous (Mcmillan and Schumacener: 2003) while there were chances of human bias and error as the researcher became immersed in the phenomenon being studied, the researcher in this particular research tried as much as possible to be detached from the phenomena by asking objective questions.

3.1.2 Quantitative Research Paradigm

Gunter (200:41) notes that "quantitative methods are used to yield numerically scored data about media audiences, media related behavior and reactions and the impact of media". McLeod (1994) posits that quantitative methods allow you to handle large numbers of cases, to examine complex patterns of interactions between variables and to verify the presence of cause and effect relationships between variables. Quantitative research paradigm falls into the positivist perspective which postulates that there is "objective reality (social facts) out there that can be observed measured, analyzed and thus understood Hilde Van den Bulck (2007:859).

Quantitative research focuses on numbers rather than words and also focuses on generalization and testing. The research paradigm strongly follows mathematical character with "black and white" validity (Neumann, 2000). Analysis of data is by means of statistical analysis and the results can be shown on charts, graphs, pie charts and tables. Quantitative data collection techniques made it possible to collect information from quite a number of respondents and allowed the researcher to follow research goals quantify responses from respondents and ensure high levels of reliability of gathered data due to mass surveying and arrived at more objectivity of judgment. However, quantitative research techniques have weaknesses as they only arrive at figures, but do not interpret the reasons that lead to those statistics. The study therefore employed the qualitative techniques to complement the quantitative technique.

3.1.3 Case Study

The study took the form of a case study which Yin (2003:20) defines it as a "logical sequence that connects the empirical data to initial questions and ultimately to its conclusion". To evaluate civil society as public sphere, the study used the case of Bulawayo Agenda, a Bulawayo based civil society organization. Prince (2005) argues that a case study is a bounded system, emphasizing the unity and wholeness of that system but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time. Yin (2000) posits that the rationale behind any case study is to question decision making processes used, the methodology and ultimate result. A case study is used when "how and why" questions are being posed and when the researcher has little control over events. Yin cited in Polonsky and Walker (2005:13)states that "the case study allows an investigation to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events such as organizational and managerial processes."

However, case studies have been criticized for rarely allowing generalizations to be made from specific cases to the general population. They have also been criticized for generating huge piles of data which allow researchers to make interpretations they want (Jackson etal: 2008)

The fact that this was a case study allowed one to concentrate on specific situations and in this case focusing specifically focusing on Bulawayo Agenda as public sphere. This provides a detailed description and analysis of processes or themes voiced by participants in a particular situation (McMillan and Schumacher: 2003). In this way data was gathered directly from individuals in their natural environment, in order to study their interactions, attitudes and their characteristics. In the words of Mouton (1996:5) "this promotes self – understanding and increases in sight into human existence"

3.2   The Population

Punch (2003) defines population as the total target group who would, in the ideal world be the subject of the research and about whom one is trying to say something. Population basically refers to "the universe of units" from which the sample is selected. "The term units is employed because it is not necessary people who are being sampled" (Bryman,

2004:87). When conducting research it is vital from the onset to define the population to be studied. As Bless and Higson (1995:21) advanced ,"population parameters and procedures are of paramount importance when conducting research and become critical as a factor in the success of any study". In this study population consisted of Bulawayo Agenda Information Officers, Participants to Bulawayo Agenda public meetings, Public meeting panellists, moderators and key informant interviewees as depicted on Table 3.1 below

Category	Target Population	Sample Size	Research tool
Participants	150	30	Questionnaire
Panellists	40	10	Questionnaire
Moderators	9	2	Interview
Bulawayo Agenda Information Officers	3	1	Interview
Key Informant Interviewees	5	1	interview
	207	44	

3.2.1 Sample Size

The Sample size consisted 30 participants to Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings. The researcher came up with a target population of 150, after going through the Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings attendance registers between January and Septermber 2014. From these attendance registers the researcher established that on average 150 particiants attended Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings in 2014. The researcher then decided to issue questionnaires to 30 respondents out of the target population of 150 participants. This was considered to be a representative sample, as it constituted 20% of the target population, which is twice the recommended minimum of 10%.

The sample size also consisted of 10 panellists of Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings. The 10 panellists were chosen out of a target population of 40. The researcher arrived a target

population of 40 panellists after going through a Bulawayo Agenda document that contained a list of panellists who participated in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings between January 2013 and September 2014. The list contained 40 panellists and the researcher decided to use them as the target population. From the target population of 40 panellists the researcher chose to issue questionnaires to 10 respondents. These respondents constituted 25% of the target population: The researcher considered this to be representative sample, as it was way above the recommended 10%

The sample size consisted of 2 moderators of Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings .The 2 moderators were chosen out of target population of 9 moderators. The researcher arrived at a target population of 9 moderators after going through a Bulawayo Agenda document that contained a list of moderators who moderated at Bulawayo Agenda meetings between January and September 2014. From the target population of 9 moderators the research chose to interview 2 moderators. These constituted 22% of the target population. The researcher considered this to be a very representative sample.

The sample size further consisted of 1 Bulawayo Agenda Information officer. The information officer chosen out of a target population of 3 information officers, the researcher arrived at this target population, after going through the Bulawayo Agenda organ gram and discovering that the organization employs 3 information officers. From this target population the researcher chose to interview I information officer. This constituted 33.3% of the target population; the researcher considered this to be highly representative.

Finally the sample consisted of 1 key informant interviewee, chosen out of a target population of 5 people. The researcher targeted 5 people who had commented on issues related to the topic in various media organizations between January and September 2014. From the target population of 5, the researcher chose to interview 1 key informant interviewee. This constituted 20% of the target population. The researcher considered this figure to be representative as it was twice the recommended minimum of 10%

3.2.2 Sampling Techniques

According to Kumar (2005:164) sampling is "the process of selecting a few (a sample) from a bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation, or outcome regarding the 'bigger group'. This study employed convenience and purposive sampling.

3.2.3   Convenience Sampling

Higginbotton cited in Koerber and McMichael (28:463) defined the convenience sample as consisting of "participants who are readily available and easy to contact".Saunders (2009:41) terms it haphazard sampling because it involves selecting "haphazardly those cases that are easiest to obtain" for a sample. This definition stresses ready availability such that it is "prone to bias and influence… as the cases appear in the sample only because they are   easy to obtain."

However, despite its weaknesses, for this study convenience sampling was particularly useful in that the researcher was able to issue out questionnaires to some participants to the Bulawayo Agenda public meetings who attended the two public meetings that the researcher   attended after drawing up the questionnaires. The researcher also used convenience sampling to distribute questionnaires to panellists. In this case the researcher managed to issue 4 questionnaires to panellists who participated at the public meetings that the researcher attended. The remaining 6 were issued out to panellists who were easily accessible to the researcher. The researcher also applied convenience sampling in choosing the 2 moderators that were interviewed. In this case, the researcher chose two moderators who moderated at two of the public meetings the researcher attended. The researcher also chose to interview these moderators because they were willing to grant the researcher time to interview them.

3.2.4 Purposive sampling

According to Kumar (199:162) the primary consideration in purposive sampling is who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. In this study the researcher applied his judgment in choosing whom to interview among the 3 Bulawayo Agenda Information officers. The researcher chose to interview the senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer because he was the most senior member of the information department. From the remaining two members one of them was an intern and the other had recently joined the organization. In this case, the senior Researcher, Advocacy and information officer became the natural choice, as he was deemed to be more knowledge about the organization. In the first instance information officers were chosen to be part of the sample because they were judged to be the custodians of the organization's information.

The researcher also used purposive sampling to choose the key informant interviewee, initially the researcher targeted 5 people deemed to be knowledgeable about the topic , 2 were civil society activists, 2 were media practitioners and I was an academic. However the researcher chose the academic to be the key informant interviewee. This choice was based on the researcher's judgment that the academic would provide more neutral and balanced information due to his track record as a more balanced analyst.

In other words the research chose to interview those subjects who in his opinion were likely to supply the required information and who were willing to share it (Singleton and Straits: 2004). In this study the researcher gave his own judgment of who among the respondents were most likely to provide the most reliable data, with regards to the topic.

3.3   Research Instruments

Research Instruments. According to (2001:52) a research   instrument is "a tool designed to measure knowledge, attitude and skills" In this study the research instruments that were found to be ideal was the questionnaire, in depth interviews and document analysis.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is "a list of written questions which can either be open –ended or closed ended used to gather responses on particular issues from the respondents" (Wagner, 1999). The questionnaire used in study comprised mostly of closed ended questions and just a few open ended questions. Questionnaires were administered to participants of Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents at public meetings. The questionnaire was completed in two ways, firstly some of the respondents chose to complete the questionnaires at the public meeting venues and submitted them soon after the public meetings, some preferred to take them home and give themselves more time for their own private response.

3.3.1 Pilot Testing of Questionnaires

Pilot test "is a small scale implementation of the draft questionnaire (survey) that assesses questionnaire (survey) clarity, questionnaire (survey) comprehensiveness and questionnaire (survey) acceptability" (Rea and Praker, 2007:28). Sudman and Bradburn (1982) emphasized the need for pilot testing because every questionnaire (survey) must be tested and refined under real- life conditions". Rosier (1988) asserted that surveys should be adequately pre-tested… to check that respondents understand the meaning of the questions or statements, to gauge whether test items are at an appropriate level of difficulty" (p.109)

The pilot testing conducted by the researcher provided an opportunity to discuss the questionnaire with the respondents after piloting testing was over to discover whether any of questions was unclear or difficult to answer" (Sudman and Bradburn 2007: 284). This approach helped the researcher to make corrections and address other shortfalls in order to make an appropriate instrument for the actual research population. The draft survey was piloted with 20 participants to one of the Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. The pilot testing was done in a real life condition (Sudman and Bradburn, 2002) because the participants resembled those who would be in the main study. Rea and Parker (2007) advanced that "it is only required that the pre-test respondents bear a resemblance to the

study`s actual working population (p 27). Participants were given the opportunity to offer comments on the structure of the questions i.e. clarity relevance, level of difficulty, and length of survey.

After the pilot testing, there were several changes needed to be made to the instrument. The major problem noted was that of clarity, therefore some words were removed from the instrument and replaced with simpler ones.

3.3.2 In-depth Interviews

The study employed in-depth interviewing approach. Johnson (2001:106) posits that this method of data collection can generate "deep information and understanding". It utilizes interpersonal communication that is why it was chosen on the basis of visual, auditory and tactile observations and perceptions, one begins to classify responses, people, action and events (Duffy, 1986)

The study employed in-depth face to face interviews with the Bulawayo Agenda`s Senior Research, Advocacy and information officer, moderators at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings and the key informant interviewee. Open ended questions gave the researcher room to follow up on answers left hanging in questionnaires. The main advantage of face in-depth interviews is that "one can adapt the questions as necessary, clarify doubt and ensure that the responses are properly understood, by repealing or rephrasing questions (Miller and Salkind, 1996)

3.3.3   Document Analysis

The study also used document analysis during the data gathering process. Althea cited in Hilde van den Black (2002:92) notes that

"Document Analysis refers to an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving and analyzing documents for their relevance significance and meaning."

This method collects data by the use of texts and documents as source materials. These are primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources are those the researcher witnessed

being delivered for example speeches. Secondary sources are publications like newsletters, brochures, notice boards, memos, emails, reports, journals, video, painting, pictures as well as other written, visual and pictorial sources in print, electronic ort other hard copy from (Meyer, 2009) argue in favour of some documents in research by defining documents as "any symbolic representation that can be recorded or retrieved for analysis."

In this study document analysis was chosen because it was deemed to be a very useful source of Bulawayo Agenda`s organizational information.Document analysis was also used to evaluate Bulawayo Agenda`s role as public sphere from a historical perspective. The researcher was of the belief that both the questionnaire and interview are not very potent instruments of gathering data on the work of the Bulawayo Agenda in the realm of the public sphere, dating to as far back as 2008. It is not easy to get accurate historical information from respondents when using the questionnaire or interview, as people tend to forget important details. This makes document analysis the best source of historical information. As Tosh (1984:56) advances, "documents are the staple diet of historical and policy researches"

Thus document analysis was used to analyze the recurring themes and discourse in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings and other communicative platforms. Document analysis was also a useful source of information on how the Bulawayo Agenda has appropriated social media to create a virtual public sphere. The documents that were analyzed in the study were the Bulawayo Agenda Annual Reports of 2008-2013. Further more, 3 copies of Bulawayo Agenda`s newspaper `The Agenda` later renamed `community Agenda`. The researcher chose I copy of `The Agenda` from the copies published in 2008, one copy published in 2013 and one copy published in 2014.

3.4   Ethical Considerations

The term ethics basically refers to a system or set of moral principles suggested by a group of individuals and accepted to offer rules and behavior expectations Ethics imply preferences that influence behavior in human relations. "Quite often ethics go hand in hand

with values which deal with issues pertaining to what is right or wrong and what is good and desirable" (Babbie and Mouton 2001:470) .

In this study, the researcher sought approval from the Bulawayo Agenda`s Executive Director, before commencing the research. The ethical principle of voluntary participation was fully observed and this was achieved by requesting the respondents to volunteer to participate in the study at their free will. The principle of anonymity was observed through separating respondents from the information they were giving by requesting them not to disclose their identity. Confidentiality was also considered as an important ethical principle in this study, particularly because of the polarization that characterizes Zimbabwe`s political landscape, which has sometimes resulted in the Bulawayo Agenda being deemed to be anti-establishment. The researcher informed all respondents that it is morally and professionally binding that the principle of confidentiality should be observed in the strictest sense. This principle of confidentiality was fully adhered to by keeping the information provided by respondents secret.

3.5   Methods of Data Presentation

Both qualitative and quantitative approach are used in presenting the data that was gathered using various techniques. Quantitatively the data was presented in the form of bar graphs, pie charts and tables. The data was also presented qualitatively using descriptive and narrative forms.

3.5.1 Bar graphs

Rose (2011) argues that a graph is a diagram showing the relation between variable quantities and they are five basic types of graphs that are used most frequently. Bar graphs are charts with rectangular bars and charts with rectangular bars and lengths proportional to compare two or more variables and these can be presented either vertically or horizontally. They are used to show comparisons of subjects under study over a period. Bar graphs facilitate comparison by virtue of their clear and visual impact. In this study bar graphs were used to show relationships that existed in the information collected and have an advantage that they are easy to interpret and they give clear understanding of data.

3.5.2 Pie Charts

Pie charts are relatively easy to understand and construct. In pie charts data is grouped under a specific category and is presented in segments as slices of a circle. The study employed this form of data presentation techniques to depict proportion of the subject under study.

3.5.2   Tables

Rose (2011) defines tables as a set of facts or figures systematically displayed especially in columns. When displayed especially in columns. When one decides to use a table, it is highly recommended to adjust the size of the table to the six by six guide line. Used in the context of tables, this guide line suggests that a table should try to have no more than six columns and no more than six roles in order to keep the amount of information to a reasonable level. The study therefore made use of tables, bar graphs and pie charts in presenting data collected using quantitative and qualitative research methods. The thematic approach combined with descriptive and narrative ways were also used in presenting data.

3.6   Methods of data analysis

Basically data analysis involves discovering patterns among collected data, so as to identify trends that point to theoretical understanding (Babbie, 2004:284). This is assembling, cleaning and examining of the data (Polonsky and Waller: 2005). This study made use of content analysis, thematic analysis and discourse analysis and these are discussed below.

3.6.1 Content Analysis

Berelson cited in Deacon etal (2007:188) defines content analysis as "a research technique for the object, systematic and quantitative description of manifest content of communication" content according to certain categories that are usually predetermined (Tankard quoted in Mytton 1997). Thus content analysis has the virtue of stressing the relationship between content and background. This technique was applied in the analysis of the Bulawayo Agenda print media publications namely their newspaper publication `the Agenda`/community Aganda and the Bulawayo Agenda Annual Reports (2008-2013). Gray (2009) advances that content analysis is also used to determine the presence of certain

words, concepts , themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner. Thus in this study content analysis was used to derive useful information linked to the objectives of the study from Bulawayo agenda publications.

Content analysis has a number of advantages which motivated the researcher to use it in this study. The method eliminates the use of assumptions as all the materials will be available for the researcher to study and analyze. Content analysis looks directly at communication in texts or transcripts hence it gets the social aspects of interaction. However, Content analysis is time consuming and subject to increased error particularly when relation analysis is used to attain higher levels of interpretation. It is devoid of a theoretical base or attempts to liberally draw meaningful inferences about the relationship and impacts implied in a study. It is flawed as there is no way of measuring results obtained from analyzing texts. In this study, the researcher therefore used other methods of data analysis, so as to overcome the weaknesses of content analysis.

3.6.6 Discourse Analysis

Given (2008:17) describes discourse analysis As., "a cluster of related methods for studying language use and its role in social life", Discourse can be studied with particular interest to its role in constructing the world and its relationships to context. Discourse focuses on how both spoken and written language is used in social setting. This study therefore analyzed data through this method on the premise that language constructs "do not emanate from the individuals as such , but are embedded in culturally and socially constructed situations, inherent and in calculated through the institution's culture. Studying the usefulness of discourse analysis in communication research Hilde Van den Bluck cited in Fiske (1995:14) define discourse as:"A language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic or area. These meanings serve the interests of that section of society within which the discourse originates and which works ideologically to naturalize those meanings into common sense"

In this study, the researcher chose to analyze discourse after realizing that the language used in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings, print publications, social media and other communication platforms, shapes communication in certain ways

3.6.3 Thematic Analysis

This is where the researcher develops an idiosyncratic coding protocol (Polonsky and Waller: 2005). This is an approach to dealing with data that involves the creation and application of themes to data. The data can take the form of an interview script or field notes. This also involves categorizing in relation to data, the grouping together of different instances of datum under an umbrella term that can enable them to be regarded as the same type.

One of the advantages of this technique is that themes are identified by "bringing together the components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which are often meaningless when viewed alone" (Leiniger 1985:6). These are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. Thematic analysis has been criticized as a subjective method of analysis as it allows the researcher to make inferences. However, the method was very relevant to the study as the researcher sought to group the data collected under different themes to address the research questions alluded to in chapter one.

3.7   Conclusion

This chapter provided the overall research methodology in detail. The research design, target population, Sampling techniques, research instruments and data collection procedure were clearly spelt out. The ethical considerations as well data presentation and analysis methods were clearly explained.

CHAPTER 4

Organizational Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter will give an organizational analysis of Bulawayo Agenda. The historical background, objectives, approach, vision and mission of the organization shall be outlined in this chapter. The organization's fact file and chapters of the organization shall also be outlined.

The organization's staff composition will be illustrated in the form of an organogram. The chapter shall also illustrate the structures of the organization's Board and General Council. Last but not least the Chapter shall briefly outline and analyze the organization's funding mechanisms.

4.1.1 History

Bulawayo Agenda is a civic society organization that was established in October 2002 by a group of concerned individuals with the aim of providing a platform for citizen participation and involvement through public debate and dialogue. It is a forum for public conversations on topic issues affecting the people across political, ethnic, religious and social lines. Bulawayo Agenda provides a unique opportunity for people to express their views freely, to listen to alternatives and seek truth through rational exchange of ideas. The central element of Bulawayo Agenda is to promote free thinking and freedom of speech both of which constitute a major prerequisite for human development. The Bulawayo office has acted as a mid-wife to the birth of twelve regional Chapters in Binga, Gwanda, Gweru, Hwange, Luane, Masvingo, Matopo, Mutare, Nkayi, Plumtree, Tsholotsho and Victoria Falls.

4.1.2 Bulawayo Agenda Chapters

Chapters

Bulawayo Agenda
Bulawayo Agenda
Suite 602, 6th Floor
Pioneer House
Cnr. 8th Ave/ Fife Street
Bulawayo
Tel: (09) 888211

Lupane Agenda
Lupane Agenda
Lupane Village Bank
P.O. Box 3158
Lupane
Tel: (0898) 508
Cell: 091 2 570 940

Binga Agenda
Binga Agenda
c/o Bulawayo Agenda
Box 2146
Bulawayo

Tsholotsho Agenda
Tsholotsho Agenda
c/o Bulawayo Agenda
Box 2146
Bulawayo

Matobo Agenda
Matobo Agenda
c/o Bulawayo Agenda
Box 2146
Bulawayo

Victoria Falls Agenda
Victoria Falls Agenda
5539 Mkhosana Township
Victoria Falls
Cell: 011 642 931

Nkayi Agenda
Nkayi Agenda
Stand 434 Nkayi
Business Cntre
Nkayi
Cell: 011 642 929

Gwanda Agenda
Gwanda Agenda
10 Khartoum Street
Gwanda
Tel: (084) 22164
Cell: 0912 570 936

Plumtree Agenda
Plumtree Agenda
Hills Creations Africa
Stand 92 Industrial Area
Plumtree
Cell: 023 254 164

Hwange Agenda
Hwange Agenda
13 Zeco MESS
Baobab Hill
Hwange
Tel: (081) 30676
Cell: 091 2 570 934

Gweru Agenda
Gweru Agenda
2nd Floor
Old Mutual Building
Gweru
Cell: 0912 516 732

4.1.3 Prime objectives

- To provide a platform for conversation on issues of topical interest.
- To facilitate birth, growth and maturity of a culture of listening and tolerating people's opinions and views without any acrimony.
- To create and increase awareness on issues of governance, democracy, rule of law, human rights and development
- To promote research and dissemination of information on topical issues guided by the axiom that information is power.

4.1.4 Approach

- We provide a platform for opinions, thoughts and facts through public meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences, conventions and talk shows.
- We seek to be fully inclusive in our approach and are respectful of diversity of political beliefs, opinions and ideologies.
- We assist people on their journeys towards democracy and development by providing a platform for sharing of experience, values, fears and hopes.
- We uphold the freedom of assembly, association and speech.

- We work in partnership with organizations and individuals who share or vision objectives.

4.1.5 Mission
- To remain a public and focused organisation devoted to promotion of debate, discussion and dialogue on issues of topical interest.

4.1.6 Vision
- We believe in a democratic society in which people and civic rights are observed and respected.

4.1.7 Fact File
Accomplishments:

Since inception and its work in mainly six of Zimbabwe's ten provinces.BA has hugely contributed to the opening up, expansion and accessibility of space for civic participation in public and political spaces. Through public debates, Community conversations, leadership trainings and focus group meetings, the organization has managed to penetrate the previously marginalised communities in largely rural and peri-urban areas. Through innovative and participatory programs such as Public Meetings, Electoral Debates dubbed: Meet the Candidates Series, Defend your Vote Campaign, Civil Society Leadership Development, Local Governance Capacity Building among others. Bulawayo Agenda has managed to increase the participation of previously politically marginalised communities in the national discourse and national events like elections. Through publications such as "weekly Agenda' newspaper, periodicals on leadership and the socio-economic and political analyses 'Inkundla' the IsiNdebele newspaper among other information dissemination (public education) initiatives, has deepened citizen awareness on issues of democracy, human rights and governance. *[Adapted from The Agenda Volume 2,2008]*

4.1.8 Institutional governance structure:

Bulawayo Agenda in modelled as a coalition of Civic Groups and Community V+Based Organisations (CBOs) scattered around 6 (six), Bulawayo Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Masvingo, Manicaland and Midlands, of the 10 (ten) provinces of Zimbabwe. The organisation had a abroad-based, solid grassroots-inclined structure that supports its programmatic interventions. The governance structure of the organisation is as follows:

4.1.9 The General Council: the General Council of the organisation is made up of institutional members of the organisation and the Chairpersons of the Regional Committees. These members are civic society hand community based groups. Currently the organisation has 39 members made up of Civil Society Organisations (CBOs). The General Council is the supreme decision making body of the organisation. It meets every year at the Annual General Meeting. Every second year, the General Council elects a Board of Trustees.

4.2 The Board of Trustees: The Board of Trustees consists of 9 members that are elected by the General Council and the Executive Director of the organization acts as an-officio member. The Board of Trustees meets every 3months to get feedback on the organization's progress and give direction on policy issues. The current sitting board it has 7 male members and 3 female members.

4.2.1 Secretariat: The secretariat is responsible for the day to day running of the organization. Currently Bulawayo Agenda employs has 15 staff members (7 female, 8 males). Some of the organization's former employees have become senior government officials, leaders in various other capacities.

4.2.3 Chapter Committees: In the 6 (six) provinces where it operates, Bulawayo Agenda is present in 12 (twelve) areas which are Bulawayo, Masvingo, Matobo, Mutare, Nkayi, Tsholotsho, Umguza, Umzingwane, Gwanda, Gweru, Bulilima, Bulawayo, Binga, Hwange, Magwe, Lupane and Victoria Falls. As a result Bulawayo Agenda has an estimated more than 1 million reach. These areas have 12 community committees who are elected by the communities.

These committees are made up of individual representatives drawn from civic groups. CBOs such as churches, Schools Development Associations, Residents Association and other local groupings. On a monthly basis, these are responsible for planning monthly activities, providing the environmental scan and analysis for programmatic response and evaluate carried out activities. The chairperson of these committees sit in the General Council to elect board of trustees on a bi-annual basis and give the organization its board operational mandate on an annual basis.

[Adapted from The Agenda Volume 2,2008

4.2.4 The Bulawayo Agenda Organogram

71

| Progra |

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| Field |

↓

| Comm |

↓

| ~~Driver~~ |

↓

| Genera |

| Senior Research, |

↓

| Inform |

↓

| Inform |

| Financ |

↓

| Financ |

↓

| Front |
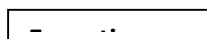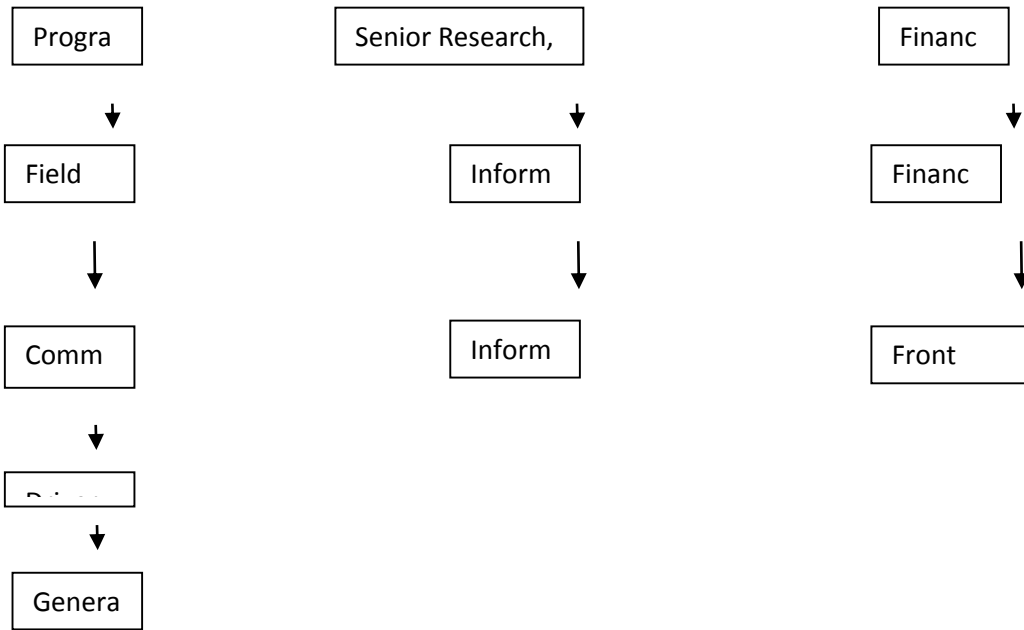
4.2.5. The Bulawayo Agenda Board

Chairperson

| |

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Vice chairperson

| |

↓

Executive Director

| |

↓

Board members

| |
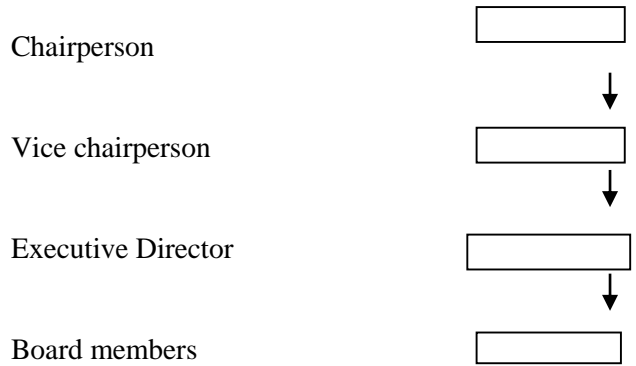
4.2.6 The Bulawayo Agenda General Council

| Vice Convener |

↓

Convener

| |

↓

Secretary

| |

4.3 Funding Mechanisms

Bulawayo Agenda gets its funding from International Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOS) and western government development agencies. Bulawayo Agenda mainly gets its funding in the form of grants. Bulawayo Agenda has received grants from the following government agencies. Australian government's aid program (AUSAID), Canadian International Development Agenda (CIDA) and Irish Aid Norweigian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The organization also gets from a number of Western organizations that support human rights, governance and democratization programmes.

This information on Bulawayo Agenda funding is of importance, as it assists in analysing the autonomy of the organization. Moyo et al (2001) argue that donor dependency and inter and intra-organizational procedures negatively impact service delivery. Civil Society organizations that rely primarily on donor funding for their programmes may find themselves pursuing a foreign agenda.

It is against this background that, the study sought to analyse the autonomy of Bulawayo Agenda as a public sphere platform.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter gave an institutional analysis of Bulawayo Agenda. The next chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5   Introduction

This chapter presents the data that has been generated to evaluate civil society as a public sphere, with particular reference to Bulawayo Agenda. It seeks to present and analyze the data collected using questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The chapter answers the research questions raised in chapter 1 and is guided by literature review and theoretical framework. The data presented in this chapter was obtained through use of quantitative and qualitative techniques alluded to in chapter three. Since quantitative and qualitative techniques were used in gathering data, this study also uses a mixed approach in presenting and analyzing data. This implies that quantitative visual representations of findings in the form of tables, graphs, pie charts and other illustrations. These are supported by qualitative descriptive quoted from interviews and documents. In this chapter findings are grouped into themes which are used as topics.

5.1   Section A: Demographic Details

With a questionnaire as the principal research tool to gather data from the respondents, the first section was intended to gather demographic details on the background of the respondents. Frequency tables were used in analyzing the data gathered from the respondents. Secondly the researcher also sought to establish the respondents categories, the number of questionnaires distributed per each category and the response rate per category as well as the overall response rate of the whole target population. This section also explains the response rate of the categories that were interviewed.

5.1.1 Respondents category and response rate
Table 4.1

Category	Distributed Questionnaire		Response per Category		Overall Response	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Participants	30	75	24	80	24	60
Panellists	10	25	6	60	6	15
TOTAL	40	100			30	75

Table 4.1 above reveals that, while 40 questionnaires were distributed to the Bulawayo Agenda public meetings participants (75%) and panellists (25%) the following response were received from the two categories. 24 (60%) response were received from participants, 6 (15%) from the panellists which brings the overall response rate to 75%, a significant figure, particularly considering that, in this case the respondents were spread over a fairly diversified target group.

In so far as the responses in each of the individual categories were concerned, there was an 80% response rate for participants and 60% response rate for panellists. The above statistics reveal that participants were the most enthusiastic in participating in this study.

The interview method was also used in this study. Table 4.2 below shows the categories and numbers of those interviewed.

Table 4.2

Category	Sample size	Interviewed
Moderator	2	2
Information Officer	1	1
Key informant Interviewee	1	1

As the Table 4.2 above depicts, all the overall response rate for interviewees was 100%. In other words all respondents the researcher sought to interview were interviewed.

5.1.2 Respondents Experience with Bulawayo Agenda

Table 4.3 and Fig 1 below show the responses of Participants and Panellists to the question which sought to find out how long they have participated in Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings

Table 4.3

Response	Participants		Panellists	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Less than 3 years	4	16.6	1	16.6
3 years to 6 years	7	29.1	2	33.3
6 years less than 9 years	9	37.5	2	33.3
Over 9 years	4	6.6	1	16.6

Figure1
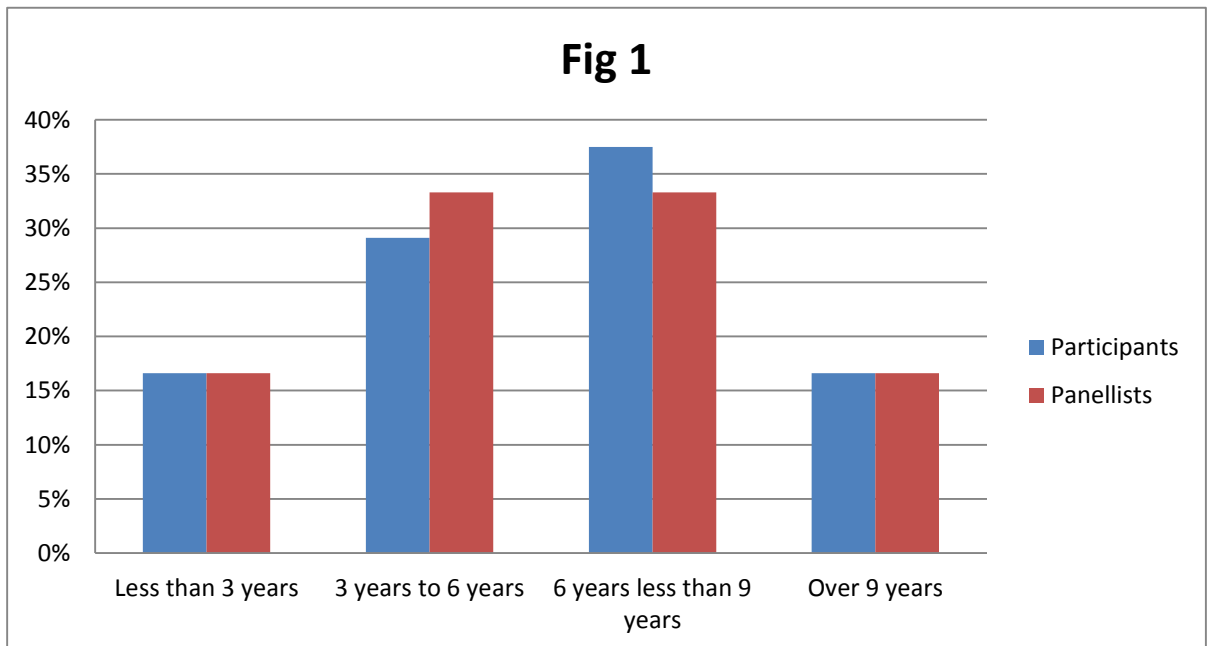
The study also took an interest in the number of years the respondents had participated in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. 16.6% of the respondents had participated for less than 3 years, 29.1% for 3 to 6 years, 37.5% for 6 years to less than 9 years and 16.6% for over 9 years.

On the other hand 16.6% of the Panellists had participated for less than 3 years, 33.3% for 3 to 6 years, another 33.3% for 6 years to less than 9 years and 16.6% for over 9 years.

The study also sought to find out the experience interviewees had with Bulawayo Agenda. The Moderator who was interviewed first, who will be referred to as Moderator 1, replied that he had been invited to moderate at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings 3 times. The second Moderator to be interviewed, who will be referred to as Moderator 2 in the study replied that he was invited to moderate at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings twice. The Bulawayo Agenda Information officer who was interviewed was asked to state how many years he had been employed by the organization and his reply was four years.

The data above reveals that the majority of participants and panellists had participated in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings for at least 3 years. This fact suggests that Bulawayo Agenda has regular participants. It can be argued that, such a scenario is not ideal for creation an inclusive public sphere as advocated by Habermas. An inclusive public sphere should accommodate everyone hence it should be characterized by new participants. In the same manner panellists should alternate but the fact that, most panellists had participated at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings for at least 3 years suggests that there is recycling of panellists which is not ideal for the creation of an inclusive public sphere.

On the other hand, moderators seemed not have featured for too long at Bulawayo Agenda. Moderator 1 had been invited 3 times and moderator 2 had been invited only twice. It can be argued that, this suggests that Bulawayo Agenda changes or alternates moderators. The changing of moderators helps in bringing about inclusivity and diversity in the public sphere. It also helps in ensuring that the moderators do not become too used to Bulawayo Agenda, which can result in them compromising their neutrality.

5.1.3 The Ages of Respondents
Table 4.4

Response	Participants		Panellists	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Less than 18 years	0	0	0	0
18 years to less than 25years	2	8.3	0	0
25 years to less than 32 years	4	16.6	1	16.6
32 to less than 39 years	9	37.5	1	16.6
39 to less than 46 years	7	29.1	2	33.3
Over 46	2	8.3	2	33.3

Fig 2 A Graph Showing the Ages of the Respondents
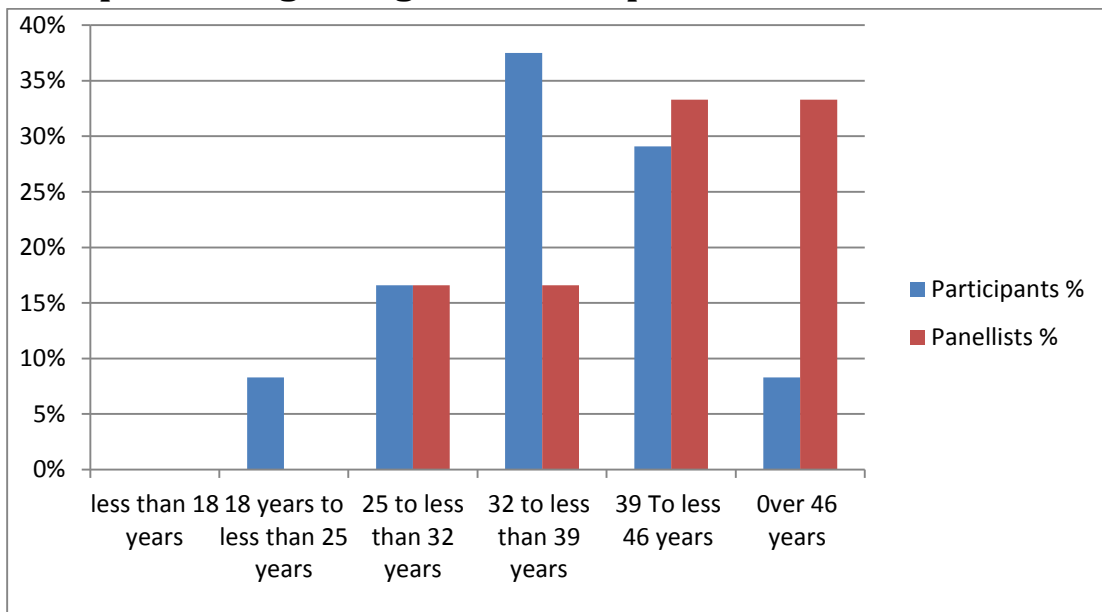
The study also took an interest in the ages of respondents. 0% (none) of the participants was less than 18 years , 8.3% of the participants were in the 18 years to less than 25 years

age category, 16.6% were in the 25 to less than 32 years category. The highest percentage of participants (37.5%) were in the 32 to less than 39 years category, 29.1% of the participants were in the 39 to less than 46 years age category and 8.3% were over 46 years.

On the other hand, 0 % (none) of the panellists were less than 18 years, 0% (none) were in the 18 to less than 25years category, 16.6% were in the 25 to less than 32 years age category, another 16.6% were in 32 years to less than 39 years age category, 33.3% were in the 39 to less than 46 years age category. Finally 33.3% of the panelists were over 46 years. The above statistics reveal that the majority of participants have ages that range between 32 to less than 46years. A factor which suggests that it is mature young adults who are mostly interested in Bulawayo Agenda activities. However there were no participants aged 18 years to less than 25 years (0%) and very few participants (8.3%) in the 18 to less than 25 years age category. This suggest young people are generally not involved in Bulawayo Agenda activities. This is contrary to the ideal Habermasian public sphere which did not discriminate on the basis of age. Furthermore, the statistics reveal that there were 16.6% panellists in both the 25 to less than 32 years age category. This further confirms the absence of young people as alluded earlier on. Interestingly there were 33.3% panellists in the 39 to less than 46 and over 46 years categories. From the above statistics it can be concluded that, Bulawayo Agenda invites mature people age wise to be panellists at its public meetings.

The study also sought to establish the ages of interviewees and there were as follows: Moderator 1 was 55 years old and Moderator 2 was 41 years old. On the other hand, the information officer was 37 years old and key informant interviewee was 56 years old. Form the ages above it can be concluded that Bulawayo Agenda invites people who mature agewise to moderate at its public meetings.

5.1.4 The Educational Qualifications of respondents
Table 4.4 Educational Qualification of respondents

Response	Participants (N=24)		Panellists (N=6)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Primary school	2	8.3	0	0
Junior Certificate	1	4.1	0	0
O' Level	7	29.1	0	0
A'Level	3	12.5	0	0
Diploma	4	16.6	1	16.6
Degree	5	20.8	4	66.6
Masters	2	8.3	1	16.6
Other	0	0	0	0

The study further took an interest in the respondents highest educational qualifications. Figure 4.4 above depicts the highest educational levels of the respondents to the questionnaires. 8.3% of the respondents in the participants category were educated up to primary school level, 4.1% of the participants held a Junior Secondary School level certificate. The majority of the respondents in the participants category (29.1%) held an O' Level certificate, 12.5% of the respondents in the participants category had A'level. In the same category 16.6% held Diplomas, 20.8% were in the possession of a degree and 8.3% held Masters degree.

The highest educational qualification held by the majority respondents in the penallist category (66.6%) was a degree. 16.6% of respondents in the panellists category held a Masters degree. None of the respondents (0%) in the panellists category held a Junior secondary school certificate. In the same category, none (0%) of the respondents held either O'Level or A'Level as their highest qualification.

The study also established the highest qualification of the interviewees. The interviews revealed that Moderator 1 had a Masters degree as highest qualification. Moderator 2 had a degree as his highest qualification. The Bulawayo Agenda Information Officer had a Master's degree while the key Informant interviewee had a Doctorate (PHD).

The statistics above generally reveal that the participants of Bulawayo Agenda public meetings were fairly educated. Thus it can be argued that Bulawayo Agenda is an elitist public sphere which caters for the educated elite. This is contrary to the Habermasian public sphere, which was blind to class differences. The statistics further reveal that both the panellists and moderators were very educated. This points to the fact that, Bulawayo Agenda invites panellists and moderators who are very knowledgeable. This is positive in the sense that with their education panellists and moderators help in improving the quality of Bulawayo Agenda public meetings discussions. In fact in a way such educated panellists and moderators help to facilitate critical and rational debates in the Habermasian sense.

5.1.5 The Respondents Areas of Speciality

This study further sought to find out the respondents areas of speciality in all the categories. The respondents represented a number of areas of speciality. These areas were Teaching, Journalism, Law, Banking, Sociology, Nursing and Development studies. Most of the areas of speciality mentioned in both the questionnaires and interviews can be classified under the fields of arts and social sciences. This suggests that, people who specialized in arts and social sciences have more interest in the nature of discussions conducted by Bulawayo Agenda.

5.1.6 The Gender of Respondents

Figure 3 below shows the gender of panellists

Fig 3
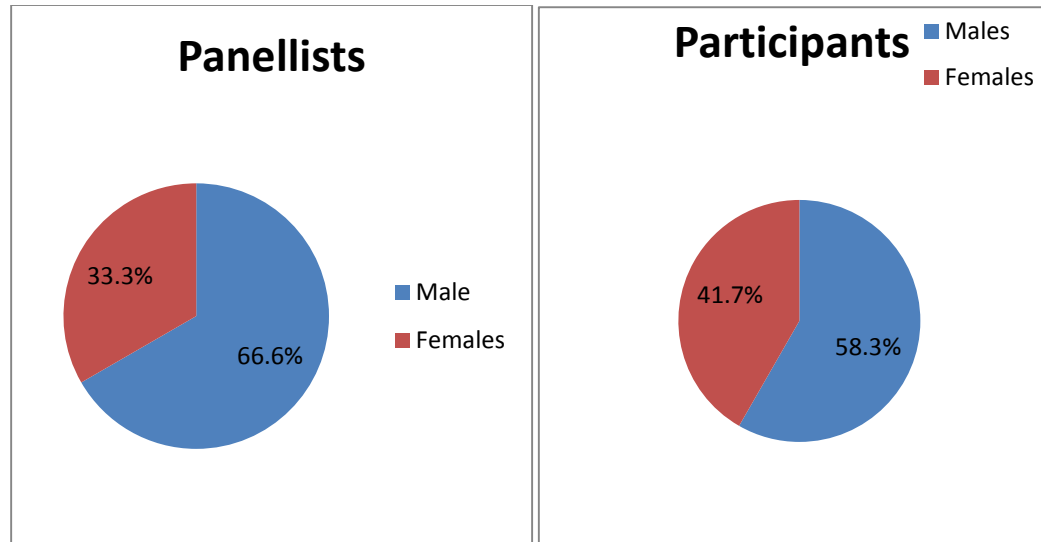
The majority of respondents (58.3%) in the participant category were male as compared to 66.6% of the respondents in the panellists category who were male. Conversely there were 41.7% female respondents in the participants category as compared to 33.3% female respondents in the panellists category. What it means is that in both categories there were more male respondents than female ones

All the four respondents who were interviewed namely the Moderator, Information officer and Key Informant interviewee category were males. This implies that at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings it is males who control the flow of discussions as Moderators and panellists

5.1.7 The Ethnicity/ Race of Respondents
Table 4.5

Response	Participants		Panellists	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Black	22	91.6	6	100
White	1	4.1	0	0
Coloured	2	8.3	0	0
Asian	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0

Fig 4 A Graph Showing the Races of Respondents
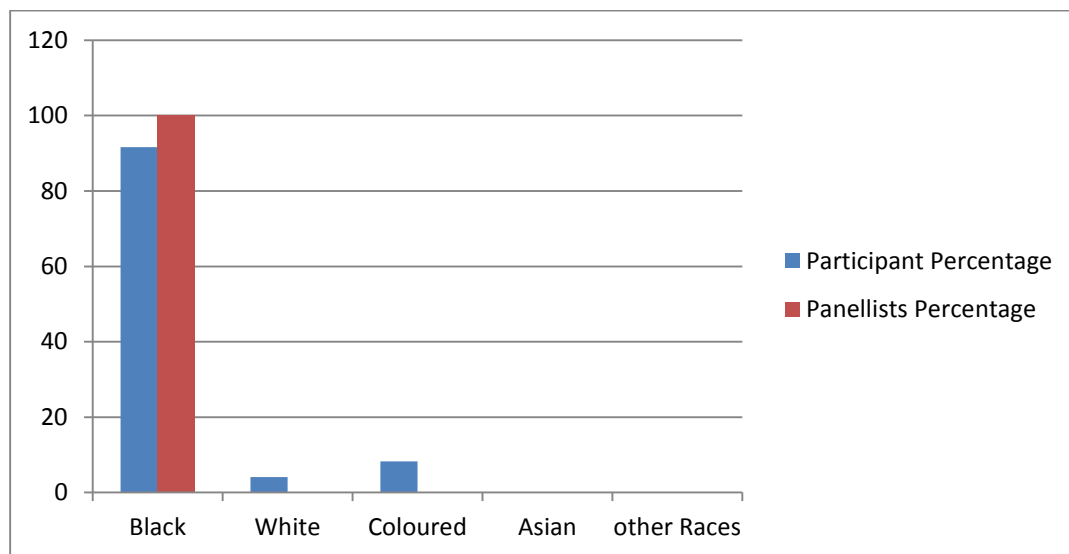
Table 4.5 and Figure 4 above reveal that the majority of respondents (91.6%) in the participants category were black. In the same category only 4.1% were white and 8.3% were coloured. None of the respondents were Asian and none (0%) belonged to other races/ ethnic groups not specified in the question.

In the panellists category all (100%) of the respondents were black. None (0%) were white, coloured, Asian or other races not specified in the question.

In the categories that were interviewed, the two Moderators, Information Officer and Key Informant interviewee were all blacks. From the above statistics it is clear that Bulawayo Agenda is mostly a black public sphere.

5.1.8 The Home Languages of Respondents
Table 4.6

Response	Participants		Panellists	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Ndebele	13	54.1	3	50
Shona	8	33.3	2	33.3
Kalanga	2	8.3	1	16.6
Venda	1	4.1	0	0
Tonga	0	0	0	0

Table 4.6 above reveals that in the participant category the respondents predominantly (54.1%) speak Ndebele, followed by Shona speakers at 33.3%. Kalanga is spoken by 8.3% while only 4.1% speak Venda as their home language. None (0%) of respondents in the participant category spoke Tonga as their home language.

In the panellists category Ndebele was still the dominant language spoken by respondents at 50%, this was followed by Shona speakers at 33.3%. only 16.6% of the respondents in this category spoke Kalanga as their home language. However none (0%) spoke Venda or Tonga as their home language.

The respondents who were interviewed were also asked to disclose their home language. It turned out that 3 were Ndebele speakers that is 2 Moderators and the Information officer. On the other hand the key Information officer was Shona speaking.

The statistics above reveal that the people who participate in Bulawayo Agenda activities are predominantly Ndebele. This is not surprising since Bulawayo is a dominantly Ndebele speaking

area. However what is more important is the notable absence or limited presence of ethnic minorities such as Venda and Tonga in the Bulawayo Agenda's public sphere.

5.2 SECTION B: CONCEPTS OF PUBLIC SPHERE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

5.2.0 Introduction

This section was intended to examine the concepts of public sphere and civil society, in attempt to address the knowledge level objective of this study. The interview method was a vital tool of gathering data in this section. The Moderators and key Informant interviewee were asked to give their definitions of these terms concepts.

5.2.1 The Concept of public sphere

The study sought to establish the respondents own understanding of the concept of public sphere. When asked what he understands by the term public sphere the key informant interviewee had this to say "*The public sphere is a discursive space in which people meet to freely discuss social issues and through that discussion influence political action*" (Interviewed 7 October 2014)

When asked to give his own understanding of the term public sphere Moderator 1 simply described it as an arena where people from all walks f life together meet together to freely discuss matters that affect their daily lives.

The definitions of public sphere given above are in line with that of Habermas (1989:231) who conceived and identified the public sphere as a place where "The citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion: thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely and express and publicize their opinion freely".

5.2.3 <u>The Concept of Civil Society</u>

The interviewees also gave their own understanding of the concept of civil society. The key informant interviewee had this to say, when asked to define the term civil society.

"*The term civil society is used to refer to a variety of non-governmental and non-profit making organizations that represent different political, economic and social interests*" (Interviewed 7 October 2014).

On the other hand Moderator 2 said:

"*The term civil society refers to groups that bring together people with a common aims. Civil society include different Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS) and numerous types of special interests groups such as lawyers organizations and trade unions*" (Interviewed 4 October 2014).

The common thread running through the above definitions given by the two interviewees is that, civil society is a grouping of people with similar interests. This view is in line with of several other scholars such as Van Rooy (1998) who advances that civil society is the population of groups formed for collective purpose, primarily outside the state and market place.

5.3 SECTION C: EVALUATING CIVIL SOCIETY AS PUBLIC SPHERE

5.3.0 Introduction

With the use of both questionnaires and interviews as the research tools to gather data from respondents, this section sought to evaluate Bulawayo Agenda as public sphere. This section

answer the topic's main research questions and is guided by literature review and the theoretical framework.

5.3.1 Respondents evaluation of the Public Sphere role of Bulawayo Agenda

Table 5.1 and Fig 5.1 below shows participants responses to the notion that Bulawayo Agenda is the platform for their views

Table 5.1

Response	Participants	
	Freq	%
Strongly agree	12	50
Agree	9	37.5
Not sure	3	12.5
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

Fig 5.1
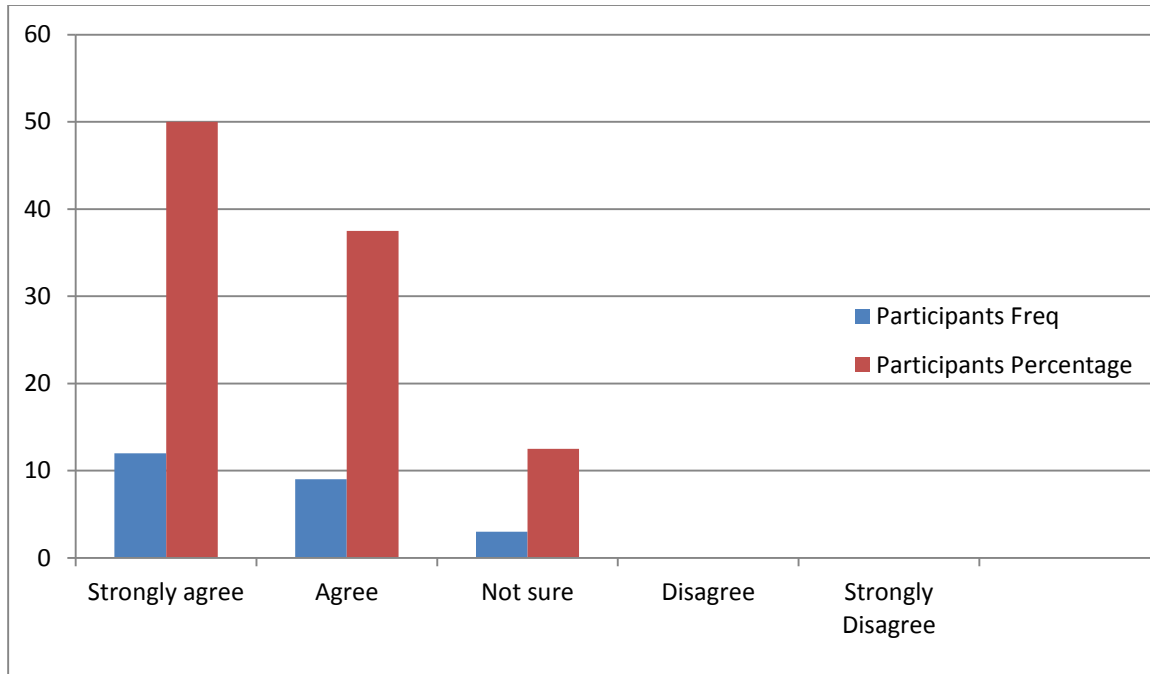
This variable was investigated to ascertain the participants evaluation of the Bulawayo Agenda as a public sphere platform. 50% of the respondents in the participants category strongly agreed with notion that Bulawayo Agenda is the platform for their views. 37.5% agreed with the notion. Only 12.5% of the respondents were not sure. None (0%) of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion.

Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2 below show the panellists responses to the notion that Bulawayo Agenda is a public sphere platform that enables policy makers to meaningfully engage with citizens.

Table 5.2

Response	Panellists	
	Freq	%
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	1	16.6
Not sure	0	0
Disagree	2	33.3
Strongly disagree	3	50

Figure 5.2

Fig 5.2 above reveals that the majority of the respondents (66.6%) strongly agreed with the notion that Bulawayo Agenda is a public sphere platform that enables policy makers to meaningfully engage with citizens. 33.3% of the respondents agreed with the notion. On the other hand none (0%) were not sure, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

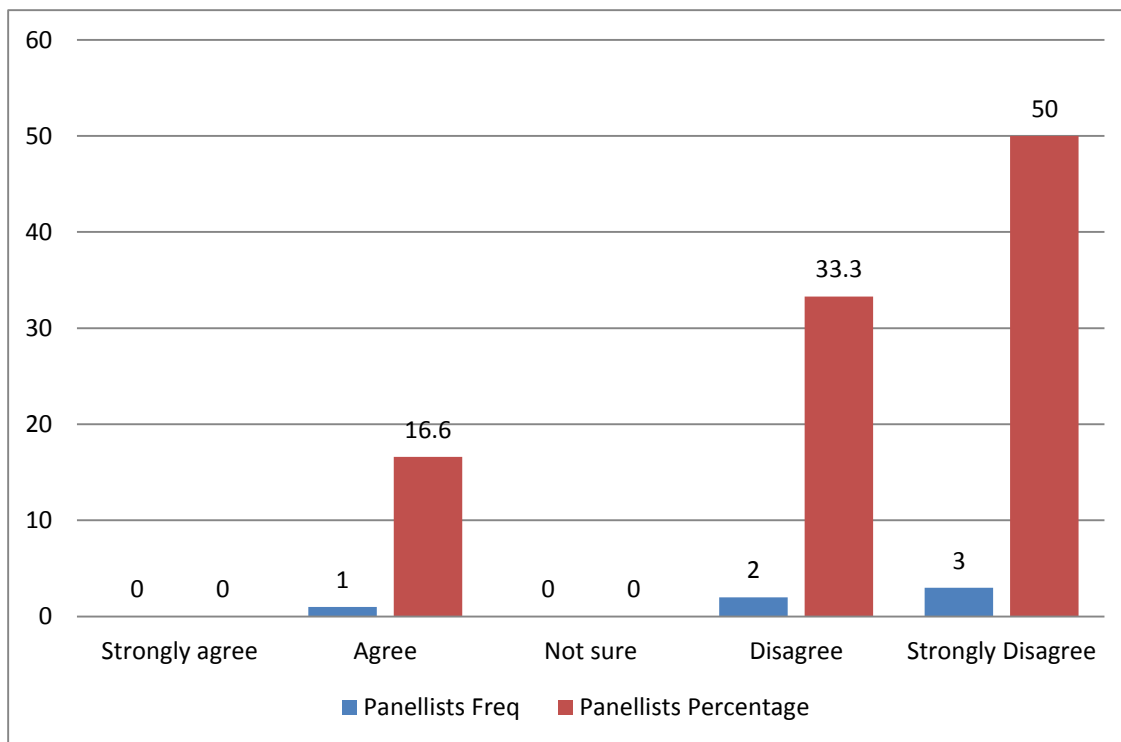The above statistics generally reveal that both participants and panellists to Bulawayo Agenda public meetings, generally view Bulawayo Agenda as a public sphere platform that allows thaem to express themselves. The participants generally felt that they could freely express their views at Bulawayo Agenda as opposed to the mainstream media. In a question that was asked to get a general perception of the participants on the public sphere role of the mainstream, the majority of the respondents (50%) strongly disagree with the notion that the mainstream is the platform for their views.

The panellists who are normally invited to Bulawayo Agenda as policymakers representing various organizations, generally felt that Bulawayo Agenda is a good public sphere platform for engaging citizens. This perception was in sharp contrast to their view of the main stream media. In a question that sought to ascertain how they measure the public sphere role of the mainstream media. The majority of them generally felt that the mainstream media are not a good platform for engaging citizens.

The study also used interviews to get the respondents views on Bulawayo Agenda's public sphere role. In an interview the Bulawayo Agenda's Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer, argued that Bulawayo Agenda had to a large extent played its public sphere role very well. He outlined that Bulawayo Agenda has since its inception facilitated dialogue between various stakeholders and between citizens and policy makers on topical issues of public interest.

When asked about the role of Bulawayo Agenda in the public sphere, Moderators 1 and 2 described the Bulawayo Agenda as a generally good public sphere forum.

However the key Informant Interviewee's evaluation of Bulawayo Agenda's public sphere role was not as positive as that of other respondents. When asked about the role of Bulawayo Agenda in the realm of the public sphere, the key informant interviewee started off by acknowledging the important role that Bulawayo Agenda has played as a public sphere platform. He said the birth of the Bulawayo Agenda concept was a milestone achievement in the history of Bulawayo. He argued that since its inception the organization has provided people not only from Matabeleland but the whole of Zimbabwe with an

excellent platform for their views. However he went on to say that: *"The public sphere role of Bulawayo Agenda has declined over the years. It is no longer as visible as it was in its early years. You hardly see posters advertising Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings these days". (*Interviewed 7 October 2014)

The sentiments of the interviewees expressed above together with those of panellists and participants which were analyzed earlier on, reveal that those who participate in Bulawayo Agenda activities generally have a positive view of the public sphere role of organization. The general pattern is that those who participate in Bulawayo Agenda activities as ordinary participants, panellists, moderators or employees as in the case of the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer all concur that Bulawayo Agenda is playing a positive public sphere role. A view that is to a large extent contradicted by the sentiments of the key informant interviewee. This points to the fact that those who participate in Bulawayo Agenda activities tend to have an insider perspective of the organization, which makes them less critical of the organization.

On the other hand, the positive manner in which those who participate in Bulawayo Agenda activities, view the organization's public sphere role may be construed as a genuine appreciation of the Bulawayo Agenda's alternative public sphere role, given Zimbabwe's stifled communicative sphere. As Ndlela (2007) argues, in a situation where society's communication structures are heavily tilted toward mainstream discourses, civil society resort to alternative media hence creating an alternative public sphere.

However, the key informant interviewee's argument that the Bulawayo Agenda's public sphere role has declined due to a number of reasons cannot be dismissed. This argument is vital in that it illustrates that despite playing an important role in the public sphere, Bulawayo Agenda has its limitations. The Bulawayo Agenda communicative platforms like any other alternative media platforms have their own weaknesses. As Bolton (2006) advances, the democratic potential of alternative media is, however not without shortcomings despite the fact that alternative media are often hailed as having the potential to enhance democracy and citizenship.
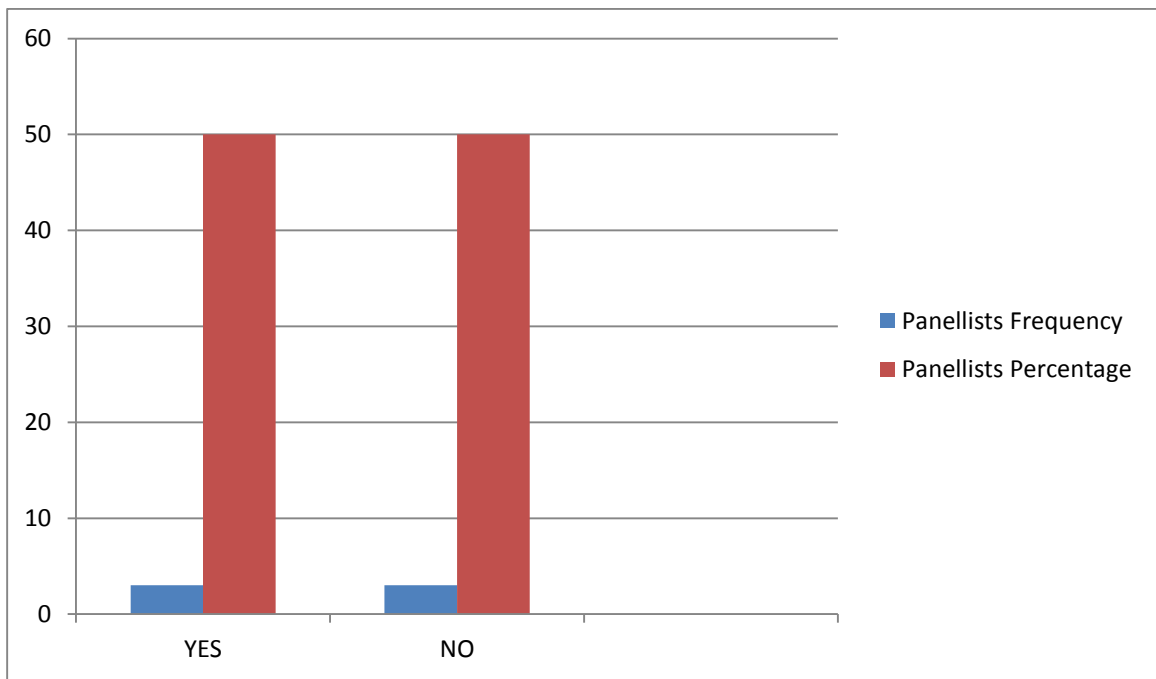
5.3.2 **Evaluating Bulawayo Agenda as a Platform For Critical and Rational Debate**

Table 6 and Fig 6 below show the response of panellists to a question that sought their opinions on whether participants at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings engage in critical and rational debate

Table 6

Response	Panellists	
	Freq	%
Yes	3	50
No	3	50

Fig 6

On the question of whether participants at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings engage in critical and rational debate the responses of the participants were numerically balanced. 50% of the respondents replied yes while the other 50% replied No. Among those who replied yes there was generally a consensus that the debates at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings offer constructive criticism that can assist those in positions of authority. On the other hand, the common thread that ran through explanation of those who replied No, is that some of the debates tend to be biased and emotional rather than critical and rational.

The views above are in line with those expressed by Moderator 2 when he was asked whether he thought Bulawayo Agenda enabled participants to engage in critical and rational debates. He argued that: "As a platform for critical and rational debates Bulawayo Agenda is doing fairly well. However, more can be done to improve the quality of the debates. I think some of the views that both participants and panellists express tend to be more partisan than critical" (Interviewed 4th October 2014).

From the data above it can be deduced that there is some element of critical and rational debates at Bulawayo Agenda. This is in tandem with Habermasian public sphere where according to Calhoun (1992) all public issues were open to critical and rational debate. From the findings above it is quite clear that the Bulawayo Agenda has to do more to improve the quality of debates to make the more critical and rational.

5.3.4 Evaluating Bulawayo Agenda's discussion Topics

In this subsection Bulawayo Agenda's discussion topics will be evaluated by examining how the agenda is set at Bulawayo Agenda and a thematic analysis of the Bulawayo Agenda topics between 2008 and September 2014.

5.3.5 Examining how the Agenda is set at Bulawayo Agenda

Table and Fig 7 below show the participants response to the question that sought to establish whether they have an input in formulating discussion topics.

93

Table 7

Response	Participants	
	Freq	%
Yes	0	0
No	24	100

Fig 7
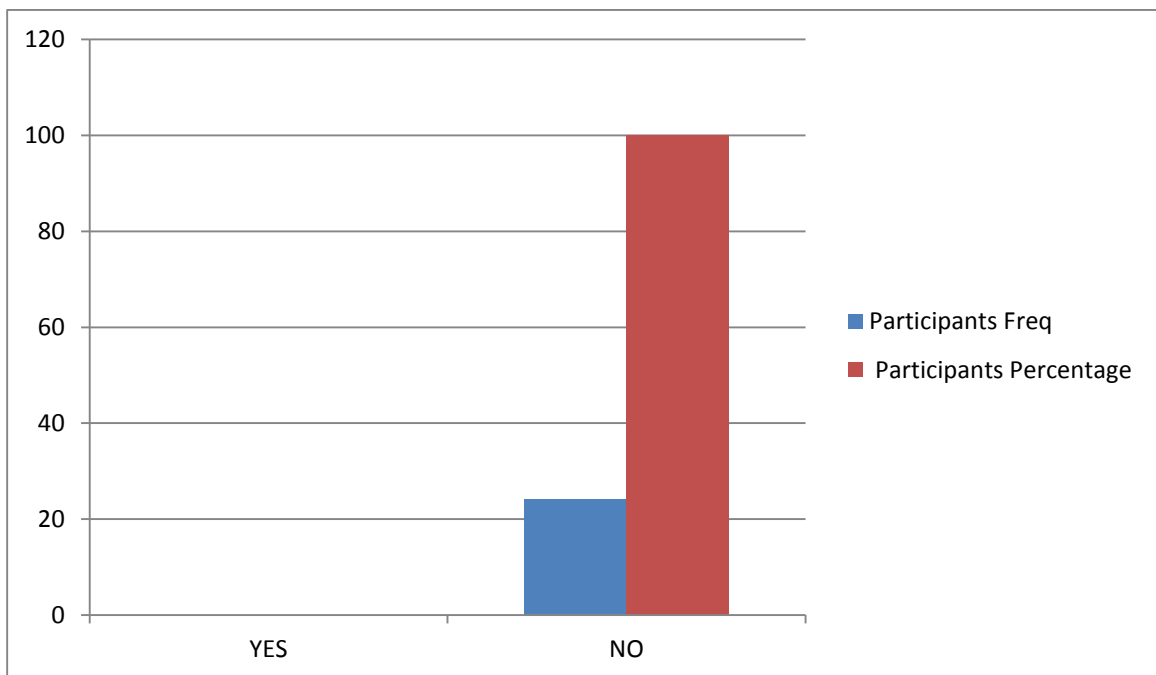
All the respondents (100%) indicated that they had no input in the formulating the discussion topics. None (0%) indicated that they had an input in formulating the discussion topics.

Table 8 and Fig 8 below show the panellists responses to the question that sought to establish whether they have an input in formulating discussion topics

Table 8

Response	Panellists
Yes	6
No	0

Fig 8
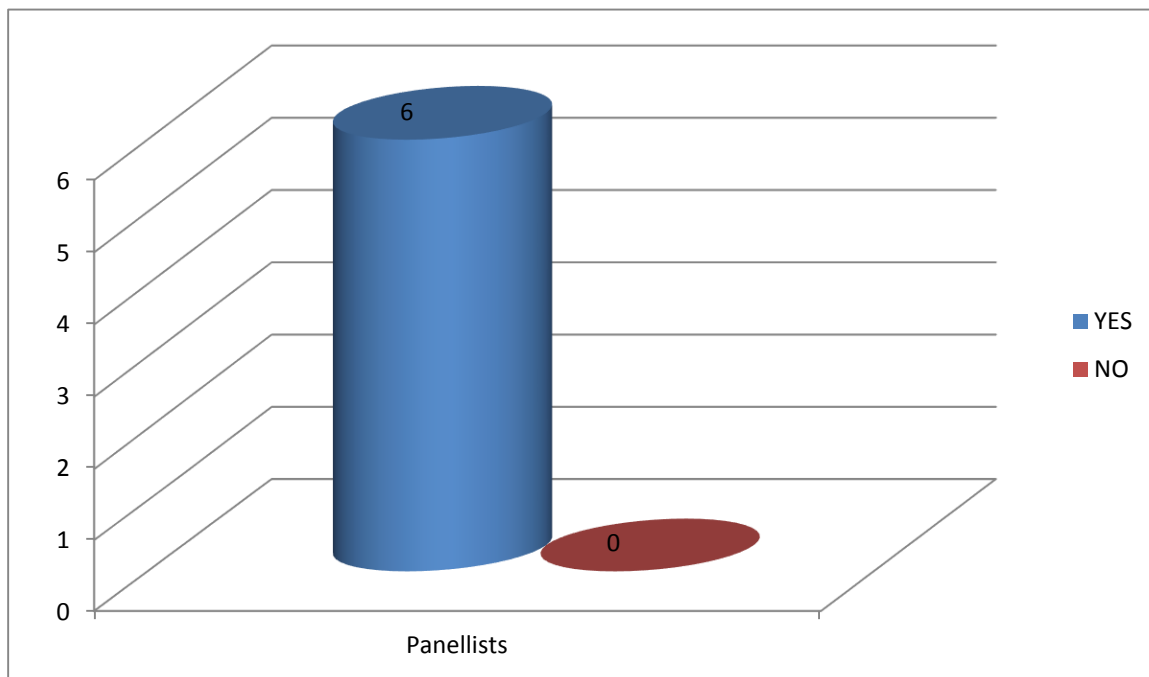
All the respondents (100%) indicated that they had no input in formulating the discussion topics at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. None (0%) indicated that they had an input in formulating the discussion topics.

When the researcher asked the 2 moderators interviewed, whether they had an input in formulating the discussion topics at Bulawayo Agenda, both said they had no input in that.

The above data shows that participants, panellists and moderators at Bulawayo Agenda have no input in formulating the discussion topics. The question then is who sets the agenda at Bulawayo Agenda? When asked afore mentioned question the Bulawayo Agenda Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer said "Topics are decided in the office after consulting chapters. The chapters scan the environment, do a needs assessment research and then recommend the topics to be discussed" (Interviewed 5th September 2014)

However the key informant interviewee's views on how the agenda is set at Bulawayo Agenda differs totally from what the senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer said. This is what he said in an interview :"The Bulawayo Agenda has been hijacked by separationist   and tribal pressure groups which failed to articulate their views elsewhere. These pressure groups have drowned the voices of ordinary people and their agenda has been paraded as the people's agenda"(Interviewed 7 October 2014).

The key informant interviewee went in to argue that, it is these seperationist pressure groups that thrust the devolution of power agenda into the Bulawayo Agenda. He went to say as a result we were made to that the devolution of power agenda was the people's agenda.

From the data above it can be clearly deduced that, the topics that are discussed at Bulawayo Agenda are not formulated by the people who participate in the meetings either as ordinary participants, panellists or moderators. In an interview the the Bulawayo Agenda Senior research, Advocacy and Information officer claimed that the organization comes up with the topics after doing up a needs assessment. However it is quite interesting to note that, none of the respondents participants, panellists or moderators at the Bulawayo Agenda seems to have been asked to make an input in topic formulation.

Basing on the above and the key informant interviewee's argument that pressure groups are setting the agenda on behalf of the ordinary people at Bulawayo Agenda, it can be argued that the ordinary are being excluded from setting the agenda. This is contrary to the spirit of the Habermasian public sphere where the discussion was dominated by issues that affected the people, with the discussion topics coming from them. Habermas (1984) aptly

sums it up, when he argues that in the public sphere discussion was dominated by discussion on issues affecting people such as taxes, duties and issues of governance as well.

5.3.6   A Thematic Analysis of the Bulawayo Agenda Public Meetings Discussion Topics   between 2008 and September 2014

The researcher used information gathered from the interview with the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer and from documents (Bulawayo Agenda Annual Reports 2008-2013) to group the discussions into periods. The main themes discussed during these periods were then briefly outlined. The periods were discussed as follows: 2008, the government of national unity (GNU) period (2009-to July 2013) and the post GNU period (August 2013-September 2014)

5.3.7 The major themes of Bulawayo Agenda discussions topics in 2008

One of the main themes of discussion in 2008 was constitutional reform. During this period, the devolution of power discourse emerged. A number of public meetings focused on the creation of a devolved government system, a strong local government infrastructure and local government capacity building initiatives. There was a strong focus on local level democracy. All this was an attempt to influence the devolution of power concept into the constitution. During this period the other major theme was elections. In this era Bulawayo Agenda launched the election debate series which was then known as the "Meet the Candidates' Series". This gave electoral candidates from various political parties the chance to meet and engage with the electorate. Electoral reforms also featured prominently in the public meetings discussions during this period.

After the disputed 2008 elections, the Bulawayo Agenda facilitated meetings whose theme centred around the nature of Government of National Unity (GNU). These public meetings were meant to influence the form of the GNU which was known as the transitional authority in the Bulawayo Agenda discourse. In this era, Bulawayo Agenda facilitated meetings which advocated for a transitional authority not led by politicians.

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5.3.8 The major themes of Bulawayo Agenda discussion topics in the Government of National Unity (GNU) Period

In the GNU period major themes of discussion centred around government accountability. In this period, Bulawayo Agenda launched the "Meet the Ministers Series" where ministers were invited to directly talk to the people. For example, the then Ministers of Water Resources and Finance were invited to talk to the people on issues related to their ministries. These meetings were meant to promote people driven accountability. One of the major thrusts of the discussion topics of this era, was also to unpack the GNU, so that people could get to understand what it was all about. Electoral reforms also constituted one of the major discussions themes in the GNU period. Before the 2013 elections Bulawayo Agenda launched the "Election debate series". This series saw different political parties grace the Bulawayo Agenda public meetings to debate on political issues with the electorate. This was meant to create an informed electorate. The other significant theme of the discussion in this era, was the new constitution. The Bulawayo Agenda invited members of the constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee, (COPAC), to public meetings centred around the new constitution. The Bulawayo Agenda also used public meetings to gather views amongst the citizenry of what they wanted in the final constitutional draft document.

5.3.9 The major themes of Bulawayo Agenda discussion topics in the Post-GNU era.

In this post-GNU era the focus of Bulawayo Agenda public meetings discussion topics have reverted back to public accountability. The main aim of these discussions have been bringing leaders to account. For example political leaders who won the 2013 elections have been invited to account to the electorate what they have done for them after winning the elections. In these public meetings the manifestos of various political parties have been used to quiz political leaders on what they have done for the people, basing on their manifestos.

In this period issues such as the plight of vendors, the right to shelter and service delivery have featured prominently on the Bulawayo Agenda discussion themes. These issues are discussed with the aim of highlighting governance issues, since Bulawayo Agenda's main focus is on governance and democracy.

The above findings reveal that Bulawayo Agenda discussions have been moving with the times and discussing the pertinent issues affecting people in a particular historic epoch. In this regard, the Bulawayo Agenda can be likened to the Habermasian public sphere that discussed the pertinent issues of the day that were affecting people. The above findings also reveal that Bulawayo Agenda has played a prominent role in bringing leaders to account, which is one of the key features of an ideal public sphere. It can also be argued that the above findings depict that the Bulawayo Agenda has played an essential role in assisting the electorate to make informed political decisions during election times. The important political role that the public sphere should play is aptly summed up by Dahlgren (1993:2) who asserts that "The public sphere represents the focal point of our desire for the good of the society, the institutional sites where political will should form and citizens should be able to constitute themselves in the political process."

The respondents views on the general impact of the Bulawayo Agenda's discussions on public opinion.

Table 9 below shows the participants responses to the question that sought their opinion on whether their participation in the Bulawayo Agenda public meetings influenced public perception of events.

Table 9

	Number	%
Yes	18	75
No	6	25

The majority (75%) answered yes to the question that sought to find out the opinions of participants on whether their participation in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings influenced public perception of events. The remaining 25% answered No to the question stated above.

Table 10 below shows the response of panelists to the question that sought their opinion on whether their participation at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings enabled citizens to better understand their institutional viewpoints.

Table 10

Yes	66.6%
No	33.3%

The majority (66.6%) answered Yes to the question stated above. Those who answered yes explained that the public meetings give them the opportunity to iron out public misconceptions on issues related to their organizations. The remaining 33.3% answered No to the above stated question. The general feeling among those who answered No was that while the meetings give them the opportunity to state their positions on issues related to their organization, they do not necessarily alter people's perception of issues.

From the above findings, it is quite clear that the majority of participants and panellists believe that Bulawayo Agenda meetings play an important role in shaping public opinion. It can be argued that such a perception is a confirmation of the important public sphere role of Bulawayo Agenda. Any meaningful public sphere platform should play a role in shaping public opinion. As Calhoun (1992) argues, in the public sphere, individual groups could shape public opinion. They could render a direct expression of their needs and interests while at the same time influencing political practice.

5.4 Evaluating the impact of Bulawayo Agenda discussions on public policy.

The study sought to evaluate the extent to which Bulawayo Agenda discussions impact on public policy. In an attempt to get information on the afore mentioned issue, the researcher

interviewed Bulawayo Agenda's senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer and this is what he said: "Policy shifts happen at the benevolence of policy makers. As a result we have not influenced policy changes that much. Our role is to try and increase the heat as a way of forcing policy changes. In a few instances we have been successful. For instance, the inclusion of the devolution of power clause in the constitution, is largely attributed to our lobbying efforts". (Interviewed 5 September 2014)

The other interviewees namely, the two moderators and the key informant interviewees, all concurred that the Bulawayo Agenda public meeting discussions have not caused any significant policy shifts.

From the above findings, it can clearly be deduced that the Bulawayo Agenda public discussions have minimal impact in influencing policy shifts. However, the fact that in a few instances the opinions that citizens express through Bulawayo Agenda communicative spaces have influenced policy changes depict the important role the organization is playing in the realm of the public sphere. When public opinion reaches a critical mass, it stops being merely a nuisance for the government. Public opinion affects policy because everyone in government would like to keep their jobs for the long term, and therefore they can repeatedly ignore public opinion at their own peril. (Bulawayo Agenda constitutional outreach report. October 2009- June 2010).**5.4.1 Examining the nature Bulawayo Agenda Participants**

Fig 9   below shows the responses of participants to the question which sought to establish how they get to know about Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings
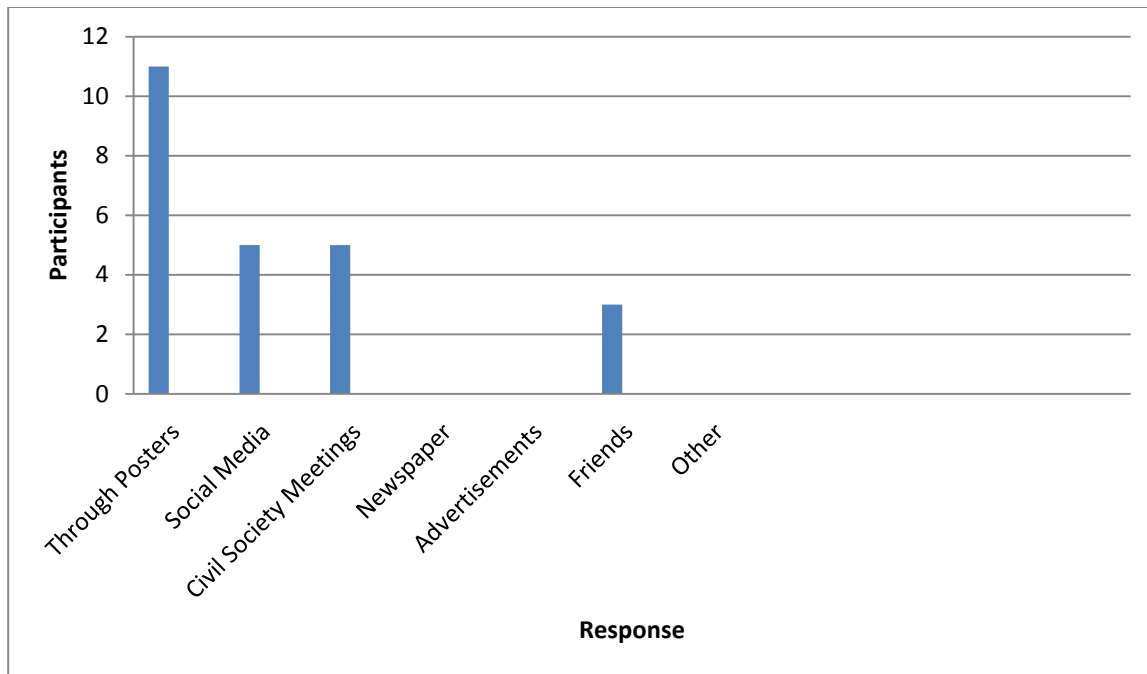
Fig 9 above reveals that, the majority of respondents (45,8%) in this category get to know about Bulawayo Agenda public meetings through posters. Social media and civil society meetings which are both at 20,8% constitute the second most common means through which respondents get to know about Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. Only 12,5% of the respondents get to know about Bulawayo Agenda public meetings through friends. On the other hand none (0%) of the respondents get to know about Bulawayo Agenda public meetings through newspaper advertisements.

In an interview, the Bulawayo Agenda Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer said the term participants at Bulawayo Agenda refers to ordinary members of the public or citizens who participate in their discussion forums. On being asked how they are invited to meetings, he disclosed that they are invited by posters, social media, fliers and announcements in other civil society meetings.

The above data, points to the fact that, Bulawayo Agenda is to a certain degree an open public sphere platform in which ordinary members of the public are from all backgrounds are free to participate. Therefore, in a sense the Bulawayo Agenda public sphere platform conforms with the Habermasion public sphere characteristics of inclusivity alluded to in the literature review section. According to the public sphere theory engagement in the public sphere was blind to class position, and the connection that bound the participants was common interests.

Fig 11below shows the responses of participants to the question which sought to find out how they participate in public meetings.
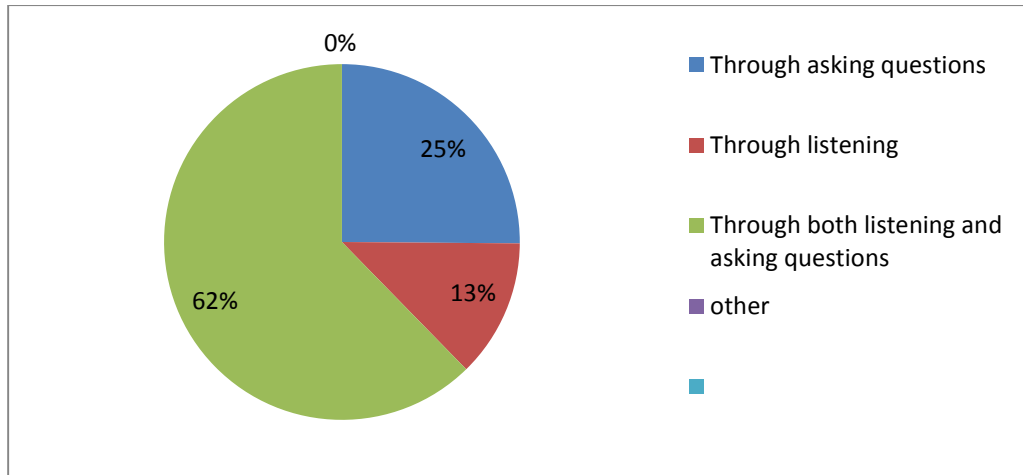
As depicted in Fig 11 above (25%) of the respondents indicated that they participated through asking questions. Only (13%) are passive participants who merely participate through listening. The majority (62%) are active participants who participate through both listening and asking questions. None (0%) of the respondents indicated that they participate through other means that are not specified in the question. These findings certainly confirm the fact that, Bulawayo agenda is an area of unrestricted interaction where people participate actively, in line with the tenets of the Habermasion public sphere.

In an interview the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer at Bulawayo Agenda, described panellists as stakeholder, from various organizations such as Local Authorities and Political parties. These usually come to public meetings representing their organizations. He further explained that a public meeting can have up to four panellists and the highest number of panellists in a public meeting so far is 6. On being asked the criteria that is used to select panellists, the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer disclosed that they try to Politically balance the panellists so a that they represent diverse views.

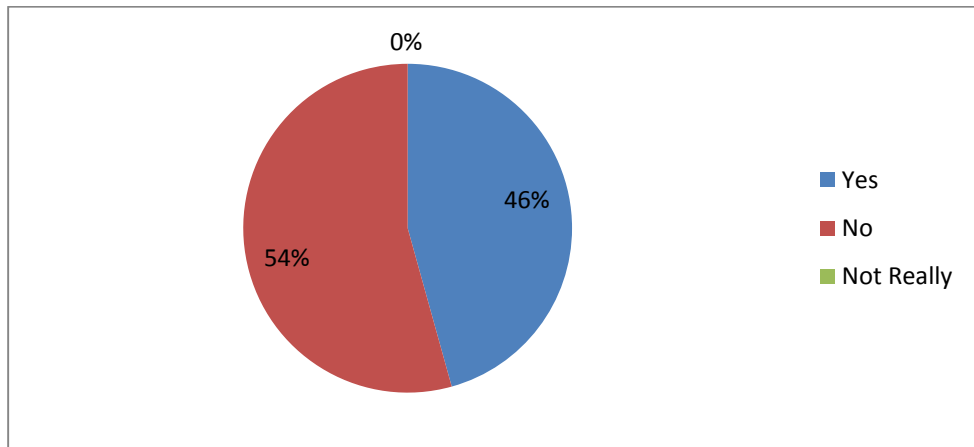When asked whether the panellists invited to Bulawayo Agenda represent diverse views, moderator I had this to say;

  "I think Bulawayo Agenda tries as much as possible to invite panellists from different segments of society". [Interviewed 13 September 2014]

When asked the same question Moderator 2 said;

"I think there is some level of diversity but the net can be cast wider (Interviewed on 4 October 2014)

Fig 12 below shows the participants responses to the question that sought their opinion on whether panellists invited to Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings represent diverse views

On the question of whether the panellists invited to Bulawayo Agenda public meetings represent diverse views, the responses of participants were as follows: 45,8% replied Yes, while the majority (54.1%) replied No. None (0%) of the respondents replied Not Really.

From the above findings, it can be deduced that, the panellists at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings generally represent different segments of society. It can be argued that, this diversity gives various groups the opportunity to utter counter hegemonic perspectives that hardly appear in the mainstream media (Ndlela :2007)

5.4.2 Examining the nature of Bulawayo Agenda Moderators

In an interview the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer said the role of Moderators at public meetings is to outline the topic, give panellists and participants time to speak and sometimes ask questions. When asked the criteria used to choose the moderators he explained that, the organization invites people thought to be neutral on a subject. He explained that, these may include journalists, academics and sometimes civic activists. The Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer emphasized that, these should be people who are not tainted by involvement in partisan politics.

Fig 13 shows responses to the question that sought the participants opinions on whether moderators are neutral.
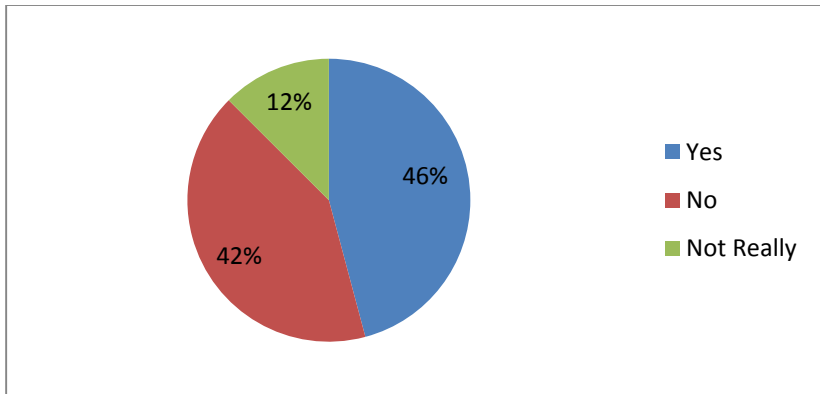
This variable was investigated to evaluate the neutrality of moderators at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. The findings show that, the majority of participants did not believe in the neutrality of moderators as depicted by the fact that, 41,6% replied No and 12, 5 % Not really to the above stated question. Two of the respondents who gave Not really as the answer stated that some of the moderators take sides while the other argued that, neutrality does not exist among Zimbabweans. On the other hand 45,8% of the respondents answered Yes to the question.

Fig 14 below shows the responses to the question that sought the Panellists opinions on whether moderators are neutral
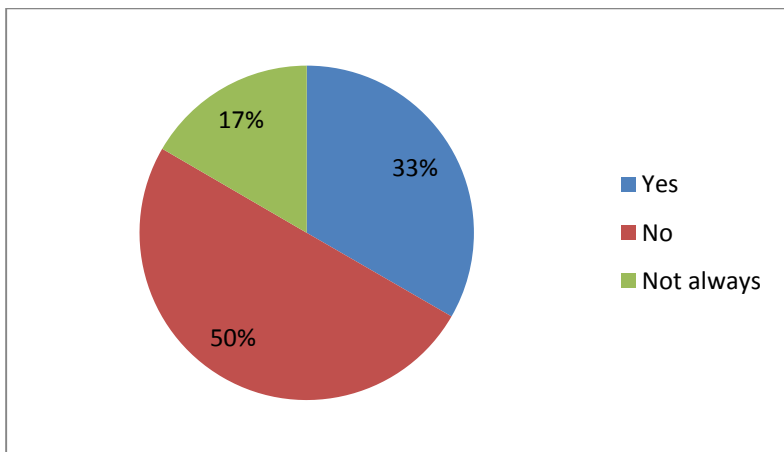
Fig 15 above reveals that 33,3% of the panellists replied Yes to the question that sought to find out whether moderators at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings are neutral. The majority (50%) replied No to the above question. On the other hand 16,6% replied Not always. The major explanation, given by those who replied Yes was that moderators conduct their duties fairly without bias on the other hand, those whose reply was either No or Not always generally explained that some moderators are biased and interfere with the discussions.

During interviews when asked whether the Bulawayo Agenda pays them, both moderators said they are not paid to moderate.

The above data, generally reveals that, despite the fact that, Bulawayo Agenda claims that it chooses moderators who are neutral, participants and panellists question the neutrality of these moderators.

Basing on the opinions of the majority panellists and participants, it can be argued that, this lack of neutrality by moderators is a dent on the public sphere role of Bulawayo Agenda. It is a hindrance to a critical debate which characterised the Habermasian public sphere.

5.4.3 Evaluating Bulawayo Agenda Public Meetings

The researcher in a bid to evaluate Bulawayo Agenda public meetings, asked the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer to shed more light on them, he explained that, the public meetings are the organization's major mode of engagement. He further explained that the meetings are held on a monthly basis and on average a meeting hosts a total of 150 people. This includes participants, panellists, moderators and the Bulawayo Agenda staff. The Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer, however, confessed that, the public meetings are no longer as frequent as they used to be around 2008 but gave no reasons for the decline.

The Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer strongly defended public meetings when asked about their relevance in the era of new media technologies. He argued that; "The power of public meetings lies in face to face interaction. The new media technologies are good public sphere platforms, however there are issues of access and limited appreciation of technology. Some public officials do not even know how to use new media technologies. Therefore, these public meetings remain a very relevant space" [Interviewed 5 September 2014].

The above findings reveal that, public meetings are the main mode of engagement that Bulawayo Agenda uses to create a public sphere platform for citizens. From the findings, one also notes that, public meetings are still a vibrant and relevant space, despite the proliferation of new media public sphere platforms. From these findings, it can be argued that, public meetings represent a more ideal public sphere due to the fact that they do not constitute an abstract public sphere like new media technologies. They represent a space where people can meet physically as was the case in the Habermasian public sphere. As Habermas (1984) notes the public sphere was hence made up of vibrant organs of political discussion such as parliament, clubs, literary saloons, coffee houses and meeting halls.

However, the findings reveal that, the Bulawayo Agenda meetings are no longer as frequent as they used to be. This can be construed as a negative development, in the sense that, it limits interaction which was one of the hallmarks of the classical Habermasian public sphere.

5.4.4 Measuring the accessibility and convenience of Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings.

Fig 16 below shows the participants responses to the question that sought their opinions on whether the venues that Bulawayo Agenda normally use for its public meetings are convenient.
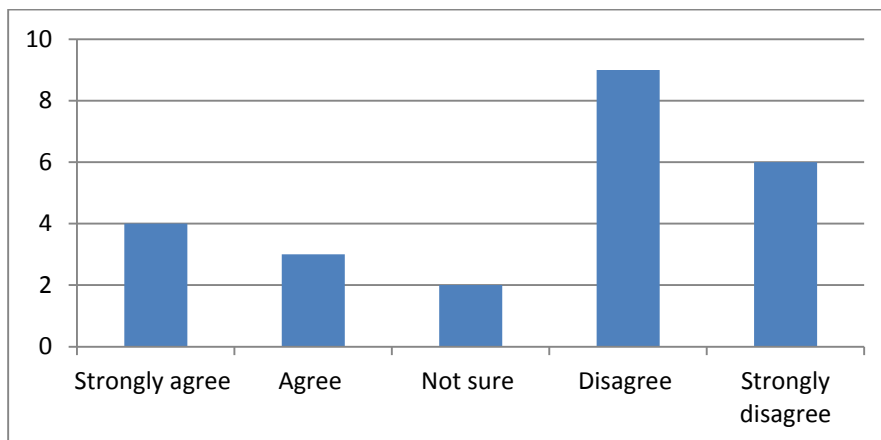
This variable was investigated to evaluate the extent to which participants consider the venues for public meetings to be convenient. The majority of respondents considered the venues as not convenient this was depicted by the fact that 37,5% disagreed and 25% strongly disagreed with the view that the venues that Bulawayo Agenda normally use for their public meetings are convenient. Only 8,3% of the respondents were not sure. On the other hand, 12,5% agreed and 16,6% strongly agreed with the view.

In an interview, the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer gave views that contradicted the views of participants concerning venues. He argued that, the organisation carefully chose venues considering accessibility, centrality, suitability and space. However, one may argue that, the views of participants hold more water, as they are the best people to measure the convenience of venues, from a user's point of view.

Fig 17below shows the participants responses to the question that sought their opinions on whether the times during which Bulawayo Agenda conduct their meetings are appropriate.
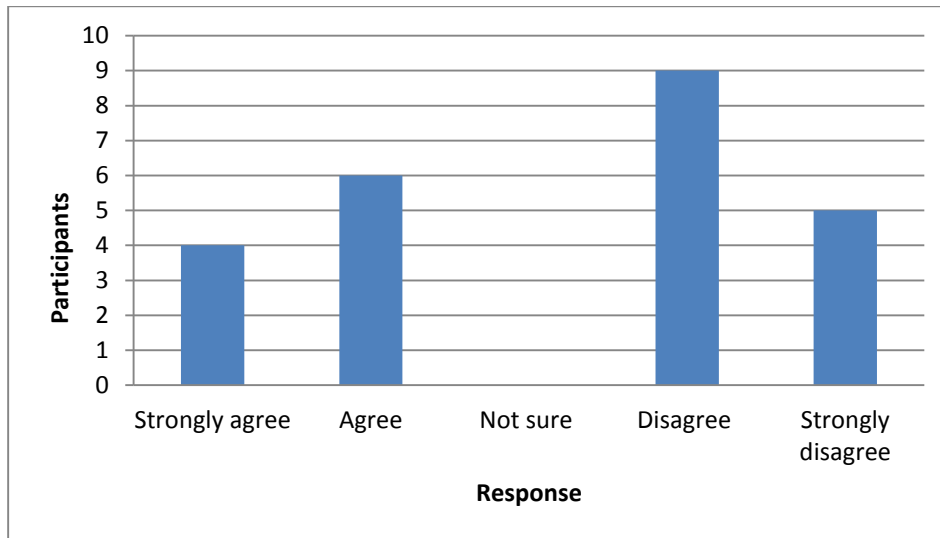
The study further sought to evaluate the extent to which the participants consider the times during which Bulawayo Agenda conducts its public meetings are appropriate. The majority of respondents considered the time to be inappropriate. This is revealed by the fact that 20,8% strongly disagreed with the view that the times during which Bulawayo Agenda conducts it's meetings are inappropriate. None (0%) of the respondents was not sure. On the other hand, 25% agreed while 16,6% strongly agreed with the notion.

On the contrary, in an interview, the Bulawayo Agenda Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer argued that as an organisation, they choose time that they consider appropriate for all stakeholders to the meetings. However, the fact that participants do not find the times appropriate, points to the fact that, the time is generally inappropriate. When asked to comment on the extent to which the language of communication used at public meetings makes it easy to participate. This is what he said "*we have witnessed the rapid vernacularisation of the public meetings which makes it easy to participate for everyone*". [Interviewed 5 September 2014].

Fig 18 below shows the participants responses to the question which sought their opinions on whether the language used at Bulawayo Agenda makes it difficult to participate.
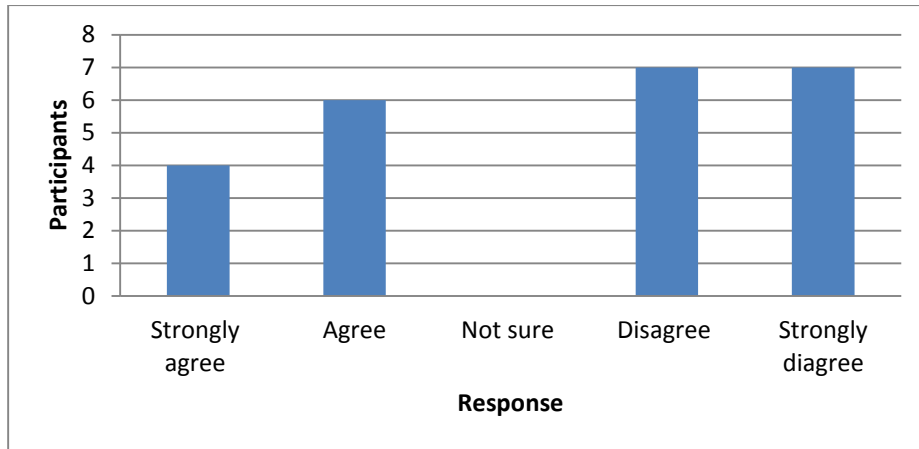
Fig 18 above reveals that 16,6% of the respondents strongly agree that the language of communication used at Bulawayo Agenda makes it difficult to participate. 25% agreed with the above notion, none (0%) were not sure. However, the majority are comfortable with language of communication as depicted by the fact that 29,1% disagreed and another 29,1% strongly disagreed with the above stated notion.

The above findings point to the fact that, both the venues and times for Bulawayo Agenda public meetings are neither convenient nor appropriate to the participants. Therefore in a way Bulawayo Agenda, to borrow the words of Bolton (2006) may at a first glance appear to amplify 'ordinary' voices but closer examination reveals a 'counter elite'. In other words, these inconvenient venues and times of Bulawayo Agenda public meetings may serve to silence the same voices that organization seeks to amplify.

However, the above findings reveal that the majority of participants are comfortable with the language of communication at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. This is one of the factors that one might use to counter the notion that Bulawayo Agenda is an elitist public sphere that excludes ordinary people form participation. This may be attributed to the vernacularisation of the public sphere which it makes it easier for those who are not fluent in English to participate. This also brings about inclusivity.

5.4.5 Women versus men participation at Bulawayo Agenda

The statistics on the gender of respondents outlined in the first section of this chapter, generally depict that, there were more male than female respondents in all categories. This certainly points to the fact that, more males than females participate in Bulawayo Agenda activities. Spivak (1988) focuses on the Indian women who she considers misrepresented, oppressed, marginalised and suffering form exclusion form the

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patriarchal community if one borrows the subaltern analysis to evaluate the participation of women in Bulawayo Agenda activities, it can be argued that women suffer form exclusion from the organisation's communicative spaces.

However, when asked about the participation of women in Bulawayo Agenda communicative spaces, the Senior Research, Advocacy and information officer at Bulawayo Agenda had this to say.

"Our gender policy directs women participation in all our activities, over 40% of participants in our activities are women". [Interviewed 5 September 2014].

The statement by the Bulawayo Agenda official cited above, reveals that, the organisation has deliberately put in place measures to promote the participation of women in the public sphere. In light of the above mentioned efforts, one can once again borrow the words of Spivak (1988:77) and argue that "the oppressed can now speak for themselves". In other words the Bulawayo Agenda can be viewed as offering the previously oppressed women a chance to speak through its communicative spaces.

5.4.6 Evaluating Youth participation in Bulawayo Agenda communication spaces

The ages of respondents to this study as depicted in the first section of this chapter, generally reveal low levels of participation by the youth. For instance, none (0%) of the participants was less than 18 years old, 8,3% of the participants were in the 18 to less than 25 years age category and 16,6% were in the 25 to less than 32 years category. These low levels of Youth representation were even steeper in the panellists and moderators categories. From the above findings youth can be considered as one of the marginalized and oppressed groups whose voice is often missing in most communicative platforms. Thus one can apply the subaltern analysis which was used in reference females earlier on, to also analyze the absence of youth voices on Bulawayo Agenda's communicative spaces.

The Bulawayo Agenda's youth policy which was outlined by the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer, depicted the efforts that are being done by the organization, to promote youth participation in the public sphere. When asked about the levels of youth participation in Bulawayo Agenda communitive spaces, he noted that;

"The organisation classifies youth and women as marginalised groups. Therefore, the organisation has a special focus on youth and women. We have members who are responsible for facilitating youth and women participation, in all our chapters". [Interviewed 5 September 2014].

In light of the above mentioned efforts aimed at promoting Youth participation, Bulawayo Agenda can be classified as an inclusive public sphere in the Habermasian sense.

5.4.7 Evaluating the participation of ethnic and tribal minorities at Bulawayo Agenda.

The ethnicity/races of respondents to this study as depicted in the first section of this chapter, generally revealed that the participation of minority races is very insignificant or in some cases non-existent.in an interview, the Bulawayo Agenda Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer indicated that the participation of minority tribes such as whites in Bulawayo Agenda activities was extremely low. He added that the few whites who participated in Bulawayo Agenda activities belong to other civil society groups. However, he argued that the organisation does not consider minority races such as whites to be marginalized, due to the colonial legacy which left them in a privileged position. He added that, as an organization they do encourage all minority races to participate in their activities.

The home languages spoken by respondents to this study as depicted in the first section of this chapter, generally showed that participation is dominated by Ndebele speakers. Shona Speakers also constituted a significant portion of the respondents. This shows that participation at Bulawayo Agenda is dominated by the country's dominant tribes.

Bulawayo Agenda documents such as the Annual Report of 2013, depict that Bulawayo Agenda offers minority tribes communicative spaces through its Chapters such as Binga Agenda, Plumtree Agenda, Victoria Falls and Hwange Agenda. However, it can still be argued that these minority tribes are also found in Bulawayo, therefore they should be represented in Bulawayo Chapter activities.

The above findings above generally reveal that there is limited participation of minority tribes and race in the Bulawayo Chapter of Bulawayo Agenda. The renders this public sphere space exclusionary.

5.4.8 Bulawayo Agenda's appropriation of social media

Fig 20below shows the participants responses to the question which asked them to indicate the other Bulawayo Agenda Communication platforms that they use apart from public meetings.
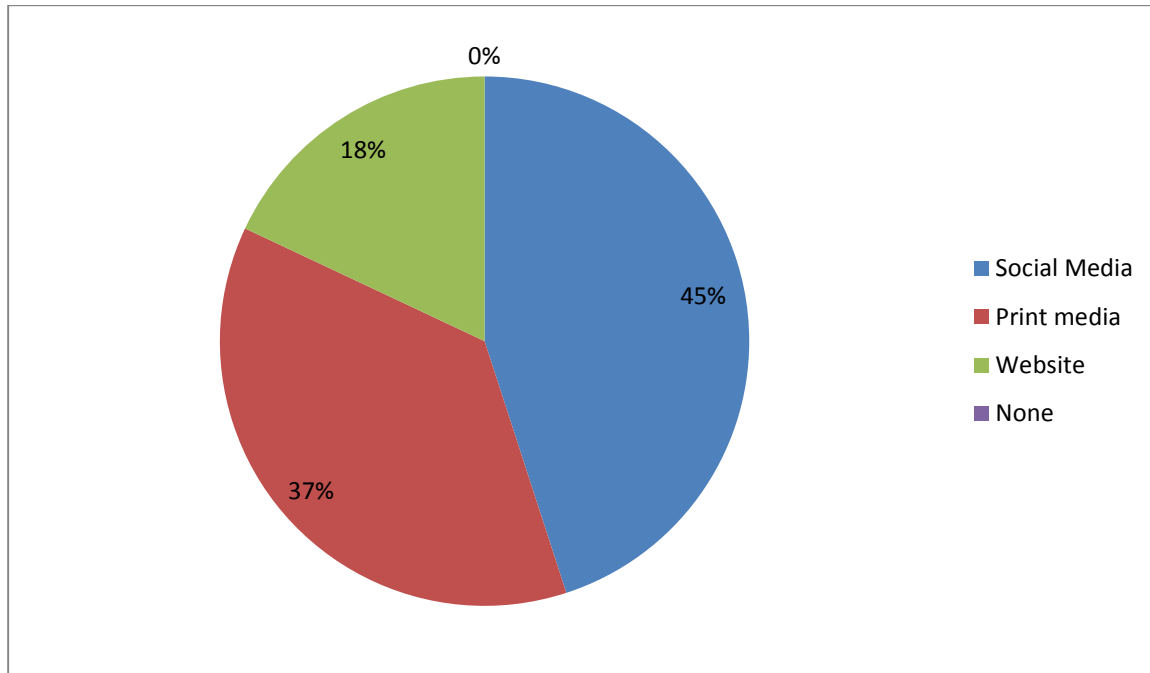
The majority of respondents (45%) indicated that they use social media, 37% indicated that they use print media, 18% indicated that they use the website. None (0%) indicated any other communication platform not specified in the question.

Fig 21 below shows the panellists responses to the question which sought to find out the other Bulawayo Agenda communication platforms that they use besides public meetings.
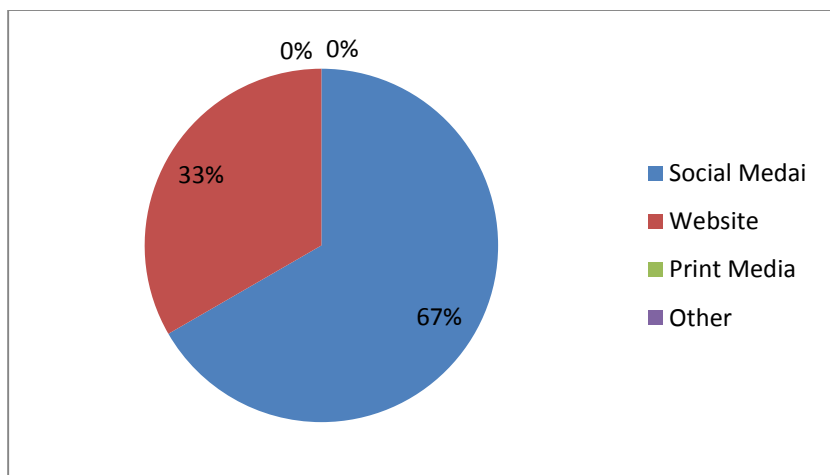
The study took an interest in the other Bulawayo Agenda Communication platforms, besides public meetings that the respondents use to engage citizens. The majority (66,6%) of respondents indicated that they use social media. 33,3% indicated that they use the website. On the other hand, none (0%) of the respondents indicated that they use either the print media or other communication platforms not specified in the question.

The above statistics generally reveal that, the majority of respondents in both the participants and panellists categories also make use of the organization's social media platforms.

Table 11 below shows the statistics recorded in the Bulawayo Agenda social media platforms in 2012.

Platform	Number of posts and subject	Number of comments received
Facebook	We posted 3 301 on various subjects that included our activity updates, "Live" updates, activity highlights, News links on issues such as key reforms, local government. We also posted images	We averaged 509 comments per post in 2012 as most of the posts were links to our blog posts and news links we would have shared.
Twitter	86 tweets were tweeted in 2012.this platform was not actively used as it was overshadowed by facebook which had a better response from the audience.	No retweets. This platform was still very new and not utilized to maximum
Blogsite	We posted 69 posts mainly on our activities news stories and alerts as well as press releases on issues of interest.	The blog has no comments although it has becoming the information hub with the United States being the catchment area of our audience followed by Zimbabwe then South Africa,

[Adapted from the Bulawayo Agenda Annual Report 2012]

The table above shows that facebook was most used Bulawayo Agenda social media platform. Twitter and blogging were also used to disseminate information and engage with citizens. When asked to explain the use of social media within the organization, the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer, revealed that the use of social media has increased significantly over the years. He indicated that, the organization uses social media platforms such as facebook, whatspp and blog. He said these are used to make announcements, invite people to meetings, publish stories and for advocacy purposes.

The Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer further revealed that, they have fused public meetings with social media platforms. He outlined this concept as follows:

"We now use social media in public meetings. This is done through live posts on twitter and facebook. We take questions from people not present in the meetings and post live pictures as the discussions take place. In other words, we have managed to fuse the cyberspace and the physical space." [Interviewed 5 September 2014].

The findings above clearly reveal that there is widespread use of social media at the Bulawayo Agenda. This appropriation social media has enabled the organization to expand its public sphere space. The use of social media complements public meetings, which are the organization's main mode of engagement. This can be construed as the expansion of Bulawayo Agenda's public sphere role. As Manganga (2008) argue, in contemporary society, the public sphere has extended to mean a site of information, discussion, contestation, political struggle and organization that encompasses the cyberspace.

5.4.9 Examining Bulawayo Agenda's print media platforms

This study also took an interest in Bulawayo Agenda's print media publications. This interest stemmed form the researcher's desire to find out how these print media publications complemented the public sphere role of public meetings. These print media platforms can be characterised as alternative forms of engagement.

For instance, as illustrated in the previous section, 29,1% of the participants indicated that they also used print media platforms. This makes print media platforms the second most utilized alternative platform among participants after social media.

When asked about the organization's print media publications, the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer revealed that they had a number of print media publications. He said, these include magazines like "Human Rights Focus" which focuses on human rights and democracy. He further mentioned the Annual reports that they produce yearly.

The Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer also pointed out their major publication is "The Agenda". This publication according to him, is a newspaper that was established as weekly paper in 2008.

He said, it later became a monthly in 2011. He attributed this shift from a weekly to a monthly paper to dwindling support from donors.

The researcher went on to do a content analysis of three copies "The Agenda' This content analysis revealed that the 2008 copies of the newspaper had 16 pages. It focused on issues such as accountability, public policy, successes and toils of communities. It also contained inspiration stories and a mixture of features and stories.

However, a content analysis of 2 copies of the newspaper (one 2013 copy and one 2014 copy) revealed that the "The Agenda" is now a 2 page newsletter. This is a serious drop from the 16 pages of the 2008 editions. However, the publication still focuses on the same issues.

The above findings reveal that print media publications are significant public sphere platforms at Bulawayo Agenda. However, one notes that the organisation's print media public sphere platform is shrinking. This is shown by the fact that "The Agenda" which happens to be the organisation's major publication has withered. This is evidenced by the fact that, it has declined from 16 pages at its peak in 2008 to the current 2 pages. The decline is also evidenced by the fact that has transformed from a weekly being to a monthly. In light of the above, it can be argued that the Bulawayo Agenda's print media has withered as a public sphere platform. Therefore, it is now playing a limited role in complementing the public sphere role of public meetings.

5.5 Evaluating the Ideas Festival as a public sphere platform

The study took a further interest in the Bulawayo Agenda's Ideas Festival. This interest emanated from the researcher's perception of the festival as an important annual event, which epitomises the organization's work in the public sphere.

When asked to explain the Ideas Festival during an interview, the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer said; "The Ideas Festival has become an annual platform through which civil society, government officials and ordinary members of the public can meet to discuss pertinent issues of the day'. [Interviewed 5 September 2014].

Ever since the inception of the ideas Festival in 2008, previously marginalized groups such as women and youths have been afforded the opportunity to assemble and discuss issues that affect them (The Agenda Volume 2, 2012)

The main activities of the Ideas Festival include a public dialogue meeting, the Democracy fair, the Local Governance symposium, the Youth Symposium, the National Leadership Symposium and the Women's symposium (Bulawayo Agenda Leadership Development Programme Magazine, 2009)

The researcher also asked the key informant interviewee about the Ideas Festival, during interview and this is what he said. "The Ideas Festival is an Excellent platform for ideas and a significant national event. However, it is not well known to ordinary members of the public in Bulawayo. Therefore, it results in Civil Society groups from all over the Country flocking to Bulawayo, whilst local residents are unaware of the event".(Interviewed on 7 October 2014)

In light of the above, it can be argued that the Ideas Festival is one of Bulawayo Agenda's most significant public sphere platforms. However, from the findings, one notes that the one of the weaknesses of the event is that it is not well publicised to ordinary members of the public. Therefore it may be constructed as an elitist Public sphere platform that has been appropriated by civil society organizations to showcase their work.

5.5.1 Section D: Analyzing the autonomy of civil society Communicative spaces.

Introduction

This final section of the chapter presents data that has been generated to analyze the autonomy of civil society communicative spaces. It seeks to present data gathered using questionnaires and interviews. The Section answers research questions raised in chapter one and is guided by Literature Review and the theoretical framework.

5.5.2 Analyzing the funding of Bulawayo Agenda and its impact on autonomy.

In an attempt to analyse the funding of Bulawayo Agenda, the researcher asked the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information Officer to explain the organization's funding mechanisms. During the interview, he explained that the organization is funded by Western International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS). He elaborated that these included Western Government development agencies and other international organizations that support civil society organizations (CSOS) democratization.

When asked to explain the impact of funding on the organization's autonomy, he argued that they are a non-partisan organization that does not dance to the tune of donors. He further explained that, they check the donors before engaging them, to ascertain whether they operate within their principles.
He went on to say that; "With us autonomy issues don't arise, we negotiate for our space. We do not go against our principles. Most donors usually consult us, they do not impose their programmes on us" [Interviewed 5 September 2014].

The researcher also interviewed the key informant interviewee, in attempt to get balanced views on Bulawayo Agenda funding. When asked to explain what he thought about the funding of Bulawayo Agenda, he simply said the organisation is funded by mostly Western Organisations. The researcher further asked him about the impact of this funding on autonomy and this is what he said; "The Bulawayo Agenda like most Zimbabwean civil society organisations is obviously not autonomous. This is due to the fact that, they rely too much on foreign funding. As a result they tend to pursue the agendas of their foreign funders". [Interviewed 7 October 2014].

The above findings clearly reveal that, the Bulawayo Agenda is funded by western organizations. Both interviewees concur that Bulawayo Agenda is funded by western organizations. This finding is not surprising, since it is in tandem with the findings of a number of scholars in this field. For instance, Hearn (1998). In a research found that the most popular African Civil Society actors in terms of western donor assistance were urban based, professional elite advocacy NGOS and human rights, governance/democracy NGOs.

It can be argued that, Bulawayo Agenda perfectly fits into the description of western donors favourite NGOs, as given above. Though, there are conflicting sentiments from the interviewees on the impact of donor funding on civil society autonomy, the impact can still be analysed. Form the above findings, it can

be argued that, foreign funding compromises the autonomy of Bulawayo Agenda. The above assertion is supported by Darnol (1997) who was quoted in the literature review section, advancing that, the majority of African civil society organizations are incapable of sustaining themselves without the support of foreign donors, thus autonomy is compromised from the start.

One may argue that, this lack of autonomy has resulted in a situation, whereby civil society organizations like Bulawayo Agenda focus on issues that are imposed by foreign donors. Much of civic activity has taken the form of political advocacy with more focus on aspects such as the documentation and reporting of human rights abuses by the state, political violence and state repression (Saki and Katema 2011,Ncube 2010). International donor interest within Zimbabwe, over the years, has been on the political situation and most of the funding availed to CSOS has been for political advocacy rather than for social and economic advocacy (Ncube 2011). One notes, the discussion topics at Bulawayo Agenda since 2008, have centred on political rather than social and economic issues. This could point to the fact that, Bulawayo Agenda has been on political issues as dictated by the western donors.

5.5.3 Analyzing Bulawayo Agenda's autonomy form the state.

Fig 22 below shows the participants answers to the question which sought to find out whether they are free to participate in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings.
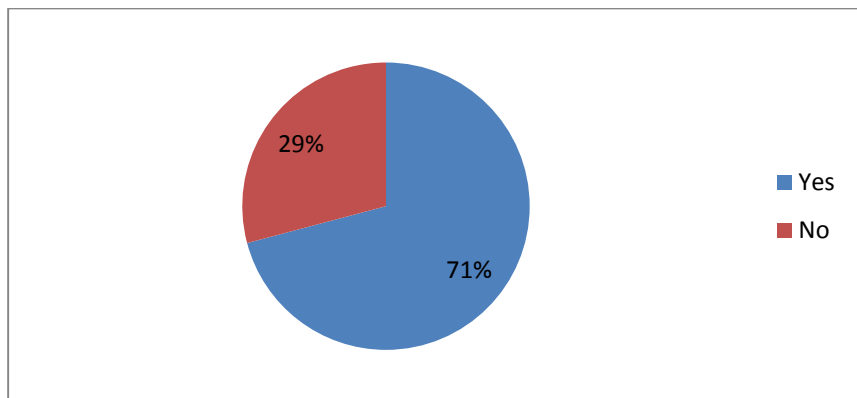
As depicted in Fig 22 above, the majority (70,8%) of the respondents indicated that they are free to participate in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. However 29,1% of the respondents indicated that they are not free to participate in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. The general sentiments among those who indicated that they are not free to participate in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings was that it is a platform where they can express their views without being hindered by anyone. One the other hand, those who indicated that they are not free, generally blamed the hostile political environment, which prevents them from expressing their views for fear being arrested.

Fig 23 below shows the panellists answers to the question which sought to establish whether they were free to participate in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings as panellists.
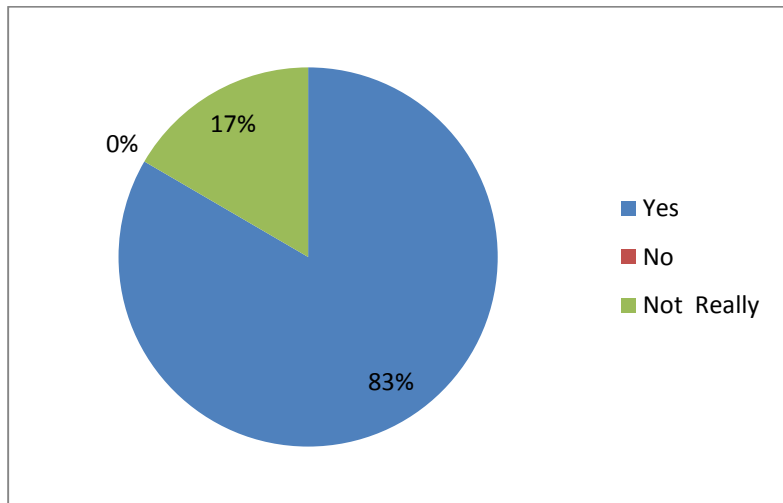
The majority (83,3%) replied Yes to the question that sought to establish whether they were free to participate at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings as panellists. The common thread that ran through the explanations given by those who feel free to participate is that, Bulawayo Agenda is a free space where communication is not hindered or censored. 16,6% of the respondents replied Not Really to the above stated question. This respondent explained that, one can not be free to participate as a panellist at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings, especially when political topics are being discussed. This explanation was premised on the belief that, Zimbabwe is a highly politically polarised.

The researcher also asked the moderators whether they were free to moderate at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. Both moderators replied that they felt very free to moderate.

The Senior Researcher, Advocacy and Information Officer was asked to explain whether Bulawayo Agenda's relationship with the state affects its autonomy. He explained that there are laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public order and Security Act (POSA) which regulate their activities but not autonomy. He added that; "The state has never questioned our operations, the problem is with political parties which abuse the state. These political parties, think we are affiliated to a certain party. The state does impact on our operations but not on our autonomy". (Interviewed 5 September 2014)

However, the key informant interviewee had a different opinion. When asked to explain the factors that limit civil society autonomy, in an interview, this is what he said' "I think state interference hinders civil society autonomy. For example, a number of civil society activities have been arrested over the years. This prevents them from conducting their duties autonomously." (Interviewed 7 October 2014)

From the above findings, it can be deduced that, generally the State has a limited impact on the autonomy or freedom of participants, panellists and moderators of Bulawayo Agenda public meetings. The majority generally participate freely. However, the fear of state authorities compromises participation to a certain degree. This can be depicted by the views of some of the participants, who indicated that, they are not totally free to express their views for fear of being arrested. This impacts negatively on the public sphere role of Bulawayo Agenda, since it limits freedom of expression.

The above findings also indicate that, though some civil society organizations have had problems with state authorities over the years, Bulawayo Agenda has not had serious confrontations with the state. Hence, it can be argued that, the organization has to some degree operated without much interference from the state. This probably explains why the organization survived in the turbulent political years like 2008 to the present.

However, this does not mean the organization is totally autonomous from the state. As Moyo (1993) advances the view that civil society is autonomous from the state is wrong. It can be argued that, though the state, has not directly confronted the Bulawayo Agenda public sphere platforms, laws such as POSA and AIPPA indirectly usurp the autonomy of these platforms.

5.5.4 Bulawayo Agenda, Partisan Politics and Autonomy
Fig 24 below shows panellists responses to the question that sought to find out whether Bulawayo Agenda is a non-partisan communicative space.
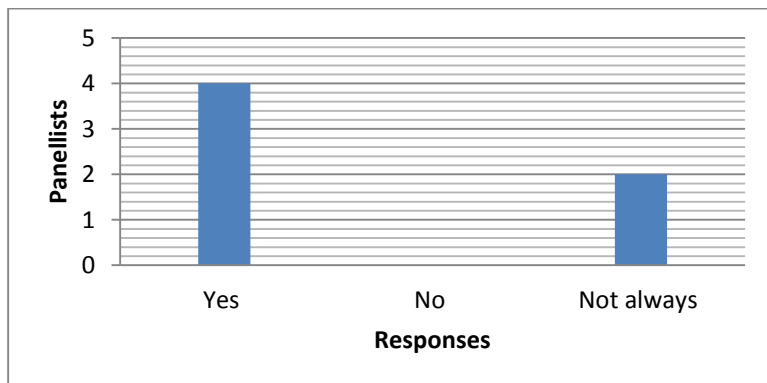
The majority of respondents (66,6%) were of the opinion that Bulawayo Agenda is a non-partisan communicative space. The notable explanation given by these respondents was that, Bulawayo Agenda displays its non-partisan nature by inviting panellists from diverse political backgrounds to their public meetings. 33,3% of the respondents were of the opinion that Bulawayo Agenda is Not always a non-partisan communicative space. The notable explanation given by respondents who were of this view is that panellists who hold certain political views are invited more often to the Bulawayo Agenda public meetings.

The researcher also asked moderators to whether they thought Bulawayo Agenda was a non-partisan communicative space. Moderator 1, was of the view that, the organization itself is non-partisan but people who participate in its activities, mostly represent partisan interests, hence the organisation has been mistakenly identified as partisan. Moderator 2, said complete non-partisanship is difficult to achieve but the organisation tries as much as possible to be non-partisan.

When asked whether the Bulawayo Agenda was non-partisan, the Senior Research, Advocacy and Information officer argued that, the organization was founded on non-partisanship. He further emphasised that the organisation was not aligned to any political party.

However, in an interview, the key informant interviewee questioned the non-partisanship of civil society organizations in general and Bulawayo Agenda in particular. When asked whether Bulawayo Agenda was non-partisan, this is what he said;"A number of Zimbabwean Civil Society groups are aligned to political parties and this limits their autonomy. For instance, one of the founders of Bulawayo Agenda served as a Minister in the now defiant inclusive government, suing the ticket of one the biggest opposition parties. This obviously raises questions on the non-partisanship of Bulawayo Agenda". [Interviewed 07 October 2014]

From the above findings, it can be noted that to a certain degree Bulawayo Agenda operaters in a non-partisan manner. The views of the majority of panellists depicted above show that the organisation caters for diverse political views and therefore it displays a degree of non-partisanship. However, an analysis of the responses of moderators and the key informant interviewee, reveal that an element of partisanship exists in Bulawayo Agenda.

One can therefore argue that, though Bulawayo Agenda is not a blatantly partisan public sphere platform, an element of partisanship does exists. This finding is in line with the assertion that, though civil society

should theoretically remain non-partisan, in reality Zimbabwean civil society organizations have demonstrated some partisan behaviour (Manganga 2008)

5.5.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented and analyzed the research findings. The next Chapter will summarise the research findings, then make recommendations and conclusions. These recommendations and conclusions will be based on strictly on the research findings.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will give a summary of the findings, make recommendations based on the findings, conclude the thesis and point out areas requiring further study.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The most important finding made is that Bulawayo Agenda as a communicative space is akin to a public sphere though some elements of this public sphere platform are not in tandem with the Habermasian public sphere.The other significant finding is that, Bulawayo Agenda public meetings are still a relevant and vibrant space, despite the proliferation of new media public sphere platforms. The strength of these public meetings lies in the fact that, they are not an abstract public sphere like new media technologies. They represent a space where people can meet physically as was the case in the Habermasian public sphere.The majority of citizens who participate in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings as ordinary participants, panellists or moderators, view the platform as a useful public sphere, that is an alternative to the mainstream media. The Bulawayo Agenda is a communication platform that provides a citizens with a useful space to engage in constructive debates. There is active participation on the topics under discussion.The Bulawayo Agenda public sphere has metamorphosised over time. It has track record of moving with the time and is endowed with the capability of pin pointing pertinent issues of the day and bring them under discussion. This public sphere has played an important role in bringing leaders to account and assisting the electorate to make informed choices.The space is inclusive and diverse, in the sense that ordinary citizens are openly invited to participate in meetings through posters and other platforms. The panellists represent different political and socio-economic views hence bringing in the element of diversity.

However, the findings reveal that, some of the debates tend to be biased and emotional. Therefore, they cannot be judged to be rational and critical in the Habermasian sense.

The 'publicness' of the sphere is compromised by the fact that ordinary members of the public are having no input in formulating the discussion topics. All public meetings participants, panellists and moderators confessed that, they had no input in topic formulation.The public sphere has been 'hijacked' by pressure groups and other elitist organizations who parade their own agendas as the people's agenda.The discussions that take place on Bulawayo Agenda's communicative spaces in a way shape public opinion.

However, these discussions have a minimal impact influencing public policy shifts.The majority of participants view the venues and times for public meetings as inconvenient. This renders Bulawayo Agenda in 'elitist' public sphere, that may shut out the same voices it seeks to amplify.However, the participants are comfortable with the language of communication, a factor which is attributable to the rampant vernacularisation of the public sphere.The participation of women in this public sphere is eclipsed by that of males. However, it is quite encouraging to note that the Bulawayo Agenda has gender policy that directs women participation all their activities.The space is also characterised by relatively low levels of Youth participation. However, the Bulawayo Agenda has a youth policy that encourages youth participation in the public sphere.The Bulawayo Chapter of the public sphere platform suffers low participation by tribal and racial minorities. This in a way renders it an exclusionary space.

The public sphere platform generally attracts people who are well educated, as depicted the educational qualifications of the respondents to this study. This further betrays the 'elitist' nature of this public sphere.

The appropriation of social media has enabled this public sphere space to expand. The cyber space and physical space have been successfully fused to create an extended public sphere platform.In this space, print media publications are significant public sphere platforms, that complement the role of public meetings. However, the print media has declined as a public sphere platform. This decline stems from the withering of the "The Agenda" which is the organisation's major print media publication. Therefore the print media now plays a limited role in complementing the public sphere role of public meetings.The ideas festival is one of Bulawayo Agenda's most significant public Sphere platforms. However, the Ideas Festival is a public sphere that is widely utilised by civil society organizations but not well known by ordinary citizens. Therefore, it may be construed as an elitist space that has been invaded by civil society organisations that seek to showcase themselves.

The autonomy of this communicative space has been seriously compromised by foreign funding which emanates mostly from western countries and organizations.The publicness of the sphere has been lost to donor organizations, as 'donor driven' topics have colonised Bulawayo Agenda's public sphere platforms.

This space enjoys some level of autonomy form the state. The majority of citizens who participate in this space do so freely without fear of state authorities.The communicative space has operated without much direct confrontation or interference from the state.However, the space is not totally autonomous from the state's restrive legal instruments such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and Public order and Security Act (POSA), indirectly usurp the autonomy of this space. To a certain degree, this communicative space operates in a non-partisan manner. However, in reality elements of political partisanship have been exhibited by this communicative space.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Having summarised major findings, the Chapter now proceeds to make recommendations based on the findings.

There is need to put in place mechanisms that guarantee that the discussions at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings become more critical and rational. They should meet the standard expected of an ideal public sphere in the Habermasian sense. This can be achieved by casting the net wider when looking for moderators. There is need to look for high quality moderators who are of high integrity and have the capacity to control the flow of debates, so as to keep them critical and rational. The researcher also recommends that the Bulawayo Agenda should improve its topic formulation process. Instead of using technical mechanisms like 'scanning the environment' to formulate topics, they should simply ask ordinary people the topics that they want to be discussed. The organization also needs to consult ordinary people to assist them to decide on the most suitable venues and the most appropriate times for their meetings. The researcher also proposes that the organization holds some of the public meetings in the high density suburbs where the majority of Bulawayo's residents reside. This might go a long way in promoting the accessibility of these meetings to ordinary people, hence enhancing their participation The researcher also recommends that, since the organization has come up with a deliberate policy to promote the participation of women and youths in the Bulawayo Agenda activities, the same policy should be extended to the minority racial and tribal groups in the Bulawayo Chapter. This will go a long way in creating an inclusive public sphere.

It is further recommended that Bulawayo Agenda partners with mainstream media institutions for the coverage of their public meetings. This coverage can go a long way in putting the opinions generated at Bulawayo Agenda in the public domain. The publicising of these opinions can go a long way in making sure that they get to policymakers and be considered in policy formulation. The researcher also recommends that, Bulawayo Agenda needs to exploit the use of new media technologies much more that the organization is currently doing. For instance, the Bulawayo Agenda's website is not very active and is not being

optimally used as a public sphere platform. Therefore, there is need to maximize on the potential that these new media technologies provide for participation, as a way of complementing the role of public meetings. On that note, the researcher further proposes that, the withering Bulawayo Agenda print media publication, "*The Agenda*" needs to establish an online edition. It is the researcher's belief that this can result in the publication having more content and being a more viable public sphere platform.

The researcher also proposes that the organization needs to limit the participation of pressure groups and other civil society groups in its public meetings. It is the researcher's belief that, this public sphere should mainly be for individual views of ordinary citizens not institutional view points. It can be argued that institutional view points tend to be elitist and have the potential to drown the people's agenda. The Bulawayo Agenda also needs to aggressively publicise all its activities using all the media platforms at its disposal. The researcher believes the organization is no longer as visible as it was, members of the public are largely unaware of its public sphere activities such as the Ideas Festival. The organization's information department can also come up with initiatives to increase the public awareness of their activities. For instance, they can conduct road shows, competitions and other initiatives aimed at improving the organization's visibility.

The researcher further proposes that Bulawayo Agenda limits its reliance on foreign donors for funding. This might be a very difficult proposition in an African context, given the dire shortage of financial resources locally. However, the organization needs to come up with innovative means of mobilising resources locally without deviating from its non-profit making principles. The researcher believes that, foreign funding is the major factor that prevents the organization from operating as an autonomous public sphere, hence the need to limit it.Lastly, the researcher proposes that Bulawayo Agenda should totally disassociate itself from partisan politics. In Habermasian terms, an ideal public sphere platform should allow diverse views. However, involvement in partisan politics is one of the greatest threats to the creation of a diverse, inclusive and vibrant public sphere.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

From the above findings one may conclude that

Civil society communicative spaces such as Bulawayo Agenda are crucial spaces in democratic societies. They provide platforms where opinions are articulated and help in nation building. Civil Society discursive

spaces have the potential to consolidate the democratization of not only Zimbabwe but Africa as a whole. These communicative platforms can be harnessed for the formation of true public opinion on various issues of importance. If left to thrive and the opinions generated in these forums are taken heed of, civil society communicative spaces such as Bulawayo Agenda can play a vital role in national policy formulation Civil society communicative spaces such as Bulawayo Agenda are a viable alternative to the mainstream media. They are a platform for views that do not find space in the mainstream media. Civil Society Communicative Spaces like Bulawayo Agenda give the Subaltern classes such as women and Youths Special focus and give them the opportunities to speak to power through institutions and individuals who represent power. It was noted, however, there are some undesirable characteristics that erode that claim of civil society communicative spaces such as Bulawayo Agenda to be an ideal public sphere.

For instance, it was noted that the Bulawayo Agenda, some elitist tendencies have crept into Bulawayo Agenda. These elitist tendencies such as holding public meetings at venues that are not accessible to the ordinary people tend to shut out the voices of ordinary people from the public sphere. It was also noted that the Bulawayo Agenda has been hijacked by 'hegemonic forces' such as political parties, pressure groups and western donors. These forces tend to impose their agendas on the Bulawayo Agenda, hence thwarting the people's agenda. However, the researcher's overall conclusion is that, despite its short comings, the Bulawayo Agenda communicative space approaches something close to a 'Greek Agora' on which the public sphere concept was founded. There is some kind of recreation of the 17th century political clubs, coffee houses, saloons and pubs as citizens meet at Bulawayo Agenda to deliberate on pertinent issues of the day.

6.5 Areas requiring further study

This study does not exhaust all the areas related to civil society as public sphere. The following are some of the areas that may require further study. The appropriation of new media technologies as public sphere platforms by civil society organizations. An investigation into the extent to which civil society communicative spaces can be considered as subaltern spaces. An indepth evaluation of the autonomy of civil society communicative spaces.

6.6 CONCLUSION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter presented a summary of findings, made recommendations based on the findings. It also made conclusions from the findings and pointed out areas requiring further study.

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Key informant interviewee on 7 October 2014

APPENDIX 1
RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Questionnaire for Participants

This questionnaire consists of section A, B, C and D. Please answer the questions in all sections by either ticking the appropriate box or filling the spaces provided.

SECTION A

Demographic details

Please tick the appropriate box to indicate your answer?

1. Indicate your category

   a) Panellist

   b) Moderator

   c) Information officer

   d) Participant

   e) Key information interviewee

   f) None of the above

2. For how long have you participated in Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings?

   Less than 3 years

   3 years to less than 6 years

   6 years to less than 9 years

   Over 9 years

3. Indicate your age please

   Less than 18 years

   18 to less than 25

   25 to less than 32

   32 to less than 39

   39 to less than 46

   Over 46

4. Please indicate your gender

   Female   Male

5. Please indicate your highest educational qualification

Primary school level ☐

Junior Certificate level ☐

O' Level ☐

Diploma ☐

Degree ☐

6. Please state you area of speciality ……………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

7. Please indicate your ethnicity race

Black ☐   White ☐   Coloured ☐

Asian ☐

8. Please indicate your home language

Ndebele ☐   Tonga ☐   Venda ☐

Shona ☐   Kalanga ☐   Tonga ☐

Other, please specify …………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION B

Concepts of public sphere and Civil Society

1. The mainstream Zimbabwean media (e.g Newspaper, television, radio) give me the chance to

air my views

Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐

☐   134   ☐

Not sure   Disagree

Strongly disagree   [   ]

2. The Bulawayo Agenda is the platform for my views

   Strongly agree   [   ]   Agree   [   ]

   Not sure   [   ]   Disagree   [   ]

   Strongly disagree   [   ]

Section C

Evaluating civil society as public sphere

   1. How did you get to know about Bulawayo Agenda Public Meetings

       Through posters   [   ]   Social Media   [   ]

       Friend   [   ]   Civil Society Meetings   [   ]

       Newspaper advertisement   [   ]

Other specify ……………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

2. Which areas of discussion do you normally participate in

Party politics ☐

Democracy ☐

Children's issues ☐

Local Governance ☐

Election Debates ☐

Economic issues ☐

Other specify……………………………………………………………………………………….

3. How do you participate

Asking questions ☐   Listening ☐

Both asking and listening ☐

Other please specify…………………………………………………………………………….

4. Do you have an input in formulating the discussion topics

Yes ☐   No ☐

5. In your opinion does your participation in Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings influence public perception of events

Yes ☐   No ☐

6. Please indicate the other Bulawayo Agenda communicative platforms that you use apart from public meetings

Social media ☐   Newspaper ☐   Website ☐

Any other specify………………………………………………………………………………..

7. The venues that Bulawayo Agenda normally use for their public meetings are convenient

Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐

☐   ☐

Not sure   Disagree

Strongly disagree   ☐

8. The times during which Bulawayo Agenda conduct their meetings is appropriate

Strongly agree   ☐   Agree   ☐

Not sure   ☐   Disagree   ☐

Strongly disagree   ☐

9. In your opinion do you think the moderators at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings are neutral \

Yes   ☐   No   ☐   Not really ☐

Explain your answer…………………………………………………………………………

10. In your opinion do you think the panellists invited to Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings represent

diverse views

Yes   ☐   No   ☐   Not really ☐

Explain your answer…………………………………………………………………………

11. The language of communication used at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings makes it difficult for

me to participate.

Strongly agree   ☐   Agree   ☐

Not sure   ☐   Disagree   ☐

Strongly disagree   ☐

Section D

Analyzing Civil Society as autonomous communicative spaces

1. Are you free to participate in Bulawayo Agenda public meetings

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

Explain your answer…………………………………………………………………………

2. Are you free to participate in Bulawayo Agenda online media platforms

   Yes ☐   No ☐

   Explain your answer…………………………………………………………………………

3. Are you free to participate in Bulawayo Agenda print media platforms

   Yes ☐   No ☐

   Explain your answer…………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX 2
Questionnaire for Panellists

This Questionnaire Consists Of Section A, B, C And D. Please Answer The Questions In All Sections By Either Ticking The Appropriate Box Or Filling The Spaces Provided.

SECTION A

Demographic details

Please tick the appropriate box to indicate your answer?

9. Indicate your category

   g) Panellist ☐

   h) Moderator ☐

   i) Information officer ☐

   j) Participant ☐

   k) Key information interviewee ☐

   l) None of the above ☐

10. For how long have you participated in Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings?

   Less than 3 years ☐

   3 years to less than 6 years ☐

   6 years to less than 9 years ☐

   Over 9 years ☐

11. Do you participate as an individual or representing an organisation

   Individual ☐   organisation ☐

   If coming as a member of an organisation please state the name of the organisation

   ………………………………………………………………………………………………

12. Indicate your age please

   Less than 18 years ☐

   18 to less than 25 ☐

   25 to less than 32 ☐

   32 to less than 39 ☐

   39 to less than 46 ☐

   Over 46 ☐

13. Please indicate your gender

   Female ☐   Male ☐

14. Please indicate your highest educational qualification

   Primary school level   ☐

   Junior Certificate level   ☐

   O' Level   ☐

   Diploma   ☐

   Degree

15. Please state you area of speciality ……………………………………………………………

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

16. Please indicate your ethnicity race

   Black ☐   White ☐   Coloured ☐

   Asian ☐

17. Please indicate your home language

   Ndebele ☐   Tonga ☐   Venda ☐

   Shona ☐   Kalanga ☐   Tonga ☐

   Other, please specify ……………………………………………………………………..

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION B

Concepts of civil society and public sphere

1. The mainstream media give policy makers a platform to meaningfully engage with

   Strongly agree   ☐   Agree   ☐

   Not sure   ☐   Disagree   ☐

   Strongly disagree ☐

2. The Bulawayo Agenda is an alternative public sphere platform that enables policy makers to

   meaningfully engage with citizens

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐

Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐

Strongly disagree ☐

SECTION C

1. What mode of communication does Bulawayo Agenda use to invite you to participate in their public

   meetings

   Formal letters ☐ Telephone ☐

   Social media ☐

   Any other please

   explain……………………………………………………………………………….

2. Do you have an input in formulating the Agenda of Bulawayo Agenda public meetings

Yes ☐　　　　　　　　　　No ☐

3. In your opinion do participants at Bulawayo Agenda public meeting engage in critical and rational debates

Yes ☐　　　　　　　　　　No ☐

Explain your answer……………………………………………………………………

4. In your opinion has your participation at Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings enabled citizens to better understand your individual/institutional viewpoints

Yes ☐　　　　　　　　　　No ☐

Explain your answer……………………………………………………………………

5. In your own opinion do you think moderators at Bulawayo Agenda Public meetings are neutral

Yes ☐　　　　　　　　No ☐　　　　　　　Not always ☐

Explain your answer……………………………………………………………………

6. Besides public meetings which other Bulawayo Agenda Communicative platforms do you use to engage citizens

Social media ☐　　　　　website ☐　　　　　print media ☐

Any other specify……………………………………………………………………

Section D

Analyzing the autonomy of civil society communicative spaces

1. Does Bulawayo Agenda pay you for participating as a panellists at their public meetings

Yes ☐　　　　　　　　　　No ☐

2. Do authorities at Bulawayo Agenda in any way influence the views that you give at public meetings

　　　　　　　　Yes ☐　　　　　　　No ☐

3. Do you feel free to participate at Bulawayo Agenda as a panelist

Yes ☐　　　　No ☐　　　　　Not Really ☐

4. In your opinion do you think Bulawayo Agenda is non-partisan communicative space

   Yes ☐   No ☐   Not always ☐

   Please explain your answer……………………………………………………………………..

5. Have you ever felt threatened by political forces for being a panelist at Bulawayo Agenda Public

   meetings

   Yes ☐   No ☐

   If your answer to the above question is Yes, Please explain…………………………………………

APPENDIX 3
Interview Guide for Moderators

1. What is your highest educational qualification ?

2. What is your area of specialty?

3. What is your current profession?

4. For how long have you been in this profession?

5. How many times have you been invited to moderate at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings?

6. What do you understand by the term public sphere?

7. How do you understand the concept of civil society?

8. Do you think Bulawayo Agenda is a platform that enables participants to engage in critical and rational debate?

9. In your opinion do you think panelists who are invited to Bulawayo Agenda public meetings represent diverse views?

10. Besides public meetings which other Bulawayo Agenda communicative platforms do you use to engage with citizens?

11. Do you have an input in formulating the agenda at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings?

12. Does Bulawayo Agenda pay you for moderating at their public meetings?

13. Do authorities at Bulawayo Agenda in any way influence how you moderate at their public meetings?

14. Do you feel free to moderate at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings?

15. Do you think Bulawayo Agenda is a non-partisan communicative space?

16. Have you ever felt threatened by political forces for moderating at Bulawayo Agenda public meetings?

APPENDIX 4
Interview Guide for the Information Officer

1. What is your highest educational qualifications?

2. What is your area of speciality?

3. What is your post in the Bulawayo Agenda information department?

4. How long have you been in this post?

5. Can you please briefly tell me about your organisation

6. Can you please explain your role as a public sphere platform from 2008 to present

7. Who decides the topics that are discussed at your public meetings?

8. What criteria do you use to select panellists and moderators who conduct your public meetings?

9. What is the level of participation by women in your communication platforms?

10. How much do minority groups participate in your communication platforms?

11. Apart from public meetings what other communication platforms do you offer to citizens?

12. To what extent have embraced new media technologies as an organisation?

13. Who funds your activities?

14. Do your funders influence your operations?

15. Is your organisation aligned to any political party?

16. How autonomous are you from the state?

APPENDIX 5
Interview Guide for the Key Informant Interviewee

1. What is your highest educational qualification ?

2. What is your area of specialty?

3. What is your current profession?

4. For how long have you been in this profession?

5. What do you understand by the term public sphere?

6. How do you understand the concept of civil society?

7. To what extent can the Zimbabwean civil society be characterized as public sphere?

8. With reference to Bulawayo Agenda, how do you characterize it as a public sphere platform?

9. To what extent are civil society communicative spaces autonomous?