

**From Manipulation to Citizen Control: A Case Study Revealing the Level of Participation
in the Citizen Participatory Audit**

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Abstract

Participation promises an avenue for citizens to take part in governance, but it does not necessarily mean effective participation. Various studies have highlighted the importance of properly integrating participants in the decision-making process to ensure effectiveness. This study explores the integration of the participants in the decision-making process to reveal the level of participation in the Solid Waste Management audit done by the Citizen Participatory Audit (CPA). Specifically, this study will use the experience of participation to identify emerging themes that will help reveal the level of participation through the integrated ladder of participation. The researchers used key informant interviews to gather necessary data from the actors of the program. The findings revealed that the level of participation present in the CPA is at the Placation level. The study also allowed the researchers to reveal facilitating factors in the program that contributed to a better understanding of participation.

I. Introduction

A. Rationale

While participation promises an avenue for the citizens to be part of the process of governance, it does not necessarily mean that the practice of participation is effective. Determining the extent of this involvement and understanding how this translates to the decision-making process should follow in order to determine whether a participatory initiative is really effective. Tristan Claridge (2004), and Andrea Cornwall and John Gaventa (2001) claim that proper integration of the citizens in the process of decision-making is important because it addresses one of the main issues of participation which is to use of the presence of citizens to rubber stamp and provide legitimacy to government actions. This issue bears significance on whether a participatory initiative succeeds or fails, as well as to its sustainability.

In 2012, the COA partnered with Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP), a non-government agency, for assistance in organizing the Citizen Participatory Audit (CPA) (COA, 2015). The CPA is a mechanism for strategic partnership that empowers the citizens to shape audit agendas as well as to conduct audit along with the auditors, with the objective to change the low compliance rate of the different government sectors being audited. In the CPA, the main goal is to not merely consult the citizens in matters of governance, but rather engage them in an active exchange of ideas to further improve the quality of audits (ANSA-EAP, 2014). However, in an article by the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (2015), the section regarding the impact of the CPA revealed that the evidence regarding the success of the program is only limited to anecdotes. There are no surveys or academic studies that prove that the COA was able to integrate the participants to the audit process properly.

Ruth Carlitz (2012) claims in her review that there is a need to understand how participatory initiatives may empower citizens and help attain its goals and objectives. She said that “studies regarding participatory budgeting and social audits tend to focus more on quantitative outcomes than on the experience of participation”. Studies focusing on the experience of participation also give a better understanding on how to create an effective participatory initiative because these studies touch topics that are not commonly covered by

either quantitative studies, outcome evaluations or impact studies. These topics are essential in understanding how such participatory initiatives may achieve their stated goals.

B. Research Problem

Although existing studies have evaluated government participatory initiatives, most of these studies focused on its outcome and impacts rather than on the level of participation itself, which the researchers argue to be a necessary aspect in fully understanding participation and how participatory initiatives succeed.

C. Research Questions

The main research question the study is addressing is: What is the level of participation in the CPA? In this regard, the supplementary research questions are as follows:

- 1) How do the actors define participation in the context of CPA?
- 2) How do the actors define and understand their role in the program?
- 3) What facilitating factors to effective participation do the actors experience during the CPA's activities?
- 4) What measures can be recommended to improve the program?

D. Research Objectives

The main research objective of the study is to reveal the level of participation in the CPA. The other research objectives are as follows:

- 1) To explore how the actors define and understand participation in the context of CPA
- 2) To reveal how the actors define and understand their role in the program
- 3) To identify what facilitating factors to effective citizen participation have the actors experienced during the program's activities
- 4) To make recommendations towards improving the program.

E. Significance of the Research

The researchers believe that the study will contribute to better policy and decision-making of the COA towards the future of the program. The findings will also serve as a guide in further improving the different program areas involved in engaging citizens. Moreover, the study bears significance to other academics that will be conducting studies regarding the subject matter

by adding to the limited literature regarding the experience of participation, especially in the context of the Philippines.

By focusing on the citizen participation aspect of the CPA, the study further enriches the limited studies that attempt to map how these types of initiatives attain its goals and objectives through citizen participation. Lastly, the study will be able to operationalize the different prevailing theories in participatory initiatives and look at their strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, this will provide an avenue to explore other emerging themes in the field of citizen participation.

II. Review of Related Literature

A. Participation

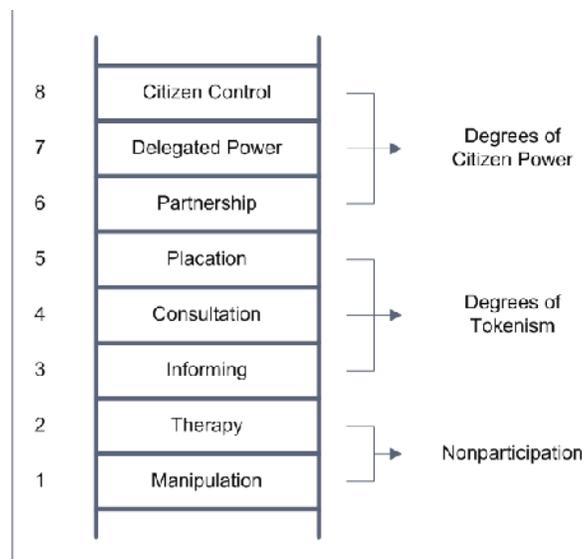
Citizen participation in government has been considered to be traditionally centered on measures to facilitate greater public access to information about government, enhance the rights of citizens to be consulted on matters which directly affect them, and ensure that all voices can be heard equally through fair systems of representative democracy. However, changes in administration approach, from government to governance, affected the scope and definition of citizen participation. This shift resulted to the widening of the definition and scope of citizen participation resulting to government having an active role in enabling capacity building in communities when it comes to citizen participation (Aulich, 2009). This also resulted in shifting the focus of participatory initiatives to the decision-making process. Rachel Slocum and Barbara Thomas-Slayter (1995), as cited by Azizan Marzuki (2015), posit that citizen participation is a means to convey individual and the society's personal interests and concerns with regard to the development plans. By participating in the decision-making process, the citizens realizes the importance of their involvement in deciding their future. Cristina Haruta and Bianca Radu (2010), echoes the sentiments of various scholars regarding citizen participation and the decision-making process. They consider citizen participation as a process of bringing the government closer to the people. This enables citizens to determine policy goals and priorities, to oversee the actions of the politicians and administrators and to hold them accountable for their actions, express points of view, share information and point to their needs and problems by getting involved in the decision-making process.

B. Ladder of Participation

1. Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

Arnstein (1969) posits that there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of citizen participation and having the power to affect the outcome of the process. She claims that participation without the proper redistribution of power is empty and frustrating process for the powerless. Participation without power redistribution does not affirm the principles of citizen participation because only the power-holders decide on the matters that affect the participants. This is why it is important to be able to determine the extent of citizen's power in determining the outcomes of decision-making. She provided a typology for citizen participation based on the extent of citizen's power in determining the outcomes of decision-making.

Figure 2.2 Arnstein's Ladder of Participation



Source: A Ladder of Citizen Participation by Sherry Arnstein (1969)

The first two levels at the bottom of the ladder, manipulation and therapy, are labeled as “non-participation” levels. The focus in these levels is on educating the citizens rather than enabling them to participate. Manipulation refers to the illusory participation created when people are provided roles for collaboration for the express purpose of educating them or generating their support. Therapy, on the other hand, refers to a type of conditioning that leads

participants to believe that they are engaged in extensive activity, yet the focus of it is to “cure” them of thinking anything unwanted by the powerholders.

The next three levels - informing, consulting, and placation - advance the degrees of tokenism. Tokenism is defined as a perfunctory gesture to create the appearance of inclusiveness. At the informing stage, citizens are made aware of their rights, responsibilities and options in participation. Once they advance to consulting, citizens are given a chance to hear and be heard but there is no follow-through; there is no “muscle” that can serve as assurance that their side will be considered by decision-makers. The last stage under tokenism is placation, which is where citizens begin to have some degree of influence. The placation stage advances in a way that citizens can now advise decision-makers, yet the power to make decisions is still retained by the government.

The last three levels - partnership, delegated power and citizen control - spell out the increasing power of the citizens in decision-making. At the partnership level of the ladder, power is in fact redistributed through negotiations between citizens and powerholders. Planning and decision-making policies are shared through joint mechanisms for preparation, policies and resolving conflicts. The level where there is delegated power refers to the point where citizens now hold the significant factors to assure the program’s accountability towards them. If there are differences to be resolved, the powerholders will be the ones to start the bargaining process instead of simply responding from their end. The final stage of the ladder, citizen control, provides citizens with the majority of decision-making seats, if not full managerial power, which ensures that citizen initiatives are prioritized and acted upon.

2. Wiedemann and Femers’ Ladder of Participation

Peter Wiedemann and Susanne Femers (1993) conducted research on the analysis and management of conflicts in public participation involving cases over waste management. Their findings allowed them to present an organized ladder classifying the degree of public involvement that could be found in public participation.

The steps in this ladder include (1) the public right to know, (2) informing the public, (3) the public right to object, (4) public participation in defining interests and determining the agenda, (5) public participation in assessing risk and recommending solutions, and (6) public partnership in decision-making. For example, "informing the public" meant distributing

information to concerned citizens about issues relevant to a planned waste disposal site. In another case, citizen groups were invited to discuss and define relevant issues on the plans of the decision-makers, putting perspective to the fourth step of the ladder, where there is public participation in defining interests and determining the agenda. A third case showed that participation procedures were sought to involve initiatives of citizens in assessing the risks associated with the new waste management technology; which presents the fifth step of the ladder, public participation in assessing risk and recommending solutions. Lastly, the fourth case revealed that citizens were partners not only active in choosing criteria to evaluate waste disposal sites, but also in reaching and supporting the final decision itself (sixth step of the ladder, public partnership in decision-making).

C. Themes Relevant to the Study

1. Motivation

In order to have successful citizen participation, citizens should first be motivated to contribute. Participation will not be initiated by citizens if they feel a sense of an apathetic government. They must be convinced first that the government will listen to their concerns and needs, and at the same time consider these concerns during the decision-making process. Providing an avenue where citizens can freely express their views and suggestions on how the government should respond will decrease the sense of distrust and increase participation (Cupps, 1977). Moreover, Zlata Ploštajner and Ivona Mendeš (2004) support the claim that when it comes to citizen participation, the citizens must become interested and motivated in involvement. They become motivated if they get a feeling that their voice counts, and that they can influence the situation and the course of action. They have to be provided with an opportunity to speak freely about everything that bothers them, and their opinions have to be treated with due attention.

One of Goncalves et al.'s (2013) case studies focused on three constructs of psychological empowerment important in motivating citizens to participate, namely perceived self-efficacy, sense of community and causal importance. They hypothesize that increased levels of these three constructs will lead to increased participation and increase the perceived service quality because the participants will feel ownership and responsibility for the public service as they engage with it. Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves and

behave (Bandura, 1992). Citizens with strong beliefs in their capabilities approach tasks with the assurance that they can exercise control over it, which can further increase citizen participation (Ohmer, 2007). Sense of community describes the relationship between the individual and the social structure. For instance, in the study of neighborhood communities, researchers have found residents' identification with the neighborhood to be a major determinant of residents' involvement in local organizations (Wandersman and Florin, 2000, as cited by Goncalves et al., 2013). Finally, causal importance reflects an individual's beliefs about the relationship between actions and outcomes. Causal importance suggests that individuals believe they exert influence through their actions (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988, as cited by Goncalves et al., 2013). A sense of causal importance has been shown to be a factor in motivating citizens leading to increased citizen participation (Pettersen, 1999, as cited by Goncalves et al., 2013).

2. Power relations

Gaventa (2006) defines power as an infinite resource; something that can be used, shared or created by actors and their systems in a number of different ways. While some may see power as a negative trait by believing that holding power means exercising control over others, others see power to be more concerned with capacity and agency to be exercised for positive action. Gaventa also examined the dynamics of power in the context of participation, allowing him to distinguish between three forms of power. The first of these forms is called visible power, which includes the definable aspects of political power such as the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of decision making. The second form of power is called hidden power, or the form that sets the political agenda. Some powerholders maintain their influence by controlling who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda. The last form of power is invisible power, the form that deals with shaping meaning along with what is and is not acceptable. Considered as the most dangerous form, Gaventa describes this form as power that shapes the psychological and ideological boundaries of participation. It is in this form that significant problems and issues can be kept not just from the decision-making table, but also from the minds and consciousness of the different actors involved.

D. Summary of Main Points

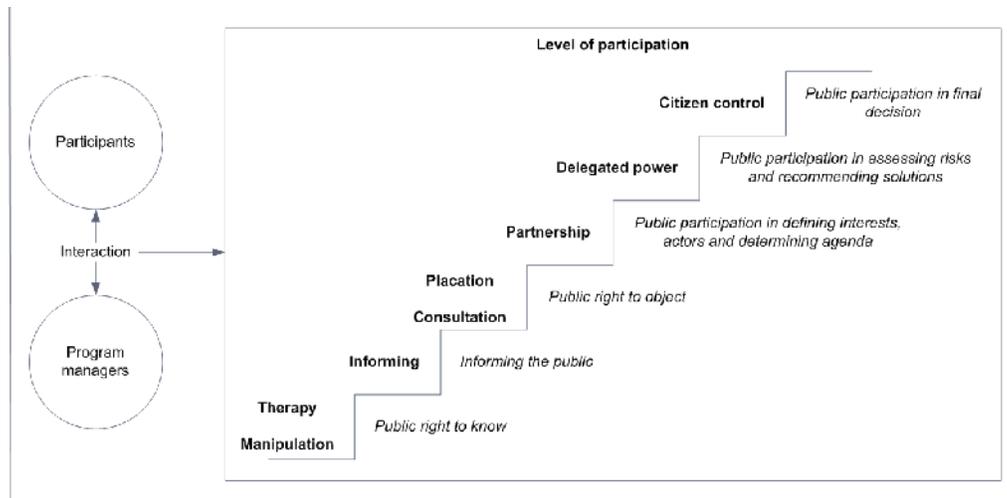
Participation is generally defined as a means to enable public access to information, boost the rights of participants by asking their opinion on issues directly concerning them, and guarantee that they have a voice to be heard equally. It mostly concerned with integrating participants in the decision-making process. Those who participate in the decision-making process are more likely to get their concerns addressed simply because they are able to share their needs and problems; and in the context of government, it also helps the government strengthen their relationship with the participants by enabling them to determine policy goals and priorities.

Arnstein's ladder of participation focused on creating a typology for participation based on the participants' power in determining the outcomes of decision-making. Arnstein's version had eight rungs divided into three clusters; non-participation, degrees of tokenism, and degrees of citizen power. Wiedemann and Femers' ladder, on the other hand, only contained six stages and used an administrative orientation based on a spectrum that starts from education to joint decision-making. Their version focused on emphasizing the relationship between participation and information; wherein participation increases with the citizens' access to information and the rights they have in the decision-making process.

The last section of the review centered on two (2) themes evident in the literature regarding the challenges in participation and the decision-making process; namely motivation and power relations. Motivation is necessary for successful participation as participants should first be motivated to contribute. One study claimed that participants will be better motivated if they are convinced that their concerns will not only be heard but considered as well; or when the goals of the program support their personal interests. Power relations include defining spaces, actors, agendas and processes which are usually in the hands of governmental institutions or organizations and can serve as barriers for effective participation.

III. Framework

Figure 3.1 Integrated level of participation model of Arnstein, Wiedemann, and Femers and the concept of Interaction



A. Framework

Figure 3.1 illustrates the integrated framework of Arnstein and Wiedemann and Femers, along with the concept of interaction (facilitating factors of participation) as presented by previous literature. This serves as a guide in determining the level of participation of the actors in SWM-CPA (as defined by the ladder) through understanding the interaction between the participants and program managers directly involved in the program.

The concept of interaction refers to the different instances of formal and informal interaction between the participants and the program managers, where the sub-concepts of power relations and motivations are apparent according to the literature. Various studies (Carlitz, 2012; Gershman, 2013) highlight the importance of exploring the experience of participation to fully understand the most effective ways of involving participants in the decision-making process. However, the present study is not limited to the aforementioned sub-concepts of interaction (brought about by existing research literature) since it is highly qualitative and interpretative in nature. The present study is open to emergent sub-concepts under the bigger concept of interaction.

In order to determine the level of participation, the framework uses an integrated ladder of participation based on the works of Arnstein, and Wiedemann and Femers. Combining the two ladders of participation is necessary because by combining the ladders, the framework can properly provide a means to reveal the level of participation in the SWM-CPA based not only on the design of the program, but also based on the interaction between the participants and program managers (experience of participation). This is because the framework now identifies the specific

entry points for participation in the decision-making process. Defining the entry points for participation in the decision-making process is important in revealing the level of participation because it relates Arnstein’s ladder to the context of the study. It provides for the indicators that are necessary to be able to determine if a level of participation is attained. This results in a more open framework that can account for the different actors and relationships within the context being studied, which is something beyond the grasp of Arnstein’s ladder due to its heavy focus on the citizen power in the program.

B. Concepts and Indicators

Figure 3.2 identifies the different concepts and indicators used in the framework. These concepts and indicators apply to the integrated ladder of participation found within the framework of the study. This will guide the framework in revealing the level of participation by providing for the concepts and indicators to be used in giving meaning to the experience of participation.

Figure 3.2 Concepts and Indicators used in the Framework

Concepts	Indicators
Participation in final decision (Citizen control)	Participants occupy the majority of the decision-making process. This ensures that citizen initiatives are prioritized and acted upon.
Participation in assessing risks and recommending solutions (Delegated power)	This exists when citizens can assure accountability of a program by achieving dominant decision-making authority over the plan or program. The process of bargaining is done and initiated by the program managers to resolve differences instead of simply responding from their end.
Partnership in defining interests, actors and determining agenda (Partnership)	Agreement to share planning and decision-making responsibilities. This also implies that program managers recognize the participants’ ability in formulating solutions and incorporate their recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
Placation (Public right to object)	Citizens begin to gain influence through joint sessions but they can still be outnumbered or overruled, particularly when their opinions are unfavourable from the perspective of professional planners.
Consultation (Public right to object)	Provides for a two-way flow of information. However, public input gathered is rarely taken into account (Arnstein, 1969). This includes giving the participants the necessary avenue to voice out their concerns regarding the program, regardless whether or not their concerns are addressed or heard.
Informing the public (Informing)	Information flows from public officials to the citizens with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiations. In the context of the study, this implies that the participants are given the necessary information about the program’s goals and objectives with complete information regarding their roles in the program.
Therapy (Public right to know)	Therapy assumes that the public is incapable of decision-making and those in power subject citizens to paternalistic education exercises or clinical group therapy as a form of enlightenment.
Manipulation (Public right to know)	Influencing the public in gaining support through the use of propaganda. This means that the participants are merely placeholders in the program, being there for the express purpose of educating them or engineering their support.

Source: Arnstein (1969) and Brooke and Harris (2008; as cited by Gershman, 2013)

IV. Methodology

A. Research Design and Methods

The study is qualitative in nature because this particular research methodology allowed the researchers to focus on the experience of participation to extract the necessary information in revealing the level of participation in the CPA. Qualitative research is a methodology used to develop an explanatory concept for the purpose of explaining a phenomenon. According to Crawford (2008; as cited by Hartley, 2013), qualitative data gives rich descriptions of complex contexts, processes, actions and interactions. Because of this, qualitative research method is appropriate when a study aims to understand and explain a phenomenon within the context. In this study, the CPA is defined as the context while the experiences of participation of the different actors are considered to be the different processes within the context. The phenomenon being studied is the process of participation. These two components guide the process of revealing the level of participation of the CPA.

B. Research Instrument

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were used to gather the data needed for the study. The respondents of KIIs are people with first-hand knowledge regarding the topic of interest. The KII is useful in situations where there is a need to understand motivation, behavior and perspectives of the people in a particular context. In this study, the perspective and experience of the different actors involved in the participatory initiative were used to reveal the level of participation. The study tried to be as comprehensive as possible when it came to the number of people interviewed; however, time constraints, conflicts in schedule and personal matters (especially from the citizen participants) heavily affected this attempt.

C. Data Analysis

A latent level of analysis was employed in the study to allow for a more interpretative analysis that is concerned with what the respondents of the interview said, as well as what may have been inferred or implied by the statement. The data analyzed came from the interviews of the actors involved in the CPA, as well as from secondary information sources such as related documents from the COA and ANSA-EAP regarding and related to the program. A constant comparative analysis of the interview transcripts and the data collected from the content analysis of related documents was done in order to better develop the findings of the study. Constant

comparative analysis involves progressive focusing, which is the process of gradually refining the focus of the study. This may be done through continuously reading and interpreting the data collected throughout the project. This was done thoroughly and repeatedly alongside the data analysis process to ensure the consistency and validity of categorization used, as well as consistency and validity of the findings. This was also used to reveal the different themes relevant to the study. A case-oriented understanding, guided by the study's framework (Arnstein's and Wiedemann and Femers' ladders of participation), was employed in order to reveal the level of participation in the CPA. Case-oriented understanding is an analysis technique concerned with the understanding of social processes in a particular context that reflects accurately the standpoint of the actors within the context. This particular data analysis technique heavily compliments the rationale and theme of the study of revealing the level of participation by using the accounts of the actors regarding their experience of participation.

V. Results and Discussions

A. Document Analysis

Based on the documents reviewed, it is clear that the type of participation the CPA planned to foster in the program was centered on partnership building. In the CPA, they planned for a type of participation where the actors within the initiative have the same access to information, are bound by the same protocols, and are required to participate in the entire audit process wherein their input on the methodologies and approaches used in the program are given equal weight. During every step of the audit process - partnership building, preliminary meetings, planning and audit execution, exit conferences and follow-up activities – it is important that the actors, especially the citizen participants, are provided avenues for their voices to be heard and for their suggestions and recommendations to be considered. They are assigned roles in every step of the process to ensure full participation and strengthen transparency in the program. At the same time, the citizen participants are expected to follow the policies of the standard audit process at all times just like any other auditor of the COA.

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation provides a typology for citizen participation based on the degree of power the citizen was provided or was able to achieve in a certain project or program. Given the CPA's focus on the role of the citizen auditors, the citizen participation present in the program is considered to be on the sixth level of the ladder, partnership. This

happens when there is an “agreement to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as joint policy-boards, planning committees and mechanisms for resolving impasses” (Arnstein, 1969, as cited by Gershman, 2013). This means that this is reflected in the role of the participants in the process of defining interests, actors and defining agenda.

B. Interview Analysis

This section will discuss the findings in reference to the ladders of participation mentioned in the framework of the study. The experience of the actors and the corresponding ladder of participation will be discussed chronologically as how the events took place in the program.

1. Manipulation and Therapy

The first two levels of participation, Manipulation and Therapy, do not have any corresponding activities in the CPA according to the experiences of the actors. This is because these two levels are facets of non-participation centered on either deception or incomplete sharing of information. This was not exhibited in the experience of participation due to the fact that the first highlighted event in their experience was an orientation regarding the complete details of the program, as well as their respective roles and duties.

2. Informing

The informing level of participation was met in the program due to the said orientation done to properly introduce and inform the participants regarding the various facets of the CPA. This clearly manifested the intent of the program managers to provide the participants complete information regarding their roles and duties in the program. Furthermore, capacity building and skills training were done in this stage of the program through a number of succeeding meetings between the participants and representatives from both the COA and ANSA-EAP.

3. Consultation and Placation

According to the experiences of the actors, the Consultation level was reached during the latter half of the sessions pertaining to task orientation as their opinions regarding the questionnaires and data gathering strategy to be used were asked. The participants were asked

regarding the quality of the questionnaires; they were also asked about the feasibility of the current data gathering strategy which was to create focus group discussions. One participant raised that people might be opposed to join focus group discussions especially since the topic was about waste disposal, and after a discussion the decision was made to use house-to-house interviews instead which was based on the suggestion of that participant. The fact that there was an attempt by the program managers to allow the participants to voice out their concerns regarding the tasks and activities being given to them manifested the Consultation level, regardless of whether their opinions would be considered or not. The Placation level was attained when these opinions were accepted and put into action; because that put the participants in a position where they can, to a minimal extent, influence a decision-making process in the program.

The actual data-gathering process exhibited more displays of the Placation level of participation. At one point in the data-gathering process, Kapit-Bisig voiced out their difficulty in surveying because the sampling process required them to count twenty (20) houses from the last household they interviewed, and considering the size of some subdivisions, it would take too much time and energy to travel from one house to the next. They consulted this with the COA and ANSA-EAP which led to the sample count being lessened to ten (10). There was also a request from their group to adjust the arrival of the transportation vehicles from 8 a.m. to 7 a.m. because along the course of the data gathering, they figured that it was not ideal to conduct the interviews during lunch time. Another point that Kapit-Bisig raised was about the supposed food and transportation allowance and their rate per questionnaire. Initially, COA said that the allowances will be given to them at the end of the program due to bureaucratic processes. However, Kapit-Bisig argued that they need the allowance promptly because they will be spending it daily as opposed to a one-time payment at the end. Eventually, they agreed and settled to receive half of the allowance then and the other half at the end of the program. These events showed the participants displaying the participation levels of Consultation and Placation as their confidence grows in voicing out their concerns especially since their concerns always receive due action from the program managers.

4. Partnership Level of Participation

It is important to note that in the case of the CPA, the participants should be able to fully participate in the complete joint-auditing process which includes the writing of the final audit report. Drawing from the experience of participation in the CPA, it is quite clear that the participants were not able to reach the level of partnership. After attending post-data gathering meetings wherein a summary report of the data collected was presented to the participants for review and confirmation, the participants were no longer involved in the actual audit report writing which was supposed to be final step and ultimately the main output of the CPA. The joint audit process effectively ended after the post-data gathering meetings as there was no participation involved from the public at all during the creation of the final audit report. A partnership level of participation would require that the participants will not only be present during the audit writing process, but will also be able to add significant input in the report and have a say when it comes to what should and what should not be part of the report, as well as how the report should be written. The events that transpired in this level are not enough to consider a level of partnership since the participation failed to reach the actual decision-making process at the definitive stage of the program which was the audit report writing.

5. Other emerging themes

Based on the researchers' findings, it would seem that Arnstein's framework did not account for the possible emergence of themes not related to power relations between the participants and the managers. This "culture of participation" that materialized among the participants did not include any aspiration for additional power from the very start; it was rooted in non-power-related benefits and self-cultivation through the capacity building efforts of the program. The following segments will provide further discussions on these themes that created a culture of participation different from what Arnstein anticipated when she developed her framework.

1. Sense of pride and achievement

Every single participant that the researchers were able to interview displayed a sense of achievement from their participation in the Citizen Participatory Audit. The participants had different reasons but mostly the sense of achievement comes from being proud of what they were able to do. The participants expressed satisfaction in being able to help others by using the data

gathering process as an avenue to share information regarding what should and should not be done in the context of the SWM program. When asked what they thought was their most important contribution in the program, most of them said that it was how they were able to share information to educate others on how to better take care of the environment. Additionally, the fact that they were the first ones to participate before the institutionalization of the program also gave them a sense of pride. They took pride in accomplishing their tasks under the program because they knew that their execution will be tied to the entire pilot audit's performance.

2. Participation for personal reasons

It was rare during the interviews that a participant would say that the initial reason for her participation was to help the government or COA achieve the program's goals and objectives. Some were interested because of the money; they looked at the CPA as a job instead of an initiative. A couple of participants also stated that they wanted to join the CPA because it gave them a chance to go outdoors again and interact with other people; they missed the enjoyment of doing outdoor activities because the nature of their current jobs (or lack of one) confined them to their rooms and houses. It also gave them an opportunity to talk to people other than their co-workers and friends, an experience that the participants found enjoyable and educational as they learned how to better communicate with people.

3. Sense of community

In the CPA, the participants were sent to gather data from their respective CSO's own communities so that they can use their familiarity with the people and the location to their advantage. This invokes a sense of community in the program as the participants are believed to be better motivated and interested in participation if they are more comfortable in the environment. The relationship between the participants and the social structure was observed as the participants' identification with the locals also significantly affected the quality of the data gathered. According to the participants, the people they talked to were more likely to tell them the truth because they would be ashamed to lie to them due to their personal connections. Similarly, the participants would not be afraid or embarrassed to ask additional questions for probing because of their comfort level with the people in the area. There was an instance, however, that a participant was not sent to a familiar community. Still, the participant's sense of community was shown when she grew more motivated and interested in finding out how the

other communities fared regarding the objectives of the SWM program because she did not see success from her own community. She wanted to take it as an opportunity to learn more about what the other communities were doing better to succeed in the program so that she could share her learnings with her own community.

VI. Summary and Conclusion

This case presents an exploratory approach in studying the level of participation that was present in the SWM-CPA program of the COA. Document review of related documents regarding the said program shows that the program initially targeted the level of partnership. However, paralleling the integrated ladder of participation found in the study's framework, the researchers' findings correspond to the level of placation, which also reflects participation in defining interests and determining the agenda as described by Wiedemann and Femers' ladder. This is because the participants were not able to reach the actual decision-making process at the definitive stage of the program.

When talking about the partnership level of participation, it is important that the participants must be able to participate in the major decision-making process. Although the participants were able to participate in the various decision-making processes in the program, these decision-makings are tokenistic in nature. Tokenistic decision-making processes give the participants decision-making powers but the significance of these things is considered to be minor when compared to the bigger picture. The discussions regarding the park bench problem capture the very essence of the issue at hand. The park bench problem pertains to a participatory situation wherein participants of a park-related participatory initiative are given the opportunity to influence the decision-making processes but the extent of their influence is restricted on deciding which color the park benches should be painted. Although the participants are afforded the opportunity to influence the decision-making process of the initiative when it comes to the management of the park, the resulting increase in the level of participation is considered to be trivial because this increase was not done in a meaningful way. In this case study, the participants were given the opportunity to influence the decision-making on matters regarding the data-gathering instrument to be used and even on the specifics of how to conduct their tasks and activities. However, the fact remains that only their output reached the major decision-making process, which in this case is the audit report writing. What was supposed to be the highlight of the program, according to the analysis of related documents, became an activity

exclusive to the program managers. Nevertheless, it is important to note that reason revealed through the interviews of the program managers is considered to be valid.

The researchers strongly believe that the very nature of the program affected the attainment of the partnership level of participation. Audit report writing is a technical process wherein normal citizens without prior knowledge and training will definitely have a hard time participating in. This may also lead to more problems and hindrances, especially on the side of the program managers, if participation in this level is forced. Given the fact that the program was running on limited resources, it was not logistically feasible to fully and adequately build the capacity of the participants to participate in this level. It is still important to acknowledge the legitimate efforts of the program managers to, as much as possible, provide an adequate space for participation in the CPA, especially during the data-gathering process.

The researchers coined the term “culture of participation” to collectively address the emerging themes due to the fact that almost all of them are related to one another. The term culture of participation was chosen because the different components within this culture were cultivated within the context of the SWM-CPA. The resulting culture of participation exhibited three major themes as observed by the researchers in this study; namely the participants’ (1) sense of pride and achievement, (2) private reasons for participating, and (3) sense of community. The researchers strongly believe that this culture of participation hindered the manifestation of the negative implications of the placation level of participation. According to the participants, their experience in being a part of the CPA helped them develop new skills through training as well as learn a lot of new information from the orientations regarding the CPA and SWM. This left the participants with no signs of regret or frustration but instead a sense of personal growth which they were very satisfied about.

All things considered, the level of participation in the context being studied is very promising. The fact that they were able to reach this and at the same time, cultivate a healthy culture of participation is very remarkable. However, there is always room for improvement. For instance, better attention to detail would really improve the participation in the context being studied. It was discovered by the researchers that a significant number (6 out of 11) of the participants were confused regarding the program. They were not sure if the program was an extension of the SWM program or a stand-alone program of the COA.

In conclusion, while the SWM-CPA may not have reached the partnership level of participation that they were aiming for, the program definitely took a step in the right direction. The SWM-CPA paved the way for a healthy public participation and should be considered as a strong initiative for future programs to model on in order build better relationships between the public and the government.

VII. Recommendations

For this study, the researchers focused on one audit under Phase 1 of the CPA; which was the audit on Quezon City's Solid Waste Management Program. In order to obtain a better understanding of how participation is experienced and what level of participation is normally attained in such programs, future researchers can focus on the other audited programs of Phase 1 or on the audited programs of Phase 2 so that they can also verify if the findings in this study were addressed for the next phase.

Given the lack of study of public participation in general, additional research should also be made on possible cultures of participation that may arise from participatory programs like the context being studied. The recognized ladders of participation from Arnstein and Wiedemann and Femers were not able to take into consideration other sources of motivation from participants as discussed in the emerging themes section of this study. The focuses of their studies were on specific ideas like power relations between the participants and the government, and the levels of decision-making present in a program. These ideas were good observations on how participation was motivated back then and the frameworks resulting from their studies made relevant assessments of the relationship between the participants and the power holders, may it be in the government or private setting. However, the frameworks were also very limiting because they failed to acknowledge that there are many other possible reasons for participants to join and behave in such a way during these initiatives. It would be helpful to reflect on what really drives people to involve themselves in initiatives such as the CPA to gain a better understanding of public participation and help create a framework that can be better suited to define and assess the levels of participation pertinent to a program.