An Exit from the Garbage City:
Resistance and "Chikonko" in Zambian Waste Management

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Abstract

This study examines citizens' responses to exclusions, injustices and power asymmetries in the context of public participatory processes in solid waste management within the Mtendere township in Lusaka, Zambia. Interviews and field observations illuminate experiences of disenfranchisement from public spheres and a collection of everyday resistance practices that bear resemblance to one another through their 'exits' from these spaces taken by the citizens. We show how, and with what implications, Zambia's decentralisation policy toward grassroots structures for planning in solid waste management conditions can be understood as a phenomenon of everyday resistance by the citizens of Lusaka. Accounts of citizens' lived experiences suggest that socio-economic, political affiliation, gender, age and litigation are often used to exclude them from participatory processes. The role of trust and distrust respectively open and close (sometimes involuntary) exit doors from the public, meaning citizens resist authority through distance. The resulting responses include counterpolitical processes on the part of households to voice displeasure ("chikonko"), such as indiscriminate waste disposal, rumor spreading and keeping ideas to themselves. The study first represents a case of the everyday – household waste disposal – becoming politicized in the context of a power struggle. Second, it shows a case of spatially-conditioned resistance that takes on different properties of communication and public manifestation depending on where it is enacted.

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Introduction

The failure of distorted, exclusionary or absent participatory arenas sometimes leads citizens to resist and circumnavigate these spaces (Bond, 2011; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2014). Betrayed by the government's promise to provide meaningful communicative spaces on common issues, citizens are forced to seek relief elsewhere or to voice their displeasure outside these spaces using the alternative means at their disposal. We refer to these as exits that constitute political statements, and at the same time they secure practical liveability. Exits in this way bear similarity to everyday resistance (Scott, 1985). In this paper, we explore the meaning and implications of these exits in a theory of everyday resistance that has been fortified by a spatially-grounded Habermasian framework about citizens entering and exiting the public sphere. We are concerned above all with how exits transgress the everyday, the private and the routine, and thus "transform into overt acts of politics" (Adnan, 2007, p. 2010).

In our context, when some households practice noncompliance with waste management policy by disposing of their waste unlawfully, it may be easy for authorities to dismiss these as "non-political acts of irresponsibility" (Hàjek, et al., 2014, p. 404). But when such noncompliance starts to add up across neighborhoods, the normative dimensions of a phenomenon of resistance may gradually testify to the failures of arenas for public participation to include citizens. This is recognizable within Scott's (1985) influential writing on everyday resistance and its categorization into public and disguised resistance –"infrapolitics" (see Hall 2015 for typologies) through which the subaltern survive and undermine exploitive domination in enclaves (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013). All in all, the everyday resistance literature concedes the transformation of individual ostensibly 'non-political' acts into politics, but there is little agreement as to how this transformation takes place.

Apart from the sheer aggregate consequences of individual acts of noncompliance, we understand the constitutive process of resistance as comprised both by the manner of, and scale at which private acts impact public goods (see also, Dobson, 2003) and by retroactive signification by the resistors. That is, we understand resistance as something that is not ontological but produced as a result of people speaking subversively about their acts or the acts of their neighbors. The process in effect describes a

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phenomenon whereby private acts are transformed via context, analysis and discourse into public ones—what everyday resistance sociologists often refer to as semiotics of dissent (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). In our case, semiotics refers both to how covert actions transform into overt ones (Adnan, 2007), and how everyday practices transform into political statements (Scott 1985). We contend that apart from the obvious discursive exercise, the increased enactment and popularity of some practices in the context of a resistance struggle help transform it from everyday action into everyday politics. It can be noted that in recent neo-Marxist social movement studies, this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the 'activation' of already present cultural customs or everyday behavior into political statements (Nilsen, 2009).

In our case, the private task of taking one's trash out from one's home receives political and public implications in a context where citizens experience profound disenfranchisement and injustice at the hands of so-called "participatory" waste management regimes. The physical manifestations of such noncompliance may be unpleasant in Lusaka, Zambia, where waste is rising rapidly and streets are littered with waste following the introduction of the polluter's pay principle, which has required actors to co-create waste management systems through "people spirited participation" (Lusaka City Council 2008 p. 03). Exclusions from participatory arenas, the sense that directives were imposed on households, distrust in waste managers, and a perception of administrative deceit (double charging for waste management through municipal taxes and polluter's pay principle) as a form of corruption, are some ways citizens problematize waste management in Lusaka. Lusaka is thus littered with heaps of waste that form a breeding ground for vectors of diseases and result in the blockage of drainage systems during the rainy season, resulting in floods (Lusaka City Council , 2007). But more than that, the cumulative expressions of Lusaka residents' resentment of the waste has led the city to be deemed a "garbage city", linked to broader civic cynicism (Shalala-Mwale, 2012)

In this study, the aggregate pattern of resistance is unusually palpable; it can be seen and smelled. Yet it is also significant for the reason that, as a context of resistance, residents' handling or non-handling of waste transcends the boundaries between the public (the health and safety

of the city environment) and the private (one's personal waste in one's home). In using waste disposal, in part, as a means of communicating disenfranchisement to government over illegitimate waste management policy, citizens of Lusaka de facto weaponize private aspects of their everyday life into political statements of disavowal (as in Nilsen's social movements, 2009). We examine their resistance through the novel concept of 'chikonko', which comes from our respondents, and denotes acts harbouring displeasure. We further seek to expose links between citizens' strategies of resistance and their perception of the lack of public participation in waste management.

In making this connection, the principal contribution of this study derives from showing how noncompliant citizens drift in and out of the boundaries of a distorted arena for public participation, depending on their actions (see also Ceva (2015)). Sometimes, they either seek or become actively pushed toward 'exit doors' to this sphere to practice solidarity privately across neighbour households, away from the power asymmetries they face in the public sphere (Tew, 2006). The spatiality of resistance is hence manifest in a public sphere with multiple doors through which citizens both willingly and unwillingly exit using forms of everyday resistance involving the material aspects of solid waste management. Their practices are often consistent with Scott's infrapolitics in that they "promise vital material gains" and "require little or no formal coordination" (Scott 1989, p. 350). If the contemporary complaint across many Western nations is that politics has become trash, in Lusaka, trash has become politics of resistance.

In what follows, we present the findings of an empirical case study of resistance in the context of a public participation deficit in waste management in Lusaka, Zambia from 2015-2016. Our theoretical framework draws from Habermas' public sphere theory, Fraser's critique of Habermas in the form of counterpublic theory (corresponding to the exit stage) and, finally, the role of trust and distrust as conditioning openings and closings of these exit doors to the public. In this way, we understand resistance as taking place in a multilayer spatiality between the public, the private and the counter-public, where the rebuilding of trust through reinvigorated public participation premises may facilitate re-entry and reconciliation with public dialogue. In the analysis, the

importance of chikonko as a simultaneous exit strategy and as an attempt at communicating feedback to policy-makers and the broader public is emphasized in what we contend is a novel and Habermasian (counter) public sphere informed contribution to theories of everyday resistance. It is one that captures the dialectic inherent in resistance of belonging and detaching from the mainstream public (Sziarto & Leitner, 2010). First, we offer a brief description of the case to expose the material dimensions of what is becoming a Zambian waste management crisis.

Understanding the problem
of waste management in Lusaka

Solid waste management generally is a complex, uncertain and multi-scalar environmental problem that affects many actors and agencies (Reed, 2008). It is particularly problematic in Zambian cities. The situation around waste management is especially severe in Lusaka due to its higher population stimulated by socio-economic factors in recent years. The city's population growth rate is 3.7%, with a population of 2.8 million (Central Statistical Office, 2013). Additionally, Lusaka's annual domestic and commercial waste generation is estimated to have risen by 141% from 220,000 metric tonnes in 2000 to 530,000 metric tonnes in 2011, with per capita generation at 0.38kg/person/day (Ntambo, 2013). Less than 40% of the waste is collected and disposed of at landfills, while the rest of it is burned, buried or dumped in drainage systems, open spaces and roadways (Shalala-Mwale, 2012). The low rate of waste collection has led the city to be littered with different sorts of waste attracting discontent among citizens; earning it the "garbage city" label and associated cynicism (Shalala-Mwale, 2012).

As waste management proves increasingly problematic, improved grassroots involvement has been sought through participatory planning as one of the practices encouraged under the decentralization policy aimed at, inter alia, effecting 'people-spirited solution seeking' (Government of Zambia , 2013). On this rationale, the Lusaka City Council implemented a participatory alternative to top-down planning (Lusaka City Council, 2008). Decentralization policy has many objectives, including: empowering local communities by devolving decision-making authority; designing and implementing mechanisms to ensure grassroots integrated

planning and budgeting; developing local authorities' and communities' capacity in development planning, financing and managing service delivery in their areas; and providing a legal and institutional framework to promote local decision-making autonomy (Government of Zambia , 2013).

The Ward Development Committees are responsible for facilitating grassroots participation, functioning as the port that captures local communities' views, needs and interests in the context of waste management and disposal. To enhance household participation in waste management at the grassroots level, wards have been further divided into Waste Management Zones. Zones are cardinal grassroots structures for primary beneficiaries or those likely to be affected by any intervention to be involved in decision-making or outcome evaluation of interventions (Ministry of Local Government and Housing, 2002). Ward Development Committees are required to work with households and waste collectors (Community Based Enterprises for peri-urban or low income townships and Franchises for high income areas) to develop waste management plans in these zones.

Despite pursuing such ostensibly participatory approaches, solid waste management has remained problematic and faces resistance from many residents. This has resulted in uncollected waste and thus made the city extremely dirty (Meulenbeek, 2011). The city's sprawling peri-urban townships are most littered with waste, leading to annual health and environmental risks such as outbreaks of diarrheal diseases, soil and water contamination (Chaampa, 2014). This exemplifies that private actions taken in one's home can have public consequences (Dobson, 2007) and must be partly governed on the understanding of this boundary transgression.

No doubt this has formed part of the rationale for coordinating waste through public participation in Lusaka. It has entailed a shift both from the notion of "professionals know best" and from the liberal notion that citizens' private affairs should be left to their own devices, toward seeing the potential benefits of grassroots' knowledge in collective decision-making (Hansen, 2014; Juarez & Brown, 2008). But as illustrated by the current state of affairs, most citizens do not experience being heard in the public or even at grassroots levels where the rhetoric around public participation

is championed. They contend that technocratic rule, coercion, exclusion and litigation now replace dialogue to secure compliance.

Theoretical framework

Public sphere

We refer to the public sphere as an arena for deliberating common issues between citizens. This study ascribes importance to the public sphere's capability to serve as an emancipated, critical lifeworld realm. Habermas seminally views the public sphere as a communicative grounding for society and institutions. His public sphere is rooted in spatial ontology; it denotes meeting places for the public to discuss and express their desires and needs without coercion (Habermas, 1990 [1983]). But to fully understand the public sphere, one must also frame it in process ontology: the public is something that one does, by having one's discourse transcend the local, the particularistic and the personal to assume an abstract political nature. This means, for example, that one neighbour talking to the other neighbour about problems with disposing household waste does not automatically take place within the remit of the public sphere. But when they begin to link up their personal experiences, interpret their meaning, articulate critiques on the justice of waste management policy or begin to envision alternatives, citizens become participants in a public sphere of their own making. In Habermas, the public sphere serves a dual function in relation to policy and law. On the one hand, it legitimates public policy by undergirding it with public deliberation. On the other hand, it also contests such policy when it is seen to be unjust, illegitimate or deliberatively unequal.

The public sphere is most productively channelled, in Habermasian theory, through processes of public participation that proceed according to deliberative principles. Such communicative spaces allow people to think, talk and act together openly and with a commitment to make a difference regarding the common good in a particular community, whether addressing collective solid waste or social rights. At any one time, these processes and spaces are vulnerable to the encroaching effect of an instrumental steering logic of the state system, with its technocratic rationality. But they are also vulnerable to deliberative inequality between

participants and authority, or between groups of citizens. Sometimes, certain social groups may be so disempowered in relation to authority or others that they see little meaning in trying to discuss issues in these settings, which they perceive to be colonized by privileged elites. Actors with social power are able to derive systematic benefits from the subordination of others using many methods such as coercion. In the process they inhibit the ability of other actors to develop and exercise their abilities as well as expressing their needs, thoughts and feelings (Tew, 2006).

Exiting the public sphere

When citizens perceive the public sphere to be stacked against them, some may become adept at resisting or subverting expectations of them from powerholders (Tew, 2006; Butler, 1993 [1997]). Empowered actors often build structures that strengthen their control (Fairclough, 2001), limiting further the freedoms of expression and assembly of subordinates. Citizens in coercive environments tend to find cooperative strategies in seeking 'exit doors' to survive outside the coercive or distrusted environment (Tew 2006). Marginalized groups (Frasian subaltern counterpublics – Fraser 1997) in the public sphere may form parallel discursive arenas, taken as enclaves comprised of disenfranchised, disempowered citizens. Senecah (2004) describes how people, when they or their views have not been given serious attention in participatory processes, in their frustration find alternative ways to make people pay attention to their ideas and preferences. Such alternative ways are manifest in counterpublic enclaves and may materialize as counterpublic acts or discourses (Fraser, 1997; von Essen, 2016). Such resistance may be aimed just as much at securing a pragmatic liveability away from the spaces of power as enacting changes in the premises of the public sphere.

Habermas' interpretation of such exits is that they are fundamentally about the latter: they have a forward-communicative function to appeal to formal bodies to change to become more inclusive of an issue or a social group. Scholars seeking to adapt Habermasian public sphere theory to everyday resistance accordingly describe the spatiality of these exits as movers or conveyor belts of "marginalized issues and concerns from informal arenas of civil society to formal decision-making environments"

(Smith & Brassett, 2013, p. 525). Others have similarly resolved exits as the body's warning system: pain from these exits signals disease and need of 'medication' (see Martin, 2008, on Varieties of Dissent). A contribution from communication scholars to theories of everyday resistance is hence that these exits are active petitions for change as much as they are passive escapes for relief (as in Hardt & Negri, 2004).

Distrust as exit, trust as re-entry

Our final theoretical appeal is to the role of trust as a participative lubricant. Here, we pay particular attention to how trust opens and closes doors the public sphere for citizens. Trust is an epistemic attitude involving reliance in the expected positive behavior of whom or what is trusted (Allwood, 2014). According to Tsang, et al., (2009), trust's prominent role is in facilitating collective actions and providing legitimacy to institutions or policies. When trust is eroded, actors avoid communication aimed at understanding each other and instead act strategically to attain their goals (Hallgren, 2003). Scholarship on participation processes considers trust (and its restoration) a vital component for a thriving public participation process in which all feel empowered to be heard on common issues. Citizens' trust in institutions, in local community leaders, or in themselves as political actors equally empowered in this arena affects their likelihood to participate in participatory processes or resist and exit it where there is distrust (Hallgren, 2003; Ångman, 2012). Trust is central in social relations, and in a socio-cultural understanding trust is not an entity but a process which, along with distrust, is constantly constructed and re-constructed (Carey, 2007). As is the case here, exits from negotiations may both signal and reproduce a loss in trust, depending on the dynamics of the interactions in these processes (Valsiner & Cabell, 2011).

Laurian (2009) contends that distrust can depreciate levels of participation among actors; making others exit the process on belief their views will not receive uptake. Distrust can often come about from the sorts of power asymmetries outlined above, including deliberative inequality. Distrust in the processes of the public sphere causes citizens to strengthen allegiance to, and solidarity within, parallel spheres. This may be a double-edged sword for many citizens, as it often consolidates their separateness and further erodes their access to the public and the

belief that it can ever reconcile them (see, for example, Krange & Skogen, (2011)). It is not uncommon for authorities to seek to contain, condemn or otherwise control these parallel spheres through coercive power rather than trust and reconciliation. In this way, although exit was intended a means of escape from the spaces of power (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013), it may also disempower citizens by consolidating distrust and precluding future openings.

On the basis of this theoretical appeal, we submit that acts like chikonko may in this way be understood as the result of systematic distortions in the public sphere. The term "systematic distortion" (Habermas, 1987) usually characterizes an entire communicative system, while "discursive closure" refers to the suppression of a particular conflict (Thackaberry, 2004). These comprise discursive ways of closing down perspectives and blocking the development of mutual understanding; for example, by apparently engaging people in participation without taking their views into account, or by disqualifying someone from participating because of gender or political affiliations. With this in mind, waste management resistance in chikonko functions both as an exit door from the distorted public participation processes offered by the Council, and as an alternative counterpublic expression of resistance and solidarity by disfranchised citizens who distrust formal channels.

Method

This study was conducted using a phenomenological epistemology, which involves capturing lived experiences as perceived by actors in a situation (Cresswell, 2014). The phenomenological epistemology is a qualitative approach that necessitates suspending ('bracketing') taken-for-granted assumptions to gain insight into how actors perceive phenomena, their motivations and actions in relation to their individual experiences (Schutz, 1967; Inglis, 2012). The study was conducted phenomenologically by the principal researcher in Mtendere Waste Management Zone 11 in Lusaka. The zone was not chosen out of its extremism or unusualness, but because it provided an important context for seeking deep understanding of behavior in real-life and its meaning, which could be attained by the principal investigator. Actors' views on participatory practices at the grassroots level provided valuable insight

into their lived experiences and subjective interpretations of the situation (Lester, 1999), including how they made sense of their predicament in waste management, and how they understood their own actions and those of peers as partly communicative acts of displeasure.

This study utilized a case study approach, which focuses on interactive social processes (Silverman, 2014). The use of the term case study in this paper refers to the study of a social phenomenon to develop descriptions and explanations of what is happening within and between social institutions (Yin, 2011; Cresswell, 2014). Lusaka waste management can be considered a case study of a broader societal manifestation of the lack of public participation, the lack of or restricted access to public spheres, and the different responses this generates at the grassroots level. Consistent with the phenomenological approach used in everyday resistance studies (see Ortner, 1995), methods utilised in this inquiry included individual and focus group interviews, personal observations and document analysis. These sources provided insightful realities and differences between what is planned for (in policy papers) and actual practices. Respondents' accounts provided the basis for a thematic analysis of patterns.

Data collection

Data collection was performed through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with Lusaka City Council officials and focus group discussions with households. The principal researcher, who is a native speaker, additionally conducted observations (by sitting at the waste disposal facility) on households' actions and those of the waste collecting company in the zone; and general discussions on waste management on the Lusaka City Council Facebook page. Relevant themes and patterns to theories and concepts used in the study from respondents' lived experiences and tone of language or reactions to issues on the Council Facebook page were open coded (assigning a word/phrase) or thematically 10 analysed to organize the data. This process constituted the study results and a basis for analysis/discussion.

Maps for waste management districts and zones were obtained from the Council for choosing the waste management district and zone,

and the waste manager in a particular zone for the research. The waste manager in the research area (zone 11) provided a list of households in the zone. The principal researcher selected households to interview from the list. The households were randomly selected using basic formula of selecting every 5th household from the list.

Respondents interviewed included the owner of a Community-Based Enterprise owner (who was also an executive member of the waste collectors' association and was thus wearing two hats, speaking in specific to the zone and general about issues affecting waste collectors), a Ward Development Committee member and households. At the Lusaka City Council, respondents were units responsible for Waste Management, Health and Environment; Communications and Public Relations; and Peri-urban management. Focus group discussions with households were used as principal data collection for the lived experiences of city residents faced with the problems of waste management. A total of 12 households and one Community Based Enterprise (waste collector) were interviewed. The number of household members per group interview was between five and nine. They included the young, adults and elderly who reflected a variety of lived experiences relating to solid waste management. The total number of respondents that featured in this study was 17, comprising of four council officials, a waste collector and twelve households. Households (except three) were sceptical or unwilling to engage in waste management discussions on record for fear of being victimised if their views were discovered by the authorities. Views of households from focus group discussions were thus captured through note taking rather than audio recording.

Documents on participatory processes and solid waste management (such as waste management strategic plans; guidelines on the establishment, management and operations of a ward development committee; and national decentralisation policy) were also obtained to supplement interviews and observations. Multiple data collection approaches are important for triangulating views about a phenomenon and patterns attributed to it (Shenton, 2004; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008), particularly in a case study in which there is scope for rich empirical data.

Analysis of findings and discussion

Public spheres: forbidden spaces?

One of the goals of the decentralization policy in solid waste management was to achieve a people-spirited participation process that could involve communities (Ministry of Local Government and Housing , 2013). However, findings from this study suggest that the Lusaka City Council was perceived as reproducing many of the problems of a centralized and technocratic waste management regime. Respondents argued that the actual spaces in which citizens were engaged as public participants were circumscribed by both practical and symbolic barriers.

First, households in Focus Group Interview 3 purported they "did not know where" other actors meet for grassroots planning. Second, there was genuine concern by a majority of those interviewed that processes of exclusion disqualified them from participating. Identities such as not being "some of us" emerged from households (Focus Group 1 and 7) who viewed themselves disqualified from public spheres due to their socio-economic, gender or political status. Third, households in Focus Group 3 also felt their ideas were simply not appreciated in waste management. This was traced to a paternalistic climate on the part of the Ward Development Committees. According to the Ward Development Committee respondent, planning was done by the Committee's executive and the ward councillor, and involved informing the people about the decisions made. This is contrary to the Ward Development Committee guidelines that provide for sub-planning units in each zone, known as the first level of participation for ordinary citizens (Ministry of Local Government and Housing , 2013).

Other narratives (from the Community Based Enterprise –waste manager – and Focus Group 2) showed that rather than the force of the better argument providing basis for actions and decisions, the force of coercion by the Lusaka City Council was used to intimidate citizens into compliance. Threats, house calls and arrests were frequent and contributed to an atmosphere of households feeling policed. The Lusaka City Council had established a Fast Track Court to speed-up waste management-related prosecutions. The council conceded that litigation

is not part of decentralisation, but a means to secure citizen compliance with waste management systems. Households seemed to view the public sphere as tantamount to an increased vulnerability to policing, and to litigation in particular.

Given the state of the public sphere over waste management, households (Focus Group 1, 6 and 4) recalled seeking relief outside of power structures. Here, they could bypass the public by operating in subaltern counterpublics that materialized when denied access to the public spheres to voice issues. By subaltern counterpublics, Fraser (1992) refers to parallel discursive arenas for subordinated actors who create and circulate counterdiscourses that form oppositional identities, interests, and needs. Here, people's dissatisfaction in the public sphere's failure to deliver on normative promises of inclusivity and deliberative equality precipitates resistance –see Habermas, et al., (1974). Such resistance, then, takes place within the remit of the newly configured or activated subaltern space of households and their informal networks.

Disqualification: the birth of *chikonko* (expressions of displeasure)?

Respondents during Group Interview 2, 5 and 7 argued they were mainly disqualified and excluded from participatory processes based on them not being "*some of us*" – considered as have-nots, belonging (or suspected to belong) to opposition political parties, being young or female.

> "There is this question about who is talking; it is a woman, youth, political supporter from the opposition parties or someone with a high social economic status in society? If you are not part of them, your views mean nothing. We are silenced in most cases. But still more we can't live with waste; we have to find a way to get rid of it even though our views don't count."

Households' inclusion or treatment of their views thus seemed contingent on the aforementioned divides rather than residency in a particular waste management zone affected by poor waste management. Intimidations or threats of arrests and prosecutions for noncompliance to waste management systems were sometimes used to suppress actors and

their views. For example, households in interview group 3 indicated that they were told to comply with waste management systems or they would be arrested and prosecuted without explanations by the Lusaka City Council on issues raised by end users of waste management services. These exclusions silenced households at a fundamental level of participation. This further suppressed their willingness to engage in these sorts of public participation processes. At the same time, citizens may "anonymously" resist waste management systems in a manner Scott termed "undeclared forms" (Scott 1989, p.37), which the waste manager felt was *chikonko* (displeasure). The waste manager contended that:

> "This place is messed up after the weekend. People throw waste anywhere they find space. It's not like two or three people throw banana piles by the roadside. It is littered with heaps of garbage bags."

In group interview 3, households contended that their divergent views tended to be considered anti-government and led them to be victimized physically or verbally. They thus tended to keep their thoughts and ideas to themselves for fear of their utterances being construed as subversive. It is contended that discursive closures of this kind impede genuine dialogue by privileging particular actors, worldviews or discourses over others (Deetz, 1992; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000).

The Community Based Enterprise (waste manager) interpreted some households' resistant actions towards waste management systems as communicative actions of *chikonko* (displeasure). The term *chikonko* is derived from Nyanja, one of the Zambian languages, and means harboring something negative. As an enterprise owner explained: "*It is like telling someone that they are not happy with the way things are done somewhere.*" The Community Based Enterprise interpreted that *chikonko* was an expression of having bottled things up in private for some time, and then letting out one's frustration into the public sphere. Elaborating on *chikonko*, the enterprise owner stated that:

> Some of the household's behavior looks like *chikonko*. It is like they want us to know that they are not happy with something. How can I explain a situation where households heap four or seven bags of waste by the roadside or throw it in the middle of the road? It is difficult to understand them."

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The Lusaka City Council viewed actions the waste collector described as *chikonko* as the physical manifestation of people's unwillingness to pay for waste. If *chikonko* were communicative acts of displeasure by citizens toward the city council, moreover, prosecutions by the city council held a similar function. The municipality emphasized that "*we introduced the Fast Track Court to prosecute waste management defaulters to make them comply.*" They were manifestly deployed as a "*warning to others that the law will visit them*" if they do not comply. To households, Ward Development Committees which were supposed to be the primary link between community members, ward development agencies (such as Community Based Enterprises) and the Lusaka City Council mainly seemed to facilitate arrests and prosecutions of households that were non-compliant with solid waste management systems.

The practical implications of a public sphere in which 'grassroots' initiatives were a reproduction of the coercive powers of the state was a discouragement of citizens against entering into popular participation. The lack of collaboration created a vacuum, making households feel they had nowhere to go when they had problems. Some households (Focus Group Interview 4 and 6) nevertheless argued that "*if the Lusaka City Council engages us, we can have a point of talking to them,*" but that no such initiatives were underway. They also felt that Community Based Enterprises lack the necessary capacity to manage public meetings, and ultimately had no mandate over public issues. "*We have public institutions to talk to when things are not going well. We do not believe in Community Based Enterprises taking our issues to government.*" The citizens do not trust the City Council enough to expect that any "normal" manner of engagement will produce any result, but they continue to communicate through the act of "*chikonko*".

Strengthening of alternative moral collectives ('networks')

The vacuum created by the lack of participation was increasingly replaced by subaltern solidarity: households developed a strategy of shielding each other against litigation for non-subscription to solid waste management systems. They argued that they prefer protecting neighbours who help them when in need. As one contended: "*It is hard to survive here if you are not in good terms with others*". For example, households shielded

each other against waste management prosecutions to preserve socio-economic benefits derived from their social networks, on which they simultaneously increased reliance for things like social assistance and financial aid in Mtendere township. Households (in Focus Groups 3 and 7) stated that:

> We depend on each other during funerals, weddings or for financial support for business. We have financing cycles, where we lend each other money at no interest. But if you are not in good relations with others, you will be alone.

But there were limits to solidarity as imparted by the coercive regime. With the enforcement of solid waste management policy by the Lusaka City Council, reporting each other to the Ward Development Committees for noncompliance with waste management systems was an increasingly common experience of our respondents. They saw that one testament to this was that reported households were often summoned to the Fast Track Court for prosecution in a way that could only have been made possible with neighbors reporting to alert the council to the noncompliance in the first place. Thus, tensions and exclusions from community social networks arose among households for reporting others over waste management.

This was problematic inasmuch as community networks are the glue that holds people together. But these had arguably also become more important institutions in the face of waste management injustice. In this way, as Cox & Nilsen (2014) contend of the growing popularity of black churches during the Civil Rights Movement, neighbor connectivity in Lusaka was a way of life that had been *re-activated*, or taken on new import, under current conditions of oppression. In so doing, it had shifted spatiality; once thought of as a private matter, the assertion of these communicative networks now constituted a challenge to public institutions. In other words, where the private and public spheres were previously separated to households, in which networks were firmly located in the former, respondents now discursively drew in the role of informal networks in challenging formal institutions in the public.

But the spatiality of these networks also had an opposite effect connected to a counterpublic's simultaneous attachment and detachment

to the public. Namely, they provided a severing of ties to the public in the face of injustice. For example, households opted to shield each other against arrests over waste management. The representative of the Community Based Enterprise was also discouraged from constantly reminding households to pay for waste collection for fear of being called a "*wizard*" (or bad person) and losing out from social networks in the area. The networks provide social, financial and moral support to members since most of the households in low-income townships like Mtendere do low-earning blue-collar jobs and small scales businesses (Hansen, 1997). Informal money lending circles provided within households' networks are thus highly valued sources of finance. In this sense, money and its exchange is concentrated in the private sphere and prevented from leaking out into the public sphere, becoming tangled up with public authorities that one does not trust. It represents the consolidation of assets in a counterpublic and, with it, a shift in the spatiality of society away from centralized authority to informal networks.

Households were also discouraged from contribute towards improving solid waste management due to feeling that the system was imposed on them and compliance was secured by coercion rather than legitimacy. They thus opted to keep ideas to themselves or go to the media instead of using official channels, an example of 'resistance through distance' (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2009). Indeed, their shared experience and principal logic of resistance was that of withdrawing from the public spaces to use alternative channels. It should be acknowledged that whereas actors in waste management expressed low zeal to participate in public spheres, there are cases in Zambia when participatory processes have been successfully delivered. For example, the Energy Regulation Board in 2015 reconsidered hiking the hydroelectricity tariff after public submissions against it during public sittings. One participant during the sittings stated: "*We managed to get the domestic fixed charge maintained. It would have gone up 300%,*" (Mwebantu Media, 2015). The actors' lack of involvement and enthusiasm in participatory processes of solid waste management could be attributed to (inter alia) views that things were imposed on others or past experience that such processes were associated to the speaker's socio-economic status.

Communication practices, 'exit doors' and rumors

Building long term relations of mutual trust in the public sphere is difficult when communicative circumstances among actors deteriorate into talking behind each other's backs, including the spreading of rumors and veiled or explicit personal threats (Hart, 2003). Respondents' (Focus Group Interview 1) narratives in Mtendere Waste Management Zone 11 were heavily characterized by rumors. One such rumor suggested waste collectors were secretly political party agents. This rumor held that Community Based Enterprises had been established as political payback to political supporters. A second rumor supplied 'explanations' on the introduction of the polluter's pay principle as a duplication of payment to make money from them because they lack information on how it came about.

People use rumor as public communication, infused with personal assumptions about how the world works (Rosnow, 1991). Amid distrust in participatory waste management processes, rumor was used here for sense-making to help citizens cope with uncertainty and worrisome situations in their lives. But it was also used as a politically-situated counter-narrative that accused other actors of conspiracies or harm, and sought to allocate blame or consolidated distrust in everyday reproducible narratives. In this, it permeated the boundaries of the private (everyday talk) and the public (political talk) and became a means of resistance. As noted in the previous section, networks rather than specific persons had become the actors in solid waste management. This facilitated the use of rumors as a depersonalized or anonymous cycling of partially political critique through households, ensuring a diffuse 'news on the wind' quality to rumors (Scott, 1992) where no one person could be formally arrested.

To this end, rumors were most easily reproduced when there were information gaps. Here there was a divergence between the views of the Lusaka City Council, who argued that it was incumbent upon households to correct any information 'deficit' they might experience in regard to waste management practices. Households' counter-view was the concession that "*responsible citizens are usually in the minority when it comes to seeking information on acting responsibly*", suggesting they had other more important things to concern themselves with, and that the

council had a duty to keep the public informed if they wanted to prevent a climate of rumors from forming –see Lusaka City Council Facebook page (2015). It can be noted, however, that some respondents recalled instances where households did seek clarity over some issues. Some responses by the Lusaka City Council were snappy and discouraging closures. For example, on the Council Facebook newsflash about an old woman convicted by the Fast Track Court over waste management, one person commented: "*Why troubling the old lady? Or maybe I am behind, are rubbish pits not allowed anymore?*" The Lusaka City Council responded:

> Town life is not for you; go to the village. Your thoughts are so retrogressive and hypocritical. People complain of the city being dirty, but when we take action others are condemning. It does not make sense (Lusaka City Council , 2015).

With such a tone, it could be hard for the person who asked to have trust in a discursive process with the Lusaka City Council. The development of distrust is an on-going process and the City Council is depreciating trust by discursive closures such as the one in the example.

This was also exacerbated by the fact that Lusaka City Council felt that there has been "*enough of talking*" and the time had come to properly enforce the by-laws on waste management, a technocratic turn. According to the City Council, the talking stage was under the Sustainable Lusaka Program, a donor-driven initiative that ended in 2004. This program viewed participation as a time-bound activity. However, it can be noted that 'talking' with households has been mainly one-directional dissemination through mainstream media (television, radio and newspapers), and online via the website and Facebook.

Communication by the council also mainly targeted waste collectors and cooperating partners. The sensationalist dissemination of court convictions of waste management defaulters in the media was used to warn households about the consequences of non-compliance. Although the council does not have unilateral control of the media, publicizing convictions in popular news outlets was within their reach. Respondents believed this to be a consciously coercive approach. At the same time, households also questioned the validity of these convictions since many of the offenses seemed engineered or unjustified in light of

insufficient information in the public domain. Commenting on the Lusaka City Council Facebook posting, a participant wondered: "*But how can I be prosecuted when no waste company came to my home asking me to join the scheme? Where is the offence?*" (Lusaka City Council, 2015). It is argued that actors' dissatisfaction with public participation can arise when insufficient communication deprives less informed actors knowledge of the scope of issues to be deliberated; thus distorting the public sphere as meeting space as equals (Thomas, 2005). Hanna (2000) views information as one of the biggest issues in participation, in terms of who controls it and whether it is trustworthy.

Some households confessed to having found alternative ways of getting around some of the issues they faced in waste management. Some disposed of waste anyhow, while others formed informal associations (networks) to meet their needs and discuss matters affecting them. Here, then, the seeds of a subaltern counterpublic can be clearly identified. Other counteractions included colluding with waste collectors' workers to have the waste disposed. The manner in which some households chose to dispose of their waste clearly transcended everyday liveability; it was done in such a way as to communicate their discontentment toward the City Council, the ward committees and indeed the broader public. As some households put it, "*Nobody wants to be surrounded by garbage*". To them, the strategy of *chikonko* was an unsightly but necessary endeavour to petition decision-makers to reconsider current solid waste management.

When the public sphere is discursively closed, it suffers a crisis of democratic legitimacy (Habermas et al 1974). Lacking credentials of democratic legitimacy, it is also lacking in the necessary trust to re-invite participants to correct such a deficit, as was the case here. On Markovits (2005) argument, resistance to precisely such deficits by citizens can draw attention to democratic shortfalls and re-invigorate the debate, akin to Habermas' conveyor belt metaphor of resistance, taking neglected issues into the public debate. *Chikonko*, while unsightly and immediately harmful to public health, could thereby provide opportunities for the correction of deficits. Actions by households to dispose garbage along roadways, incomplete buildings and open spaces or the subversive act of subscribing to waste collectors outside their waste management zones could be seen as expressions of displeasure directed towards gaining

the attention of those in waste management planning, policy-making or waste collection and disposal. The actions, while disengaging exits, communicate deficits also on the purported grassroots sites originally meant for "public spirited participation" where actors were supposed to meet and "ask each other and share views on what they hope for in their wards" (Lusaka City Council , 2008).

Distrust

We have noted trust as an important "glue" or "lubricant" in participatory processes (Raitio, 2013) and that its denigration is both reflected and results in poor quality of interaction between citizens and state agencies. The narratives on waste management in Mtendere were heavily characterized by distrust of authority, or even of neighbors following suspected reporting of non-compliance. At the same time as they are clearly functions of this distrust and power asymmetry, one can thus state that rumors, lack of information and inadequate deliberative actions have also exacerbated levels of distrust.

There were many facets of the distrust narratives. On the part of households, their distrust arises from past experiences of dishonesty in their interaction with waste collectors, Ward Development Committees and the Lusaka City Council. For example, households noted that waste collector workers sometimes disposed of waste within zones or burned it at the primary disposal sites, instead of having it disposed at the landfills. The legacy of these actions undermined households' trust in waste collectors. Another facet was distrust toward the Ward Development Committees who were supposed to empower households against the City Council, but who respondents saw as often complicit with them. Indeed, ward development committees are supposed to be the link with grassroots communities, but these committees mainly focus on arresting and facilitating the prosecution of noncompliant households. Respondents from households argued that the Committees' failure to take action when issues were brought to them eroded the covenant of trust that was supposed to undergird the public sphere.

The third facet pertained to growing mistrust between households in the neighborhood. While there was solidarity as a subaltern, the actions of some households to turn on others, and accusations of non-

paying households conspiring with waste collectors' workers to collect their waste for small amounts, were profound impediments to wanting to enter into any kind of participatory process that was premised on mutual trust. Indeed, when suspicions, distrust and rumors pervade the narratives of households, citizens become guarded and self-interested, turning away from furthering the common good (McMillan, 2013). Accordingly, cooperation and active civic culture also diminish. Eroded confidence in solid waste management systems and grassroots participatory processes was exemplified by households' claim they would rather "*keep ideas to themselves*" in the present situation: a *de facto* exit from the public that betrayed them.

Openings for improvement

While having these problems of legitimacy and distrust, participatory spheres may showcase openings that can be used to build relations towards a shared vision on managing waste. A "discursive opening" may be sought where participants can further discuss and explore meanings, procedures and established meanings of participation –see (Deetz, 1992; Ångman, 2013). Consequently, a way to attain deliberative standards in the public sphere is to search for and cultivate the "openings" for renewed culture of popular participation. Rendered less abstractly, in the context of the solid waste management the first step would be to search for openings that would increase the level of trust to make actors willing to engage in conversation in the public, with the Committee as an auxiliary resource rather than a watch-dog over Lusaka citizens. Improved trust among actors could be sought by acting on causes of mistrust that preclude openings. Some issues raised included inaction on matters presented to authorities, information void, dishonesty and "imposing things" on others in a paternalistic-technocratic vein that contradicted the grassroots rhetoric championed by the Council.

The gradable nature of trust (Allwood, 2014) means that trust is something that can be lost or gained step by step. This means time-bound, one-off participation is poorly positioned to cultivate trust, especially in a context of amutual skepticism. As Reeds (2008) contends, participation is a process—not an event—that requires on-going involvement of actors. Mistrust, exacerbated by time-bound and systematically distorted

communication, can thus result in loss of willingness to interact in the future. There is, however, also the possibility that trust is low but at a sufficient threshold to at least initiate interaction, in a way emphasized by Markovitz (2005): triggering events can unlock blockages and open up debates. This fact can in itself be called an opening, since it could encourage both authorities and citizens to accept and engage in smaller steps towards a more constructive communication in the public sphere. As a respondent noted, households were cautiously optimistic about reconciliation – provided it be initiated by the Council ("*[Then] we can have a point of talking to them.*"). In this way, one could argue that they saw themselves as already having taken the first step toward a renewed discussion, simply by visibly resorting to *chikonko* as a call for dialogue.

Given present inadequacy in information transparency, this aspect must be addressed first. Clear, timely and publicly available information on solid waste management systems must be one of the key steps toward reinvigorating the public discussion. As it was demonstrated, households often call, visit, email or post on the Council Facebook page to know more about solid waste management. This is a site which needs to be harnessed. The Lusaka City Council should utilise various communicative and, perhaps more importantly, at least minimally interactive platforms and act on issues actors bring out through those channels rather than ridiculing people (that town life was not for them and they should go to the village because their thoughts were retrogressive and hypocritical –see Facebook page for Lusaka City Council (2015) – over their views or for seeking clarity).

In terms of clearing the murky climate of rumors around Lusaka solid waste management, this will be a longer-term process that only starts with information dispensing, but will principally be addressed by neutralizing the power differentials in the public that divide some narratives into subaltern rumors and others into official transcripts. Consistent with the literature of everyday resistance, we understand power differentials and closures as drivers to rumors, not merely as a lack of information (Scott, 1992; Skogen & Krange 2003). Re-invigorated deliberation could help minimise rumours by clarifying issues and positions that underlie the rumours and by providing a process in which citizens can be heard equally. Trust must be rebuilt through information

sharing and deliberation in new, corrected participatory spheres (Luarian, 2009). Luhmann (2005) links trust to participation through its growing relevance in complex issues and its ability to mobilise particular public involvement to enhance the degree of participation. With trust in others, in the system and process, there is a possibility for actors in solid waste management to actively participate in collective actions without resistance. Deliberative approaches can foster collective learning on what is working or not, system limitations, and emerging issues as other actors interact in waste management zones; it can possibly create more responsive and proactive actions plans towards waste management, instead of seeing them as colonized or exclusionary spaces.

It is contended that when the public is involved early, when their views are obtained, reflected upon and possibly included in decision-making, the chances of public trust in the system and support increases. For example, after analyzing citizen participation in Boston Southwest Corridor project in the 1970s and 1980s, Crewe (2001) posited that the more designers valued citizens' input, the more appropriate their designs became to users. Facilitators of participatory processes in the project obtained better ideas that made their final plans more widely accepted and much easier to carry out. Similarly, in solid waste management, actors' views could be obtained and unclear issues clarified. Mistrust could reduce actors' need for and willingness to resort to resistance, but also their present unwillingness to listen, reflect and understand the position of others. Investing in deliberative processes could thus enable actors to meet in a non-coercive atmosphere to discuss, learn and provide preferred actions over the problem (Lukensmeyer & Torres, 2006). In other words, we see that solutions do not lie in empowering resistors in their resistance tactics to become more skilled political players. This will rather escalate distrust and consolidate their seperation (Skogen & Krange 2003). Solutions instead lie in correcting the public that precipitated their resistance in the first place.

Conclusion: practicing what is on paper

Everyday resistance to the waste management regime in Lusaka took mostly disguised patterns or exits. Although people sometimes went to the (social and mainstream –newspapers, television or radio) media to protest

poor waste management, they tended to act quietly by indiscriminately disposing of their waste. Everyday resistance acts by residents of Lusaka show how people counteract and create parallel arenas to express their views (see Frazer 1997 –on subaltern counterpublics). In our case, Lusaka residents opposed the waste management regime by finding 'exits' to counteract or collude with each other to 'protect' themselves from the repressive regime. In this sense, consistent with Scott (1992), their resistance practices bore resemblance to each other. Furthermore, residents who identified themselves with the phrase "not some of us" (have-nots) resisted suggested ways of improving managing waste when called upon by the City Council, as they felt their ideas were not valued. The subtle subversions of the "*imposed system*" resulted in huge heaps of garbage that accorded Lusaka the cynical characterization as a "garbage city."

The waste management case in Lusaka testifies to a situation in which the public has been abandoned and replaced by alternative, non-deliberative means. Instead of open dialogue, the City Council for example communicates through the coercive power of the law, and households communicate in turn through the subversive acts of dumping household waste on the street. In this way, both the City Council and citizens may be said to have lost faith in the ability of public dialogue to solve the problem of littered streets. The City Council viewed such dialogue in instrumental terms of a required time-bound step to legitimate the new management. In the end, they openly admitted to being "*past the talking stage*". Fast-track persecutions, threats, arrests and direct enforcement of policy had replaced the intended public-spirited discussion on the grassroots level, comprising a rationalization of the life-world in Habermas. Rationalization was sometimes literal and directly motivated acts of resistance by those victimized by it. This occurred first of all because fast-track courts orient toward technicalities and expert knowledge rather than social justice and popular participation, so their presence compels everyday resistance outside legal channels (Johansson & Vinthagen 2013). Everyday resistance becomes mainly justified in light of the City Council's ability to subjugate participants in courts while giving the *appearance* of dispensing a neutral form of justice (see Martin, 2008)). The City Council's claim to the state's legitimate use of violence,

enforcement and legal coercion further circumscribes the official arenas in which citizens can voice their concerns, compelling them to adopt infrapolitics.

Households, in one sense, showed similar disillusionment over the possibilities for public dialogue to resolve the situation. They responded to the coercion of the City Council by keeping things to themselves, going to the media, circulating rumors, or communicating displeasure indirectly through *chikonko*. They can thereby be understood to have partly exited the public sphere and having surrounded themselves in subaltern spheres where solidarity and empowerment through everyday resistance were practiced. On the other hand, we stress that their withdrawal from the public sphere had a pernicious side that created a breeding ground for rumors and distrust, furthering the gap between citizens and authority, and thus resulted in mistrustful neighbor conflicts around reporting noncompliance.

We believe the will to re-enter the public, or rather a new undistorted public with a basic commitment to deliberative equality, was latently present in some household focus group interviews. Such wills must be cultivated rather than their resistance tactics. We contended that households can be engaged discursively when the atmosphere is cordial. Creating a cordial environment where actors feel safe to meet and deliberate could provide an opportunity for co-creation of solid waste management systems actors might support, and will be one of the small steps towards an increase in trust—a minimum threshold of trust to start interaction. The autonomous assembly of households into informal associations mobilized from their networks also testifies to a desire to transcend the particularities of their struggles at home to join hands in a coalition that can hold the authority accountable – in effect, a means of becoming a (counter)'public' of their own making (Colquhoun & Martin, 2001). On this view, we argue that Lusaka citizens' exclusions from the extant public participation processes in waste management were not as self-willed as they may appear in the term "exit doors"; they were ultimately grounded in exclusions. To this end, rather than viewing Lusaka residents as entirely powerless victims retreating into subaltern spheres, their strategies of resistance also showed ingenuity in circumventing the distorted public.

In the end, the case study reveals a spatiality of resistance. Households in Lusaka drift in and out of a public sphere that is perforated by exit doors and openings, which have been created as a result of power differentials and distrust manifest in discursive closures. Once outside of the public that excludes them, households are freer to voice their displeasure through subversive acts, both in an attempt to establish an alternative counterpublic and to compel the hegemonic public colonized by the Lusaka City Council to change. In this way, their everyday resistance finds similarities that can be partly explained in Martin & Varney's (2003) words as a heuristic device publicizing communication distortions. Indeed, while some acts of resistance tended toward disengagement and denunciation of authority, the more communicative practices of cluttering streets with waste may paradoxically be seen as an opening—an overt statement that change is needed, and a call for dialogue. Finally, the cumulative consequences of the acts, the fact the waste manager framed as '*chikonko*', and the reaction of the City Council to suppress any insurgence suggests that a private act became both public and political.

Our contribution has been to show that in the context of everyday resistance, the transformation of an everyday practice into a political practice is mediated both by semiotics (meaning-making of these events) and perhaps more importantly by *spatiality*, via transgressing the boundaries of the private. The Lusaka waste management situation shows that exits are not mere escapes that indicate coping, avoidance and survival on the part of exiters (as in Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). When placed in a Habermasian public sphere framework, exits are communicative of systematic distortions and of the (however latent) will of citizens to remedy these deficits by re-integrating into, rather than escaping from, the public. We believe this highlights an underacknowledged link to Scott's (1992) understanding of rumors: it should be understood as something more than the backstage "griping and grumbling" (p. 188) of private citizens; it is also an implicit or explicit critique of power asymmetry and, consequently, communicative of this situation. Further, resistance scholars should not seek to empower or laud exits as empowering stratagem that successively chips away at the regime, but critically understand them as the impetus and trigger for entrances/openings to a more inclusive politics.

Note

1. A household here refers to a group of persons who normally eat and live together under the same roof (blood relatives or not) and make common provision for essential living needs and have one person heading the household (Central Statistical Office, 2012).

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