



# Community perceptions of participatory efforts in NGO development projects: A case study from Masaiti District, Zambia

**Limbani KAMANGA**



**EIMAS**  
EUROPEAN INTERDISCIPLINARY  
MASTER AFRICAN STUDIES  
Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree

## Introduction

- Strong vs weak participation – in practice, a spectrum (Cornwall, 2008).
- Community as a geographical location VS communities of interest (Taylor, 2011).
- The relationality power VS a dichotomous view (Kothari, 2001)
- Normalization of marginalization
- Offensive technocratic strategies of NGOs vs the defensive strategies of beneficiaries (Olivier de Sadarn, 2005)
- Garbage can model of project identification (Neubert, 1996)
- Engaging community members through brokers (e.g CBOs, chiefs, & committees)
- Establishing a field office

## Research Questions

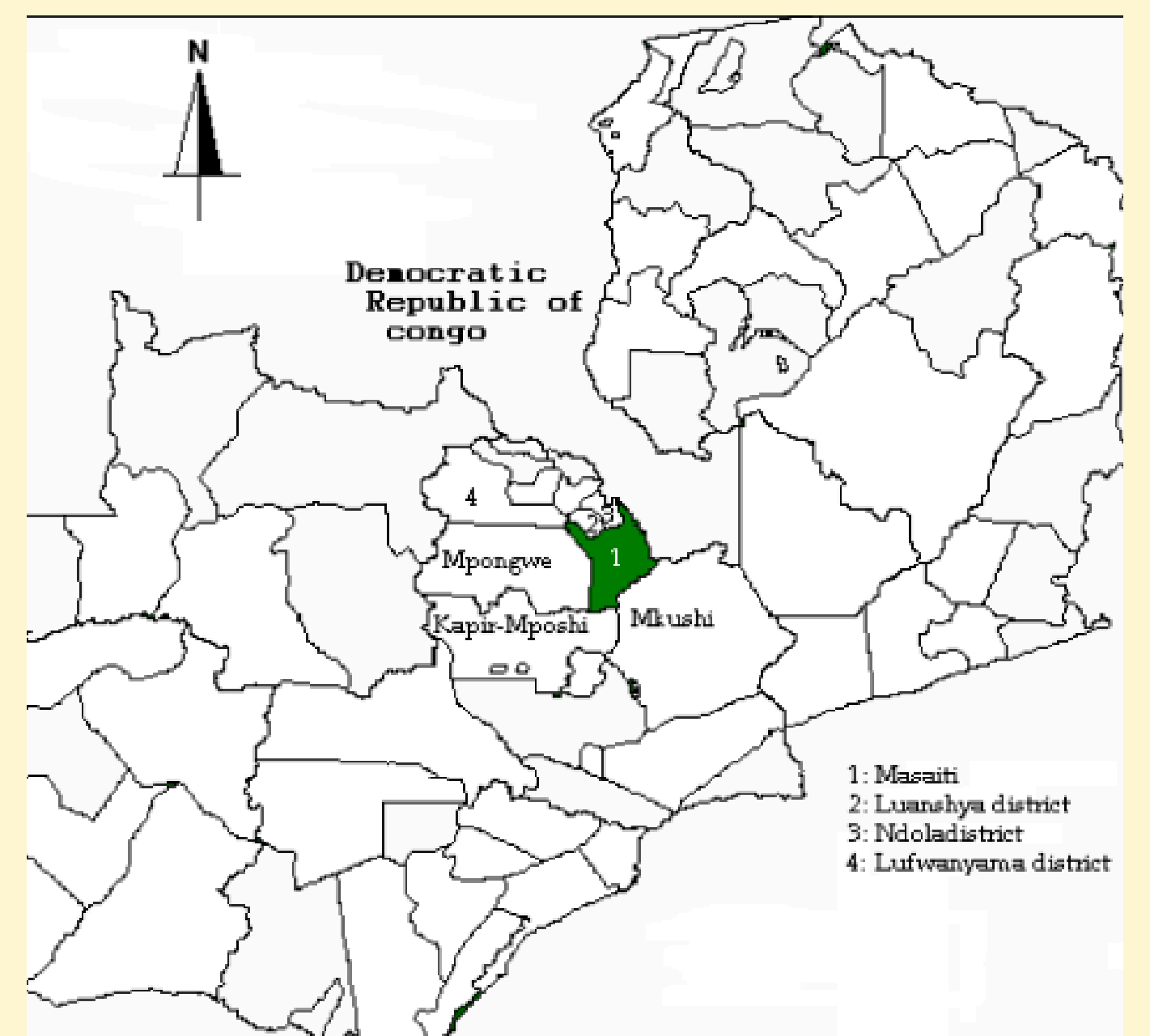
- How do community members perceive the depth of their participation and the participatory strategies adopted by NGO-led development projects?
- What factors shape the perceptions of the community members?
- How do these perceptions influence the nature of involvement that community members demonstrate in the management of NGO-led development projects?

## Methodology

- Non-positivist paradigm with a subjective ontology & interpretive epistemology.
- Qualitative research method – single-case study.
- The case: Livelihood support project under FSP in Masaiti District, Zambia
- Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews & document analysis\*
- Sampling technique: Purposive sampling (association with the project), 29 interviewees.
- Ethical consideration: ethical approval by local IRB, translated ICF, voluntary, confidentiality, anonymity, and plan to share results.
- Analysis: Thematic analysis.

## The case

- Country: Zambia.
- Province: Copperbelt, Masaiti District, Shibiwanga Ward.
- Project name: Livelihood Support Project.
  - Funder: Societas Socialis (SOS) Children's Village.
  - Overall Program : Family Strengthening Program.
- Key stakeholders: SOS, MCDSS, DSWO, CWACs, CBO, targeted households.
- Duration: 2020 – 2024 (a COVID-19 break).
- Provisions: Business management knowledge and skills, business capital, and immediate material needs.



## Findings

- General contentment with exclusion from decision-making, justified by personal benefits.
- Defensive logic over offensive logic: views shaped by material benefits.
- Normalization of domination: colloquial definition of participation & empowerment.
- General contentment with participation through elite representation.
- Representatives assessed based on performance and reputation rather than descriptive characteristics.
- Mixed feelings on the absence of NGO field office.

## Study Recommendations

- A similar study in a global south setting that demonstrates strong participation.
- A similar study focused on a project that targets the non-poorest.
- Relate the findings to a study that distributes communal goods and/or services.
- Assess the findings of this study with the findings of multiple-case studies in the global south.

### Contacts

Email: [kamangalt@gmail.com](mailto:kamangalt@gmail.com)

WhatsApp: +265993577445