

# Political Participation in the Kibera Informal Settlement in Nairobi, Kenya

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to expose the factors influencing political participation in the Kibera informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. To this end, an extensive survey was carried out in three of the five political wards in Kibera. Prior comparative studies of political participation have reached the somewhat simplistic conclusion that poor citizens are a politically inactive group in society. A handful of studies have, however, inquired the nuances of participation within that group. In stark contrast to the traditional literature, they find least financially well-off respondents to be the more active ones, and that participation is chiefly driven by encounters with local representatives. While the indicators correlating with voting in Kibera align with socioeconomic factors described in traditional theories, the regression analysis reveals a similar pattern of political participation (other than voting) and encounters with local politicians. Moreover, group membership is strongly correlated with both voting and other political activities in the sample.

Keywords: Political participation, urban poor, informal settlement, Kenya.

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# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	2
Note of acknowledgement .....	3
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Traditional theories of political participation .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. Political participation amongst urban poor.....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Socioeconomic indicators .....	10
3.2 Civic Skills .....	11
3.3 Political efficacy.....	11
3.4 Contact with government representatives or local politicians .....	12
3.5 The way the poor participate.....	12
<b>4. Definition and operationalization .....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Defining Political Participation.....	14
4.2 Operationalization .....	15
<b>5. Context of the study: Kibera informal settlement.....</b>	<b>17</b>
5.1 Kibera slum .....	17
5.2 Political landscape of Kibera .....	18
5.2.1 Electoral constituency .....	18
5.2.2 Political Violence .....	19
5.2.3 Political leaders .....	19
<b>6. Data and methods .....</b>	<b>20</b>
6.1 Choice of area of study .....	20
6.2 Sampling.....	21
6.3 Random walk sampling method.....	21
6.4 In designing the questionnaire .....	23
6.5 Interviews .....	23
6.6 Ethical considerations.....	24
6.7 Data analysis .....	24
<b>7. Results.....</b>	<b>25</b>
7.1 Voting.....	26
7.2 Political participation .....	27
<b>8. Analysis of major findings .....</b>	<b>29</b>
8.1 Input for the activities differ.....	29

8.2 Encounter with Local politicians .....	30
8.2.1 Sarangombe .....	31
8.2.2 Laini Saba .....	32
8.2.3 Makina .....	32
8.3 Group membership .....	33
<b>9. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>10. References .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>11. Appendix .....</b>	<b>40</b>

# 1. Introduction

At the core of a democratic system there must be political participation, or else the system would by definition be futile. Scholars of politics have long attempted to map out and pin down the factors influencing such participation. Such studies have almost unanimously pointed out poorer citizens as a politically inactive group as they often lack the resources facilitating such participation.

Few studies have, however, attempted to clarify the nuances of the participatory patterns within that group. Lawless and Fox found in their study of the urban poor in the southern Bronx a strong correlation between positive encounters with welfare workers and political engagement (2011). Banks and Harris have studied political motivations of slum inhabitants in Dhaka (Banks, 2008) and New Delhi (Harris, 2005). All three studies have found that within the sample, those in the worst economic hardship to be the most politically active.

To add to this existing literature on participation amongst the urban poor, an extensive survey study was carried out in the informal settlement of Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya in an attempt to answer the question: *What factors influence political participation in Kibera?*

Kibera provides a strikingly good case to carry out a study of political activity amongst urban poor. Contrary to what scholars of political participation predict of poor citizens' engagement in politics, Kibera has been home to some of Kenya's most fierce political movements. The concurrent widespread poverty and overall low 'quality of life' or socio-economic indicators and the political engagement posits a paradox that cannot be explained in the dichotomous ways proposed in the traditional literature.

The regression analysis reveals several interesting patterns of political participation amongst Kibera inhabitants. The factor influencing voting and other political activities differs in significant ways. For voting, traditional explanations of socio-economic indicators remained true in the Kibera context. However, they are not able to explain engagement in other political activities. Instead, a strong correlation between encounters with local politicians and political engagement is identified. Moreover, the data reveals that the Kibera population are both an active population in terms of casting their ballots, but also in engaging in political activities.

From here the paper will proceed as follows. The first section identifies traditional theories of political participation. A second theory section sheds light on how these explanations pertain to the urban poor, as well as alternative explanations of participation of this group, accompanied by corresponding hypotheses. The following section constitutes a brief overview of Kibera's socioeconomic and political context, to then proceed to present the methodology, in principle, regarding the data

collection. Subsequently, the empirical results are presented, followed by a more extensive analysis of the three main findings. While concluding the paper I suggest how to refine the research to further validate and strengthen the central arguments as well as briefly suggest approaches to future research of political participation amongst the poor.

## 2. Traditional theories of political participation

Participation of the public in politics holds a quintessential role in any democratic state. The very concept of democracy is defined as the aggregated participation of citizens, rendering it the most crucial element of such a system. Philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville argued already in 1835 that American democracy is rooted in civic voluntarism. That is, a citizen's involvement in family, work, school, and religion which subsequently forms their political participation as voters, campaigners, protesters, or community activists (De Tocqueville, 1835).

Particular emphasis is put on the need for every citizen to pursue political participation, despite the fact that it requires input in the form of time and money. De Tocqueville argues that if political participation amongst citizens is dwindling, it might pave the way for power centralizing in the hands of few.

Centuries after de Tocqueville's writing, scholars are still concerned about citizen's motivations to engage in politics. One of the most encompassing studies of political participation is the 1990 "Citizen Participation Study" conducted by Verba, Brady, Lehman Schlozman and Nie. From the study, the authors develop a 'Civic Voluntarism Model' employed to explain and understand patterns of political participation amongst citizens. To this day, it remains foundational to most of the scholarly inquiry on the topic (Verba, Lehman Schlozman, Brady, & Nie, 1993).

The authors distinguish between two determinants of an individual's engagement in politics: motivation and capacity. While in theory, everyone could have the motivation to participate, since ultimately every citizen is affected by governmental decisions, not everyone has the capacity to do so (Verba, Lehman Schlozman, Nie, & Brady, p. 3, 1993).

In a subsequent paper, the authors develop a 'resource model' of political participation, in which they specify three factors that influence the 'capacity' to participate in politics to be; time, money, and civic skills (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, p.275, 1995). Any capacity-building requires input, which can be provided by all three factors, albeit in different ways. The input of time and money are rather self-explanatory: time is needed to engage in any activity and money can buy the time to do so. Moreover, financial contributions to political campaigns and parties can be a way of participating in politics. The concept of civic skills, however, is more complex and is vaguely defined as organizational and communicational capacities that can be acquired in various non-political settings and allow citizens to effectively engage in political life. Fora for acquiring civic skills include church, school or the workplace (Ibid).



In regards to all three factors, money, time and civic skills the model confers to an extent advantages to the already privileged. A critical stance could posit that the framing of the model, and thereby every analysis departing from it will per definition imply a disadvantage for the less privileged.

Although the model provides us with a framework in which we can assess the likelihood of a citizen participating (richer rather than poorer), it is only indicative of who is more likely to engage in politics. From the 'Citizen Participation Study', the same authors have provided a more nuanced analysis of the demographics of political participation in the US. In contrast to the mass participation stressed by de Tocqueville, Verba et al. finds that political activists are not representative in relation to the demographic characteristics of the public at large (Verba, Lehman Schlozman, Brady, & Nie, p.305, 1993)

The study finds that people with less education and in economic hardship are severely underrepresented in virtually all the political participation categories proposed by the authors. That is, people in economic hardship are substantially underrepresented among voters and, especially, among campaign workers (Ibid. p. 306). The same pattern is found regarding the likelihood of poorer citizens to contact public officials, attending protests and demonstrations where under-representation was even more severe (Ibid p.307). The proposed explanation for these findings can be summarized as follows: citizens in economic hardship lack the time (for participation), civic skills (for involvement), and money (for contributions).

This pattern of participatory inequality has been further corroborated by Schlozman, Burns and Verba, who argue that the role of different access to political resources play a pivotal role in citizen's participation. They find that women are overall less likely to participate than men because they are disadvantaged with respect to the resources that facilitate political activity. Women have overall lower levels of education, earn less money, and have less free time (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, p.964, 1994).

The social and economically disadvantaged citizens are hence, on the comparative, substantially less likely to exercise their 'participatory rights' than their financially better-off counterparts.

### 3. Political participation amongst urban poor

What is almost axiomatically concluded in the traditional literature of political participation is that the propensity to participate is inextricably (directly or indirectly) linked to socioeconomic brackets. While this argument is commonly corroborated in the literature, comparing the participation of richer and poorer citizen severely limits the theorization around motivations and patterns of political participation amongst the poor. Contending that that poor people do not participate in politics is a false conclusion. This subsequent section identifies existing explanations and hypotheses of motivations for political participation amongst the urban poor.

#### 3.1 Socioeconomic indicators

Traditional theorists postulate that economic hardship will decrease the overall likelihood of political participation. Evidence for education as a socioeconomic indicator positively correlated with political participation in terms of problem-solving amongst the urban poor in New Delhi has been found. Respondents who are ‘super active’ have completed secondary level and has at least some tertiary education (Harris, p. 1044, 2005). In many developing countries, education is highly correlated with income, which corroborates the socioeconomic claim made by Verba et al.(1995).

However, in the same studied population, a different pattern was revealed in terms of electoral participation. On the comparative, poor people (income up to 6000 rupees a month) were more likely than people with a higher income to participate in electoral politics.(Ibid, p.1058).

In a study of Urban poor in the southern Bronx, Lawless and Fox draw a similar conclusion. Of the participants in the study, those in the worst economic hardship were more inclined to exercise their political rights, both in terms of voting and other political activities, than the ‘average respondents’ (Lawless & Fox, p. 372, 2001). The proposed explanation for this trend is that the stakes to participate in politics are higher for the poor and they have more to gain than the average citizen.

Albeit the different explanations of SES role in political participation, the hypothesis will depart from the traditional explanation:

H1. *Demographic and social economic factors*

Level of political participation will increase with increased education, income and age.

## 3.2 Civic Skills

As previously mentioned, an explanation of the motivation to engage politically is so-called 'Civic Skills' which can be conceptualized as skills that enhance effective and meaningful political participation. These skills can be acquired in various non-political organizations such as community groups or religious fora and are expected to render citizens acquainted with civic virtues, such as active participation in public life, trustworthiness, and reciprocity (Michels & Graaf, p. 489, 2010).

McClendon and Riedl find in their experimental study in Nairobi, that some churches, Pentecostal churches, in particular, can be effective in inducing self-affirmative messages which can boost an individual's propensity to participate in politics (McClendon & Riedl, 2015). The positive impact on political participation, however, disappears when self-affirming messages are not present. This finding challenges in part Verba et. al.'s assumption of the church (none specified) as a forum for learning civic skills that bolster political participation.

In developing countries, in particular, non-governmental organizations (henceforth NGOs) often focus on capacity-building in various forms. NGOs constitute in theory an excellent forum in which citizens can develop 'civic skills' that subsequently can inspire political action. However, in a recent study of political participation of the urban poor in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Banks finds that instead of inspiring actions, suspicions and doubts surrounding NGOs were omnipresent amongst participants in the study (Banks, p. 368, 2008). Contrary to what some scholars have predicted, these organizations could instead deter capacity building and have a detrimental effect on the development of 'civic skills'.

From these two opposing findings, the following hypothesis is derived:

### *H2. Civic skills.*

If an individual is employed, affiliated with an organization and/or church will increase the possibility of acquiring civic skills that will, in turn, boost their propensity to participate in politics.

## 3.3 Political efficacy

The perceived political efficacy could impact an individual's propensity to participate in politics in two ways. A deep feeling of inequality or inefficiency of the status quo politics could either spur or lessen the motivation of participation amongst the urban poor. In the case of an enhanced political participation due to dissatisfaction relies on the existence of a forum or organization to transform the discontent into political participation according to Nelson (1979).

Other theorists have developed other explanations. In the 'collective interest model' Finkel and Muller specify the conditions under which individuals will participate in protest activities. One condition is that there are high levels of discontent with the current provision of public goods by the government or regime (Finkel & Mueller, p. 39, 1998).

The opposed effect could however also be possible: a strong feeling of disgruntlement and disenfranchisement could lead to a 'voter fatigue' syndrome,

meaning that individuals would opt out of participating in any political process (Lawless and Fox, 2001).

H3. *Perceived political efficacy.*

Dissatisfaction with the government will inspire action and spur political participation

### 3.4 Contact with government representatives or local politicians

If local politicians, government agents, such as social workers, are present and conspicuous in the lives of poor citizens, they are more likely to participate in politics (Banks, 2008; Harris, 2005; Lawless & Fox, 2001). Lawless and Fox find that dealing with welfare and social service workers influence attitudes about the political system as well as the tendency for respondents to relate their experiences with public assistance to impressions of government. This finding is corroborated by evidence from an informal settlement in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Both “active” and “non-active” inhabitants valued the most important characteristic of a ward commissioner to maintain a presence, be approachable and show an interest in the lives of the poor (Banks, p.370, 2008).

The logic of this explanation can be summarized as follows. The perceived distance between the poor and the national decision-makers is often large. The poor are experiencing a denial of their needs from the government – otherwise, they would not find themselves in the existing condition. If a decision-maker or politicians is locally elected, or at least present among the poor, they are more likely to be aware of the needs of the poor. Their presence can inspire further action, as citizens are more likely to participate when they view government as responsive (Conway, 1991; Danigelis, 1978).

H4. *Encounter with political representatives.*

Encounters with political representatives will motivate political participation as the ‘proximity’ of the decision makers increases.

### 3.5 The way the poor participate

While discussing the factors influencing political participation, it is crucial to turn to the avenues used for such participation. For the urban poor Harris, Banks, and Nelson find that voting and engagement in political parties are the main means employed by the poor to seek representation.

Elections are seen as a possibility of a reversal of power and the only time when the poor hold social and political power (Lawless & Fox, 2001). Participation of the urban poor could however also manifest through demonstrations and boycotts.

These are the, in the existing literature the means through which the urban poor participates, which prompts a conceptual discussion of what we consider to be political participation.

## 4. Definition and operationalization

### 4.1 Defining Political Participation

In the foundational work 'Political Participation in America', Verba and Nie employ a definition of political participation including 'behavior designed to affect the choice of governmental personnel and/or policies.' (Verba and Nie, 1972). However, excluded from the definition are passive forms of participation and violent forms, such as disobedience or political violence, of political participation (Conge, p. 242, 1988).

This conceptualization has been debated and contested. Questions regarding the intention of the concept include whether it should encompass 'unconventional' modes of political participation such as boycotts, demonstrations, and petitions. Joan Nelson, an early scholar of political participation of the urban poor in developing countries stresses the importance of including illegal and violent acts as forms of political participation. The urban poor, especially those living in informal, unrecognized settlement do not access public goods to the same extent citizens belonging to higher income strata of society do. Violence could be a response to injustices and can therefore qualify as political action.

While it can be useful to tailor a definition to better fit a certain social context, it could be at the expense of generalizability. In research investigating the pattern of political participation amongst urban poor in developing countries, the traditional concept of political participation has been modified. In the, to my knowledge, two previous studies of political participation in informal settlements, the definition of political participation has been dramatically expanded to include 'any form of participation through which the poor gain access to services and other means of problem-solving (Banks, p.366, 2008) and 'people's involvement in solving collective action problems' (Harris, p. 1042, 2005).

The problem-solving capacity amongst citizens in informal settlements is an important factor in the amelioration of their everyday life, and can be deemed 'political'. However, employing a different definition of political participation in studying this particular group carries inherent analytical concerns which should be addressed. A consequence of defining political participation as a community-level problem-solving activity is that the conclusions drawn from such a study will depend on, and be confined to that specific social context. Neither Banks nor Harris specifies what activity conceptually qualify as collective action problem-solving, which means that the studied phenomenon of political participation could range from a few families cleaning the sewage to community-wide public goods distribution.

Nelson stresses the importance of regarding impoverished citizens not as a class apart but as closely linked to, and interactive with other strata of society (Nelson p.381-402, 1979). Moreover, Banks asserts that the urban poor has more avenues than before of both traditional and non-traditional political participation (Banks, 2008). If we analytically and conceptually divide politics into social classes such as “the politics of the rich” and “the politics of the poor”, electoral and national politics as a concept will be analytically inadequate. This creates a real problem of reliability of a study aiming at evaluation ‘political participation’, as well as the suitability of future comparative studies and should therefore be carefully considered.

This paper will employ a definition of political participation that can travel across socioeconomic groups and allow for comparisons with studies that are concerned with a population as a whole. A precondition for such comparison is that the political activity is aimed towards a common decision-maker. Kenya’s population is within the jurisdiction of one national government and county governments on the local level. All citizens are affected by their decisions and all citizens could, in theory, engage in activities to influence the government. Therefore, activities not directed influencing either of those governmental instances will not be considered as political participation. The definition reads:

*Individual or collective action at the national or local level that supports or opposes state structures, authorities, and or the allocation of public goods.*

(Conge, 1988; Kaase & Marsh, 1979)

The analytical merits of employing such a definition are obvious. It includes an inclusive understanding of political participation that can manifest in different forms, under the condition that it is ultimately aimed at governmental instances or representatives. While the study conducted in this paper is confined to an informal settlement, the same survey could be used in other parts of Nairobi and still be relevant.

## 4.2 Operationalization

From this conceptual discussion, the indicator of political participation and the dependent variable of this study includes: registered to vote, voting, dedicated time or money to a political campaign, hosted or attended a political meeting, engaged in party nominations, attended a political rally or demonstration or/and signed a petition.

In the analysis, the dependent variable is divided into two categories: voters (registered to vote and voted) and political participants (the remaining political activities). There are reasons to believe that the characteristics and/or motivations of someone who ‘only’ votes and someone who engages in other political activities differ. Verba and Nie describe the latter as ‘citizen-initiated contact’ and argue that

the main characteristic separating the two is the power to set the agenda. The agenda-setting activities require more engagement (higher input) from the individual than voting, where the political agenda is already agreed upon (1972, 206). A further breakdown of the voting category is the division of 'registration' and 'voting' which are tested separately in the analysis. The input required for registration is expected to be lower than that for voting, since the act of voting to some extent requires a decision, regardless how informed it is. Categorizing the dependent variable in this fashion allows for more nuance in the analysis.

The political activities are gathered in an index ranging from zero to eight, depending on the number of activities indicated. In the index, the separate activities are equally weighted. There is currently no empirical, nor theoretical ground to ascribe more weight to an activity in the index. Instead, as the pattern of political participation is not known in the studied population, weighting could create a problem of reliability as it risks exacerbating patterns in the data in a distorting way.

The independent variables that will be tested are stated in the hypotheses. The precise definition and coding of them can be found in Appendix 1.



## 5. Context of the study: Kibera informal settlement

### 5.1 Kibera slum

Kibera is one of Africa's largest informal settlements and the largest one in Kenya. The name derives from the Nubian word Kibra for 'forest' and testifies to the origins of the settlement. During the Second World War, the British colonial powers deployed Kenyans in their forces and when the war ended Nubian soldiers were granted land in the forest in the outskirts of Nairobi (Mutisya and Yarime, 2011, p. 199).

Subsequently, the colonial government allowed for other ethnic groups to reside in the area. A still tangible legacy of the colonial government's rule is the prominent issue of land ownership in Kibera. Kikuyus, who were favored by the Kenyatta regime at independence, were given land in Kibera which allowed them to invest in housing. The historical land injustices and the economic inequalities have made the area sensitive to ethnic conflict. (De Smedt, 2009; Elfversson & Höglund, 2017).

As many other developing nations, Kenya is experiencing urbanization at a rapid speed. It is not uncommon that people moving from rural to urban areas in search of jobs end up in one of Nairobi's informal settlements. Kibera grew from a population of 3,000 in 1960 to 287,000 in 1999 (APHRC, 2014, p.18).

Due to the non-recognized status of the settlement, estimates of the population size and detailed census are not confirmed. UN-Habitat has estimated the total population to be between 350,000 and one million while International Housing Coalition estimates the population to more than 500,000. Government statistics on the total population of Kibera estimate the population to be around 200,000 people, a number that has been confirmed by a GIS and household survey conducted in 2011 (Desgropes & Taupin, 2011; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Mutisya & Yarime, 2011).

A 2007 report from Umande Trust, a non-governmental organization estimate the population in Kibera to be 30 % Luo, 20 % Kikuyu, 19 % Kamba, 14% Luhya, 6 % Kalenjin and 11 % other groups (Umande Trust, 2007; Mutisya and Yarime, p. 203, 2011), although these numbers have not been confirmed.

While the exact number of people residing in Kibera remains unconfirmed, consensus regarding the quality of life of the inhabitants prevails. Extensive poverty and unemployment characterize life in the slum. Almost three-quarters of Kibera's households earn less than KES 10,000 per month with an average of five people per household (approximately one USD per person per day) (Mulcacy & Chu, p.10,

2008). Formal employment is low, albeit no official statistics. Self-employment and informal, short contact work is however common. In a study conducted in 2011, only 8.5% of the men above 18 years in Kibera stated they have no occupation (Desgropes & Taupin, p. 8, 2011).

Housing and sanitation have been stated the most pressing issues of the settlement (UN Habitat, 2014). In 2006, only 22% of the slum households had water connections and 75% accessed water through water vendors severely overcharge (UN Habitat, 2006). These highly congested living conditions profoundly increase health risks and severely diminish the quality of life for Kibera residents (Mulcacy & Chu, p. 13, 2008) (K'akumu, p. 89, 2007).

## 5.2 Political landscape of Kibera

### 5.2.1 Electoral constituency

Kibera slum is a part of the Kibra electoral constituency which is made up of five different wards: Laini Saba, Makina, Sarangombe, Lindi and Woodley. Voter register data from the IEBC office in Kibra for the 2017 election reveals the following numbers.

Table 1. *Registered voters Kibra constituency 2017*

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Registered voters</b>
Laini Saba	17 292
Lindi	16 625
Makina	25 583
Woodley	28 019
Sarangombe	30 656
<b>Total</b>	<b>118 175</b>

Source: IEBC Office Kibra DC\*

\*Note: the documents obtained at the office did not hold the exact same numbers as the official IEBC report that was released in January 2018: 118 276 (accused of being manipulated).

### 5.2.2 Political Violence

Kibera has suffered from political and electoral violence on several occasions. It has often been characterized by ethnic tensions that have boiled over during election times. Throughout Kibera's history most of the violence originates from conflict of land and property ownership. Historically, Luos have been the tenants of the structures owned by Kikuyus and Nubians (De Smedt, p 588, 2009).

The post-election violence in 2007 and 2008 was particularly present and perpetrated in Kibera. The violence was expressed along ethnic lines in Kibera and resulted in the bolstering Luo dominance. Mostly affected were the Kikuyu landlords, whose power was reduced (Ibid, p. 589). This balance of power between ethnic groups have not stabilized and brewing tensions persists.

### 5.2.3 Political leaders

Albeit having suffered hardship and violence, Kibera is also the breeding place for some of Kenya's most prominent political leaders. Raila Odinga, the main opponent to incumbent presidents since 1997, was the Member of Parliament for the Kibra constituency for 20 years (De Smedt, p.585, 2009). In Sarangombe ward, the powerful Kamukunji meeting is held every Sunday. The political meeting is in place to inform and engage Kibera citizen in political dialogue and has spurred political engagement both in terms of party politics but also to inspire peacebuilding and engagement in community organizations (Abraham, p.74, 2014).

In sum, Kibera has a complex and multifaceted political landscape that has spurred political participation, both in violent forms as well as through inspiring political leaders and community members.

## 6. Data and methods

While attempting to explore what factors influence political participation amongst citizens in Kibera, a quantitative study was envisioned. A questionnaire was distributed to 300 respondents in three of the five wards in the Kibra constituency. Of those, thirteen failed to fill the questionnaire adequately and were disregarded. A descriptive statistics summary can be found in appendix 2.

In order to evaluate the impact of the current explanations of political participation formulated in the hypotheses, a multiple linear regression analysis was employed to measure their correlation. This subsequent section identifies some of the central methodological considerations to this study, starting with the choice of the studied area. Secondly, a section discussing the crucial matter of sampling as well as its limitations can be found. Lastly, a brief section defends the choice of a regression analysis as the main tool in analyzing the data.

### 6.1 Choice of area of study

While attempting to explore the nuances and pattern of political participation amongst the urban poor in Kenya, the deliberate choice of carrying out the extensive survey data collection in Kibera is motivated by two foundational reasons. Firstly, Kibera is the largest informal settlement in Kenya and poverty is assumed to be a ubiquitous feature in the life of most citizens.

Secondly, Kibera is an area that displays significant varieties in the census of the population. Kenya as a country is home to over seventy ethnic groups and politics are highly ethnicized (University of Pennsylvania, 2017). It is thus crucial for a study of political participation in the Kenyan context that the sample is representing several different ethnic groups. In that sense, collecting the data in the Kibra constituency allows for further nuance in the analysis.

*Table 2. Descriptive characteristics of the wards*

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Descriptive characteristics</b>
<i>Laini Saba</i>	Ethnically diverse Business community
<i>Makina</i>	Nubian stronghold Muslim stronghold Pro-jubilee, and inhabitants were given land prior to the 2017 election
<i>Sarangombe</i>	Politically vibrant Majority Luo High unemployment rate Mainly NASA supporters Kamukunji meeting every Sunday open field

(Interview, Anne Wambui 6/12)

## 6.2 Sampling

While designing a study of this kind, one of the main methodological concerns is that of sampling. With an ambition to draw conclusions from the sample pertaining to the studied population, the representability in the sample of the population as a whole is paramount in order to avoid systemic generalizability errors (Teorell & Svensson, p.69, 2007). One of the strategies commonly employed is to make a random selection of respondents from a known population. It is of particularly good use when the operating independent variable is not known beforehand (Geddes, p. 134, 1990).

Two sub-categories of random selection can be identified. Firstly, stratified selection entails dividing (stratifying) the respondents in accordance with the 'interesting attributes' and then perform random sampling to the strata. Secondly, quota selection is a different method of random sampling where the relative probability of a respondent to be chosen is unknown. The selection is thus random in so far that the respondent that will be chosen is unknown but the selection is still constrained by certain criteria or attributes to ensure representability along the relevant indicators.

In theory, both methods of random sampling presuppose a good knowledge of the attributes and their distribution within the studied population. For this study, the lack of comprehensive census data of the informal settlements poses an obvious constraint. The most recent encompassing census data collection in Kenya is dated 2009, in which the specific population, of Kibera, is not stated (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Despite having indicative numbers of Kibera population ranging between 200.000 to one million (see section 5.1) the distribution of gender, age and ethnicity within the population are not known.

## 6.3 Random walk sampling method

In an attempt to circumvent the obvious constraint of census data, the sampling in this study aimed to conduct a quota selection through random-walk selection with the following guidelines:

1. Gender distribution in the wards was assumed to be around 50-50, therefore, every second respondent should be male/female.
2. No person under the age of 18 was eligible to partake in the survey as it is the age limit for voting.

Random walk sampling is a method employed to approximate a probability sample when information about the population does not exist on beforehand. However, since the method of selection does not guarantee that every household has a known probability of selection it is not a strict probability sample. (Turner, p. 7, 2003).

In practice, the method entails that the data collector has a predetermined path of travel and will select households according to a randomized formula. In this case, the data collectors were instructed to approach every 10th person or household on the right-hand side and would interview each qualifying person until the pre-determined quota of one hundred people per ward had been reached.

For each ward, the starting point was the Kibra District Commissioner's office where the team of six data collectors departed from for each day of data collection. Prior to each data collecting session, the data collectors and I discussed the geography of the ward and it was subsequently divided amongst the team members. The informal settlements of Kibera do not have a structured street network instead small pathways between the houses are in place. Whenever the pathway traveled came to an end, the data collectors would take a left and for the subsequent time it occurred, they would take a right.

Advocates of this sampling technique claim it to be unbiased as long as the starting point along the path of travel is determined randomly (Turner, p.9, 2003). Moreover, the technique also addresses the issue of non-response amongst the informants as the interviewer continues beyond non-responding households until he or she obtains enough responding ones to fulfill the quota. However, by substituting non-responding households with responding ones, the sample could be biased toward cooperative, available households (Joshi et al., p. 2, 2014).

In this study, measures were taken to mitigate the issue of non-responsiveness. The team members were informed to take notes of the circumstances and reasons, in the case of a randomly selected respondent refraining or refusing to participate. In following up at the end of each day of data collection, these constraints were reported on. The research team only registered ten refusals for participation and the reasons were primarily time constraint and lack of interest.

Of those who were reluctant to answer, a prominent concern was that the data collectors were sent by the government and some of the team members experienced lack of trust based on their ethnicity. The data-collectors were all active community workers as well as Kibera citizens and thus skilled in community interactions, building trust and engaging in dialogue. In most cases of initial reluctance of participating the information on the consent form as well as a dialogue where the informant could ask questions ultimately resulted in participation.

Another potential concern regarding the representability within the sample should be addressed. The survey was conducted during weekdays while in other similar surveys, the data collection was conducted during the weekend, when most people

are assumed to be home from work (Joshi, Ayah, Njau, et al., 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2001). A concern could be that the sample does not cover people that are working elsewhere than in Kibera.

Taken into consideration that Kibera is a vibrant business community and many of the inhabitants are self-employed in the slum, it could still be feasible to conduct the study during weekdays (Desgropes & Taupin, 2011). Moreover, the unemployment rate of the Kibera population is high which means that people are often dwelling in the community. Moreover, most people spend Sundays in church, leaving us only Saturdays to conduct the survey. Carrying out the data collection three consecutive Saturdays presented obvious time constraints as well as straining the availability of the research team.

## 6.4 In designing the questionnaire

A test round was conducted to test the quality of the questionnaire as well as evaluating the random-sampling method. This is crucial for any study of this kind to ensure the reliability of the survey as it can reveal problems that the interviewers have with the questionnaire as well as evaluating the questions' adequacy (Schaeffer & Presser, p. 81, 2003).

The initial survey that was distributed mainly consisted of 'closed' yes/no questions. The reason of that was primarily to create a simple non-time consuming formula. However, after having analyzed the results of the test-survey, it was clear that the respondents requested more 'open' questions to satisfy an urge to express their opinion in greater detail. Other concerns that were addressed involved the categories available for church and mosque attendance as well as the wording of the education levels.

The survey was made available in Kiswahili and English which are the two official languages in Kenya. We noticed during the test survey that many respondents preferred having the survey read to them. The data collecting team was thus informed on how to read the questions in a non-suggestive, neutral manner, to not influence the answers that were given.

Lastly, it is important to mention the overwhelmingly positive response to the survey, which made the crucial point of approachability easier for all data collectors.

## 6.5 Interviews

The quantitative data and analysis constitute an integral part of the study. However, some of the findings were needed additional nuances and explanations. For this purpose, after having analyzed the data, I carried out two semi-structured longer interviews with two central political players in Kibera: Anne Wambui Ithara, first assistant to Member of Parliament Ken Okoth (6/12-2018) and Cecilia Ayote, Member of County Assembly for Laini Saba ward (15/12-2018). The interview guide can be found in Appendix 4.

## 6.6 Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all the informants that participated in this study. All informants were above 18 years old. The ethical considerations and the consent form followed the guidelines of the Swedish Research Council and the template of the consent form was borrowed from University of Chicago (University of Chicago, 2018; Etikprövningsnämnden, 2017).

## 6.7 Data analysis

In analyzing the quantitative data, a regression analysis was employed. This method allows for estimates of unknown parameters and how each of them affect the known parameter, in this case, political participation. Multiple regression is used when a variable Y (dependent) is to be studied a function or in a relationship with any factors of interest (Teorell & Svensson, p. 192, 2007).

Regression analysis can describe both a causal or behavioral process (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, p.69, 2003). The analysis in this study is not attempting to make a causal claim, however, the regression analysis exteriorizes the relationship between the independent variables and political participation. This method of analysis is particularly well suited for this study since it is unprecedented in Kenya and the correlation of the independent variables on political participation is unknown.

Since the dependent variable of ‘voting’ is dichotomous, e.g. a yes/no variable a logistic regression is used in testing it. Linear regression for binary variables can yield meaningless results, since a predicted probability may fall outside the range 0–1 (Hellevik, p. 62, 2009). This does not, however, affect the comparability with the results from the multiple regression analysis.



## 7. Results

Table 3. *Estimated political activity amongst Kibera citizens*

Variable	Registered 2017	Registered 2013	Voted 2017	Voted 2013	Political participation
<i>SES indicators</i>					
Gender	0.945 (0.62)	0.883 (0.55)	0.515 (0.474)	0.779 (0.061)	0.319 (0.365)
Age	0.004*** (0.04)	0.001*** (0.06)	0.011** (0.029)	0.001*** (0.002)	0.128 (0.017)
Ethnicity	0.967 (0.07)	0.174 (0.06)	0.535 (0.068)	0.330 (0.008)	0.762 (0.052)
Education	0.023** (0.037)	0.421 (0.359)	0.031** (0.290)	0.203 (0.040)	0.138 (0.241)
Income	0.213 (0.24)	0.069* (0.18)	0.994 (0.182)	0.090* (0.023)	0.177 (0.138)
<i>Civic skills indicators</i>					
Employment	0.731 (0.706)	0.573 (0.586)	0.338 (0.573)	0.385 (0.064)	0.532 (0.383)
Group membership	0.001*** (0.740)	0.015** (0.569)	0.001*** (0.479)	0.009*** (0.067)	0.010*** (0.400)
Weekly Church/ Mosque attendance	0.729 (0.399)	0.349 (0.334)	0.525 (0.331)	0.970 (0.042)	0.194 (0.254)
<i>Encounters</i>					
Government agent	0.336 (0.714)	0.662 (0.073)	0.600 (0.550)	0.642 (0.075)	0.611 (0.450)
Local politician	0.776 (0.873)	0.747 (0.677)	0.082* (0.668)	0.666 (0.091)	0.027** (0.545)
Local chief	0.464 (0.815)	0.766 (0.741)	0.085* (0.657)	0.476 (0.088)	0.825 (0.528)
<i>Political efficacy</i>					
Perceived political efficacy	0.169 (0.152)	0.243 (0.130)	0.022** (0.119)	0.035** (0.045)	0.656 (0.268)
Political knowledge	0.038 (0.34)	0.009*** (0.315)	0.432 (0.28)	0.005*** (0.038)	0.018** (0.228)
Constant	0.005 (2.57)	0.001 (2.76)	0.033 (1.87)	0.000 (2.62)	0.340 (2.95)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.330	0.537	0.214	0.513	0.371

Standard errors in parentheses. \* p < 0.10, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01. Estimations made in Stata 14.2.

With this data, I am able to determine which factors correlate with political participation amongst Kibera citizens in these three wards. The dependent variables are divided into two categories of political activism: ‘voters’ and ‘political participants’. They are subsequently tested independently with each of the independent variables and will be presented in that same order in the ensuing section.

## 7.1 Voting

The first four models test the independent variables suggested by the existing literature and their correlation with voting and registration. The regression coefficient corroborates what traditional political participation theories claim: socioeconomic and demographic factors play a role in the voting behavior in Kibera.

From the sample, higher age is positively correlated with voting. Possible explanations include the following. Traditional theories claim that political resources such as time, money and skills are accumulated over the course of life. Older respondents are therefore more likely to have accrued any of these resources. Some of the younger respondents answered that they were still in school, of which some were attending boarding school up-country and could not vote. (Conway 1991; Milbrath and Goel 1977).

Additional levels of schooling were also positively correlated with voting. Those who had finished secondary or university/college are more likely to cast their ballots. The Kibera citizens do not in that regard exempt from the patterns found in other populations studied (compare: Banks 2008; Harris; 2005; Verba et al. 1993). Higher degrees of education are associated with the development of faculties that can allow for critical engagement in politics. Moreover, as in most other parts of the world, higher education in Kenya is often correlated with higher income levels.

Furthermore, income was statistically significant with voting in the 2013 election but not for 2017 election. It could be due to that in the sample, some of the younger respondents were not eligible to vote in the 2013 election, and those are also the ones that are expected to have a lower income. This is aligned with the predictions made in the resources model of participation (Brady et al., 1995).

Conversely, gender and ethnicity (compare: race in Lawless and Fox) did not have a significant impact on voting behavior in the sample. Schlozman and Verba discovered a gender bias in the access to resources enabling engagement in politics as women earned less and had fewer opportunities to engage in political activities. In this sample, however, the income disparities between men and women were not significant, neither was completed education, nor employment status.

With the significant correlation of the indicators of age, education, and income, hypothesis 1 on socioeconomic indicators confirmed for voting.

Regarding the civic skills indicators, employment and church/mosque visit frequency do not have an impact on the respondents’ propensity to vote. Group membership in a social, political or community organization, on the other hand, is strongly positively correlated with voting (see: Baumgartner & Walker, 1988). This finding thus

supports the theorization around group membership as a significant catalyst or motivation to engage in politics (Verba et. al 1995). A more elaborate analysis of this will be identified in the subsequent section 8.3.

Hypothesis 2 is confirmed, but only through the group membership indicator.

Respondents were not more prone to registered to vote if they had encountered a local politician. On the other hand, for those who voted in the 2017 election, the encounter had an effect. A possible explanation could be that political campaigns from local politicians compelled respondents to cast their ballots (which is the very objective of such campaign). For the 2013 registration and voting such encounters did not have an effect. The survey question explicitly stated if the respondents had encountered a politician over the past year, leaving the 2013 election outside the scope. This was purposely done to create a point of comparison. Indeed, the campaigns seem to serve as a positive motivator for voting, while it does not influence the propensity to register.

From the regression analysis, hypothesis 4 is refuted for ‘voters’.

The hypothesis of political efficacy implies that dissatisfaction of the current political system and government will propel action amongst citizens. The indicator is significant for voting both the 2013 and the 2017 election which thereby confirms hypothesis 3. A more developed analysis of this finding will be identified in section 8.1.

The political knowledge questions were envisioned to provide nuance to the sample, in testing whether increased knowledge about current political events have a positive correlation with increased participation. As the indicator is only significant for the 2013 election, there are reasons to believe that older respondents know the questions and the nature of the correlation to political participation can be an illusory correlational and will be disregarded.

## 7.2 Political participation

If we turn to the factors influencing political activities, the regression analysis reveals different results. Contrary to what traditional theories of political participation claim, socioeconomic indicators, and demographic factors did not bolster the likelihood of engaging in political activities. Hypothesis 1 is thereby refuted for ‘political participants’.

While group membership remains significant at the 0.01 level, the remaining two indications of civic skills did not have a significant effect on political activity in the sample. Reaching the same conclusion as for voting for hypothesis 2, it is corroborated only through group membership.

In other words, political participants did not appear to have more of any of the resources (other than potentially civic skills, represented as group membership) necessary to transform the motivation to participation (Verba et al. 1995). While it remains true that political participation requires some input, the nature of the input could be of different importance in different social context. The assumptions made in earlier studies of political participation might not be plausible to explain the

motivations in a 'poor' context, as the emphasis has been placed on time and money. This core finding on required input for different activities will be further developed in section 8.1.

Turning back to the data, however, a strong correlation between political participants and encounters with local politicians which is significant at the 0.05 level in the sample. Implying that such an encounter spur political participation amongst the respondents. This finding underpins conclusions made in previous studies of political participation amongst the urban poor (See: Lawless and Fox, 2011 and Banks, 2008). Hypothesis 4 is thereby confirmed for political participants. Section 8.2 will elaborate further on this key finding.

The indicator of political efficacy does not have a significant correlation with political participation. In other words, dissatisfaction alone is not enough to make people engage in political activities that are not voting. Nelson claims that dissatisfaction can propel political engagement, but only if there are meaningful institutions or organizations in societies that can transform the discontent into participation. The lack of such institutions could provide an explanation to the observed pattern. Hypothesis 3 is refuted for 'political participants'.

For the knowledge questions, a positive correlation with political participation was identified. Definitive conclusions of this pattern can be perilous to draw. Asserting that people that are more engaged in politics will possess more knowledge of current political events seems logical. However, the specific question might carry nuances that make some people more adapt to answer them, without revealing a pattern of political participation (compare Lawless and Fox 2011).

## 8. Analysis of major findings

The first main finding in this study is the differing indicators correlating with voting on one hand and political participation of the other. Secondly, a strong correlation between encounters with local politicians and the propensity to vote and engage in political activities was identified, a finding that warrants more attention. Thirdly, another salient finding is that of group membership as a driver of political engagement which prompts a discussion of the suitability for ‘civic skills’ as the driver of political participation amongst Kibera citizens.

### 8.1 Input for the activities differ

The regression analysis revealed different patterns in the indicators spurring voting on one hand and political participation on the other hand. In the sample, 86% of the respondents said they voted, just slightly more than the share of respondents that had engaged in any of the political participation (85%). This provides a contrast to what most earlier studies on the topic have concluded; that voting is the most commonly used mode by the urban poor for engaging in politics (Banks, 2008; Harris, 2005; Lawless and Fox 2011). In the sample, the importance of voting to the respondents was nonetheless protruding.

‘Any leader can lose their seat without my voice’

‘It is me that bring them the sovereign power to govern and to rule and using our national resources’

‘Voting is important because it is the way to bring about change’

Bäck et. al, argue that voting can be regarded as more of a ‘civic duty than most other forms of participation’. In addition, what renders it a political activity with high frequency across populations is the relatively high norm pressure (resulting from the ‘civic duty’) along with the relatively low cost of fulfilling one’s perceived duty.’ (Bäck, Teorell, & Westholm, p.81, 2011). The duty can be particularly pronounced in Kibera where a non-vote can be costly for the society as a whole and peer pressure rise as a consequence. Further, Verba and Nie. argue that the act of voting requires a lower input than other modes of participation (1972, p. 105). The regression revealed that dissatisfaction was ‘sufficient’ to encourage inhabitants to cast their ballot. In a sense, this is what we expect from any democratic system- if citizens want change,

voting is to many respondents, a meaningful way to attempt to bring about such change.

The regression analysis manifest in a decisive way, that the factors influencing voting are not the same as for political participation.

For political participation, traditional SES-indicators and political efficacy were not significant, yet political participation remained high. Of the total sample, only 15 % had not participated in any political activity. 60 % had participated in two of the eight stated political activities. 36% of the sample had engaged in at least four of the eight activities.

While the SES-explanation is insufficient in explaining the motivators of political participation, it provides a powerful point of comparison for the indicator that did bolster participation, namely that of encounters with local politicians. It allows us to deduct that regardless of the age, education and income level, such encounters spur participation. The potential policy implications from this conclusion could be significant. A present, engaged leader can motivate people to participate in politics, despite them not possessing any of the resources that in theory have been considered prerequisites for political participation.

Concomitantly, another analysis of the diverging patterns of voting and political participation can be made. For the activities categorized as political participation, a higher input is needed. Nonetheless, input defined by resources (time and money) have proven by the analysis to not be the decisive factor.

Verba and Nie (1972) have concluded that explanations of political participation must be mode-specific to a significant extent. The findings clearly point to the same conclusion. While scholarly inquiry has mainly focused on party politics as a pull-factor for participation, future studies could interrogate political leaders' function as an 'input' to transform motivation to participation in the context of urban poor.

## 8.2 Encounter with Local politicians

In the regression analysis that include data from all three wards, the independent variable of an encounter with a local politician is significant at the 0.05 level. In other words, those who have been in contact with a local politician are also substantially more likely to engage in other political activities than those who have not.

Several explanations for this finding can be attempted. Poor citizens can in general terms be assumed to be experiencing some kind of social, or political marginalization. Meanwhile, elected leaders that are 'far' away, both in terms of geographical distance as well as in understanding could also be more prone to 'overlook' or not meet the needs of the poor. Several respondents expressed this in the open-ended questions on opinions on the government.

'The government (national) does not provide services to Kibera because we are poor'

'They (the government) are only interested in the slum during campaigns'

Contrary then, if the poor are regularly encountering the local politicians, this feeling of invisibility of the conditions seems likely to change.

‘...they (local politicians) know what the conditions are here (Kibera)’

‘My representative (MP Okoth) grew up amongst us. He knows us.’

However, a reciprocity in the relationship between the Kibera citizens and the local politicians prevails. Any elected leader is dependent on their constituencies to prolonging their term and should at least, in theory, be compelled to offer something in return for a vote.

During our interview, Cecilia Ayote (15/12) contended that a person that is elected from the community is more beholden to the community, as they carry the responsibility to ameliorate the living conditions for the community members. Leaders that are elected and present in the community are more likely to be able to engage those living there into politics than a politician on a national level.

Anne Wambui alluded to the problem of national politicians; ‘buying off the poor voters’ and that the Kibera voters get ‘compelled by any monetary means’ (6/12). Buying votes of in this fashion can a detrimental effect on both accountability as well as organically building sustainable participation that does not depend on monetary promises around election times. In contrast, for a local politician that is perceived to be present and can deliver to those that have been engaging and active (accountability), further participation can be sparked as a result. The nuances of this argument crystallize when comparing the wards.

Table 4. Encounters with local politicians and political participation

Ward	Encounter with a local politician Yes	Political participation		P-value Correlation Encounter - participation
		0 activities	5 or more activities	
<i>Sarangombe</i>	78%	11.2 %	34.7%	0.008***
<i>Makina</i>	75%	14.1 %	26 %	0.093*
<i>Laini Saba</i>	71 %	16.4%	13.4%	0.132

### 8.2.1 Sarangombe

The data indicate clearly that Sarangombe is a more politically ‘active’ ward. The data from the questionnaire does not reveal specific characteristics that can explain this. During my interviews with Ayote (15/12) and Wambui (6/12), some tentative answers were however deducted. Of the three wards, Sarangombe hosts a big political meeting to which inhabitants assemble after church on Sundays. The field on which Kamukunji is held is the only relatively big open space in the slum, otherwise extremely densely populated. In these meetings, local politicians and campaign workers present their agenda which can be a powerful encounter and exchange (Wambui 6/12). An explanation could be that Sarangombe is simply the

only geographical place where people can gather for big meetings, rendering the ward a political ‘hub’.

Finkel and Muller's argument that strength of party identification might affect the propensity to participate together could pertain to Sarangombe to a greater extent than the other wards (Finkel & Mueller, 1998). The leader of NASA, Raila Odinga is Luo and a majority of the supporters are too. Sarangombe is the Luo stronghold in Kibera and it is the only ward that in the individual regression analysis displayed a significant correlation between ethnicity (Luo) and increased political participation. The community leaders are often elected from within the community and are likely to share the same ethnic identity and political stance as the people living in the ward, which could facilitate engagement (Wambui, 6/12).

### 8.2.2 Laini Saba

Laini Saba is the ‘business district’ in Kibera with a more ethnically diverse population (see table 2). The overall political activity was the lowest in Laini Saba which could have several explanations. Contrary to Sarangombe the population is heterogeneous and engaging inhabitants along ethnic lines is not possible to the same extent, if party affiliations are expressed in that fashion. Finkel and Mueller’s argument does not specify the explicit link between ethnicity and party identification, however, many scholars of Kenyan politics have found this to be the case in Kenya (Brass, 2012; Jablonski, 2014).

In Kibera, all the local administrative work, including issuing of business licenses and shops and store spaces rental, is conducted by the local chiefs (Wambui 6/12). The individual regression for Laini Saba does not display any significant correlation for local politicians, but encounters with a local chief was significant at the 0.01 level. The chiefs also hold a function an authority function within the societal governance structure, qualifying the encounter as an encounter with a political representative (albeit not elected). This finding corroborates the argument that the local representative that citizens encounter frequently are the ones that influence participation.

### 8.2.3 Makina

Lastly, Makina is ethnically diverse with a business community less vibrant than Laini Saba. While it showed a slight significance with encounter with local politician it did not for chiefs. Makina serves in a sense as a point of comparison to test the strength of the ‘encounter’ argument.

If local politicians would be more likely to rally support along ethnic lines the pattern in Makina aligns with that argument: it has an ethnically diverse population and lower participation than Sarangombe and was less significant in the ward-specific regression analysis. It is not as a vibrant business community as Laini Saba and local chief encounters did also not bolster participation in the ward. Ann Wambui disclosed during the interview that Makina is a ward with few strong community leaders and that the inhabitants (Nubian stronghold) have been sensitive to promises from government representatives of land allocations. Leaders in Makina have



historically not been elected from the community (Wambui, 6/12). This could serve as an explanation as to why the significant correlation between local politicians and political participation in the ward is weaker than for Sarangombe.

### 8.3 Group membership

The third central observation from the regression analysis is the strong correlation between group membership and political activity, both for voters and political participants.

Traditional theorists argue that civic skills can be acquired through group membership and is one of the resources for political participation. Yet, this argument does not provide a necessary condition for participation e.g. just because someone possesses civic skills it does not mean that they will use them to engage in politics. In the case of Kibera, it seems unlikely that civic skills can be singled out as the operational factor in participation since other fora for acquiring such skills are not significant in the sample. In addition, civic skills are expected to accrue over the course of a lifetime, rendering older respondents more likely to harbor and expose such skills. Nonetheless, age, level of education, employment or income did not have an effect on political participation which in turn can question the explanatory viability of the concept.

Beyond these empirical refutations of civic skills as a catalyst to political activity, a theoretical one can be further explored. Even if we accept the argument that group membership produces civic skills and that in turn is a resource for transforming motivation to capacity to engage in politics, the catalyst between capacity and actual engagement remains unspecified.

The level of group membership in the sample is high. In the overall sample of 287 respondents, 185 (65%) said they are a part of a community, social or political group. This poses several interesting questions about the role of group membership in relation to political participation.

The first question is why so many of the respondents are members of a group. In the survey respondents indicated their group to work directly, or indirectly with the some of the following themes: women groups, food, sanitation, peacebuilding and political parties. The themes suggest that groups have germinated around issues that are inherently political, as they are central to the amelioration of the quality of life in Kibera. Most inhabitants need provisions that the groups are concerned with and standing outside a potential source of service provision can be costly, which could be one explanation for the high group membership rate. Moreover, many people are unemployed, which can allow for spending time attending groups. The abundance of community groups in Kibera further lowers the threshold of joining such a group since the accessibility can be considered to be high (UN Habitat, 2014).

From here, the explanation of the catalyst yielding political participation from group membership can take several forms, I will develop on two of them. Firstly,

since many of the community groups are dealing with what could be considered political issues, such as public goods provision, or peacebuilding there could be an overlap in the analysis between the dependent and independent variable. While it is delicate to search for explanations outside of the stated definition, engagement in community groups dealing with public provisions lies analytically close to the 'problem solving' definition employed by Harris (2005) to explain political participation. Consistent with the findings of the urban poor in New Delhi, inhabitants of Kibera engage in these groups as an indirect way of participating in politics.

Yet, worth emphasizing is that while there might be an overlap of the independent and dependent variables of group activity and political participation, such overlap does not pertain to the case of voting. Group membership is as significant for voters as for political participants, which prompts an alternative explanation.

A second explanation can be that of group mobilization capacity (Holyoke, 2012; Leighley, 1996; Verba & Nie, 1972). Verba and Nie have argued that organizations 'increase the propensity of the individual to be a participant because they give him an opportunity for training in participation that can be transferred to the political realm ...what counts is not mere membership but the opportunity that the organization affords' (p.184).

For the Kibera context, the opportunities offered to group members could be information and for political participation. Moreover, a 'peer pressure' within these groups could pave the way for collective political action. If members mobilize around a certain societal topic, as identified in the survey, it is likely that they want to forward their agenda: where one of the avenues to do that is the political arena.

In sum, concluding that civic skills are the catalyst at play in facilitating political participation in Kibera does not appear plausible. Instead, there are reasons to believe that the community groups which respondents were a part of, are political by nature and membership in those can be regarded as a political act. This could explain the strong correlation of group membership and all forms of political participation in the sample. However, mobilization capacity within groups can also provide an explanation to the pattern identified in the regression analysis.

## 9. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to identify the factors influencing political participation in terms of voting and other political activities in the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya. Contrary to what earlier studies of political participation have concluded of a general absence of poor citizens in political engagement, Kibera provides, in the light of these theories a paradox with its widespread poverty, yet vibrant political community.

From the quantitative data, patterns regarding voting in Kibera, by and large, follow the predictions of SES-indicators made in traditional theories. Kibera citizens with higher levels of education and income were more likely to register and vote. For political participants, however, the SES explanation is insufficient. Instead, encounters with local politicians displayed a significant correlation with political participation.

In at least three significant ways does this finding add to the current literature on political participation on the urban poor, primarily by corroborating the arguments made in the pioneering studies on the topic (see Lawless and Fox 2011 and Banks 2008) about encounters as the main driver for political engagement.

Secondly, the study exposes in a clear manner that the factors influencing participation differ depending on the activity and thereby underpin the indispensability of analyzing political in relation to the nature of the act and the level of input required.

Lastly, group membership significantly bolsters political engagement in Kibera. Organizations can provide members with a forum for information sharing and collective engagement that can positively affect the propensity to engage in political activity.

The policy implications of the study can be significant. A central barrier to understanding and predicting the engagement in politics amongst the poor is analytical inadequacy, as traditional comparative models designed in such a way that the poor are bound to score lower. Shedding light on what motivates different political activities, can help local, and national decision-makers to better understand what measures are needed to engage more people in Kibera in political dialogue. The positive welfare effects for the society as a whole of such an exercise are obvious.

Limitations of this study have been several. Surveying all five wards of the Kibera constituency could yield more nuance in the results, as well as potentially corroborating, or refuting some claims on the ward-specific analysis. Notwithstanding, the study was designed in such a way that subsequent studies could add to the findings and cumulatively can be enabled. Future studies could serve as a

point of departure in comparing the political pattern of other informal settlements. Better yet, a comparative study of socioeconomically different areas in Nairobi could reveal differences and similarities of the behavior of voting, and political engagement amongst Kenyans.

## 10. References

### Interviews

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# 11. Appendix

## APPENDIX 1. EXPLANATIONS AND CODING OF THE VARIABLES

Variable	Explanation and coding
<b>Dependent variable</b>	
<i>Voting</i>	Indicates whether the respondent voted in the 2017 election (1) or not (0) as well as if they voted in the 2013 election (1) or not (0).
<i>Registered to vote</i>	Indicates whether the respondent was registered to vote in the 2017 election (1) or not (0) as well as if they were registered to vote in the 2013 election (1) or not (0).
<i>Political activism</i>	Indicates the political activities that the respondent has been taking part in other than voting. Ranging from (0) to (8) depending on the number of indicated activities: Dedicate time to a political campaign or candidate, donated money to a political campaign or candidate, hosted a political meeting or debate, attended a political meeting or debate, party nominations, engaged in political rallies or demonstration, signed a petition or other political event.
<b>Independent variables</b>	
<i>Socioeconomic factors and demographics</i>	
Gender	Indicates whether the respondent was male (1) or female (2).
Age	Indicates the age of the respondent.
Ethnicity	Indicates the ethnicity of the respondent. Within the sample the following ethnic groups were identified: Kikuyu (1) Luo (2) Luhya (3) Kisii (4) Nubian (5) Masai (6) Kamba (7) Somali (8) Kalenjin (9), Teso (10) Embu (11) Kenyan (12) Pokot (13) Meru (14).
Education	Indicates the level of education completed by the respondent. None (0) Primary (1) Secondary (2) or College/University (3).
Monthly income	Indicates the monthly income in Kenyan shillings (KES) of the respondent ranging from 0-2000 (1) 2000-4000 (2) 4000-8000 (3) 8000-12000 (4) to more than 12000 (5).
<i>Civic skills indicators</i>	
Employment status	Indicates whether the respondent was currently employed (1) or not (0).



Group membership Indicates whether the respondent is part of any political, social or community group/organization (1) or not (0).

Church/mosque attendance Indicates the how often the respondent attend church or the mosque ranging from “Never” (0) “Once a month” (1) “Once a week” (2) to “Everyday” (3)

*Personal experience with political actors*

Interaction with political actors Whether the respondent has over the last year interacted with a government agent (1) or not (0), a local politician (1) or not (0) as well as local chief (1) or not (0).

Quality of the experience The respondents were asked how they would feel to interact with each of the above-mentioned actors again ranging from “Very confident” (3) “Confident” (2) “Not confident” (3).

*Political attitudes*

Political efficacy A scale based on three questions where the respondent indicated whether the statement felt “True” (3) “Somewhat true” (2) or “Not true” (1) to measure the overall trust in the political system. The questions were: “The government has my interest at heart”, “Kenya’s political system allows equal opportunities to participate for all citizens.” and “My vote in the election counts”.

Political knowledge Questions about current political events to determine the political knowledge of the respondents. “What is the name of the current deputy president of Kenya?”, “What is the name of the Kibra member of parliament?”, “Identify two political parties affiliated with NASA” and “What is the name of the president of South Africa?” Ranging from (0) to (4) depending on the number of correct answers.

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*APPENDIX 2. Descriptive statistics of variables*

Variable	Number of observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.
Vote in 2017 election	287	0.85	0.35	0	1
Vote in 2013 election	287	0.72	0.44	0	1
Political activity index	287	2.83	2.36	0	8
Time to political campaign	287	0.43	0.49	0	1
Money to political campaign	287	0.18	0.38	0	1
Hosted a political meeting	287	0.24	0.42	0	1
Attended a political meeting	287	0.53	0.49	0	1
Party nomination	287	0.40	0.49	0	1
Engaged in rallies or demonstration	287	0.52	0.50	0	1
Signed a petition	287	0.25	0.43	0	1
Other political event	287	0.30	0.45	0	1
Gender	287	1.48	0.5	1	2
Age	285	32.4	10.1	18	70
Ethnicity	282	4.43	3.63	1	14
Education	283	2.01	0.76	0	3
Monthly income	234	3.05	1.52	0	5
Employment	285	0.38	0.48	0	1
Part of an organization	287	0.64	0.47	0	1
Frequency of attending church	287	1.99	0.73	0	3
Interacting with government agent	287	0.63	0.48	0	1
Interacting with local politician	287	0.74	0.43	0	1
Interacting with local chief	287	0.77	0.42	0	1
Experience with the police	285	1.72	0.78	1	3
Political efficacy	287	5.10	2.12	0	9
Political knowledge	287	3.40	0.80	0	4

APPENDIX 3. Questionnaire

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POLITICAL PARTICIPATION STUDY

Gender: M F

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Education:   None           Primary           Secondary           College/University

Monthly income: 0-2000   2000-4000   4000-8000   8000-12000   more than 12000  
(in KES)

Currently employed:       Yes           No

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1. Were you registered to vote in the August 8<sup>th</sup> 2017 election?

Yes           No

2. Did you vote in the August 8<sup>th</sup> 2017 election?

Yes           No

If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Were you registered to vote in the 2013 election?

Yes           No

4. Did you vote in the 2013 election?

Yes           No

If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Have you taken part of any of the following activities? (tick all that apply)

- Dedicate time to a political campaign or candidate
- Donated money to a political campaign or candidate
- Hosted a political meeting or debate
-

- Attended a political meeting or debate
- Party nominations
- Engaged in political rallies or demonstration
- Signed a petition
- Attended a public forum
- Other political event: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Are you a part of any political, social or community organization?

Yes                      No

If yes, please specify what organization: \_\_\_\_\_

7. How often do you attend church/mosque?

- Every day
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Never

8. Have you, or anyone in your family had contact with any of the following during the last year:

8.1 A government agent:                      Yes                      No

If yes: How confident would you be to interact with them again:

Very confident                      Confident                      Not confident

8.2 Local politician                      Yes                      No

If yes: How confident would you be to interact with them again:

Very confident                      Confident                      Not confident

8.3. Local Chief                      Yes                      No

If yes: How confident would you be to interact with them again:

Very confident                      Confident                      Not confident

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Indicate your opinion of the following statements:

10.1 The government has my interest at heart

True                      Somewhat true              Not true

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

10.2 Kenya's political system allows equal opportunities to participate for all citizens.

True                      Somewhat true              Not true

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

9.3 My vote in the election counts

True                      Somewhat true              Not true

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Please respond to the following questions (as many as you can)

11.1 What is the name of the current deputy president of Kenya?

\_\_\_\_\_

11.2 What is the name of the Kibra member of parliament?

\_\_\_\_\_

10.3 Identify two political parties affiliated with NASA:

\_\_\_\_\_

10.4 What is the name of the president of South Africa?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### APPENDIX 4. Interview Guide

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1. What makes people in Kibra constituency participate in politics?
2. Who doesn't? and why?
3. What is the main challenge to inclusive political participation in Kibra?
4. Why does participation differ so much between the wards?