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The journal is a forum for the discussion of ideas, scholarly opinions, and case studies of urban resilience in Zimbabwe. It promotes multidisciplinary engagement of urban resilience as a subject and practice. It is a product of the Department of Architecture & Real Estate and the Department of Demography Settlement & Development at the University of Zimbabwe supported by the UNDP–UNICEF Urban Resilience Programme. The journal is produced bi-annually.

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**Abstract:** must be between 150 and 300 words

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KUDZAI CHATIZA

# Foreword

DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE'S (DEGI)

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Residents of Zimbabwe's growing informal settlements find themselves in conditions of perpetual land and housing precarity. At the same time, responses to urban informality remain stretched by a combination of resource constraints, inadequate alternative approaches, and reliance on evictions and demolitions. The government-led *Operation Murambatsvina/Drive-Out Filth* in 2005 and more recently COVID-19 lockdown-induced displacements attest to this (Dialogue on Shelter Trust, 2020<sup>1</sup>, United Nations, 2005<sup>2</sup>). The preliminary findings of the Inclusive Urban Infrastructure (IUI) action research<sup>3</sup> show how housing, infrastructure, and land tenure conditions directly influence evictability in off-grid settlements.

Tenure security and titling are not straightforward for most emerging settlements. In some instances, it is integrated within legitimate urban council processes and title deeds issued. In other instances, the title is non-existent, and occupation remains precarious and tied to political patronage (Chavunduka, 2018)<sup>4</sup>. Different actors are involved in the regulation of informal settlements. These include the state, the urban poor, and the elite in manipulating peri-urban and urban land access and housing development (Chatiza and Gotora, 2021)<sup>5</sup>.

Informal settlements have not fully transitioned into mature formal suburbs. Some settlements have followed community-based pathways to successfully follow the transition to formality. Slum upgrading experiences

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<sup>1</sup> Dialogue on Shelter (2020). Policy advice to respond to Covid-19 in urban informal settlements in Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (2005). Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka

<sup>3</sup> A research project with experiences from the study sites – Harare and Masvingo through a research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), grant number ES/T008067/1.

<sup>4</sup> Chavunduka, C. (2018). Land patronage and static urban boundaries in Zimbabwe: Implications for land tenure security. *African Journal on Land Policy and Geospatial Sciences*, 1(2), 107-118.

<sup>5</sup> Chatiza, K. and Gotora, P. (2021). The Varying Shades of Settlement Informality in Zimbabwe's Urban Areas and How this Impacts Public Sector Regularisation Attitudes and Responses. *Journal of Urban Systems and Innovations for Resilience in Zimbabwe-JUSIRZ*, 3(2), 38-67.



in Epworth Ward 7 and Dzivarasekwa Extension demonstrated how collaboration by different agencies, including the national government, local authorities, residents, and civil society organisations (CSOs) harness community-based efforts.

Fortunately, regularisation and upgrading debates have gained traction in Zimbabwe's public policy and academic discourse. The 2020 Zimbabwe Human Settlements Policy provides that a Regularisation Protocol be developed to standardise processes of facilitating further developments (tenure security and/or basic infrastructure and services) in emerging settlements (GRZ, 2020)<sup>6</sup>. This is a formal government acknowledgement that the scale of informal housing developments across major urban centres in the country cannot be improved under provisions of s27 of the Regional, Town and Planning Act (1996). The provision in the Act focuses mainly on single-proponent and plot-level development at variance with an approved plan (or development permit). The National Human Settlements Policy drew on evidence from rural and urban settlements where physical planning and governance processes were recognised as stressed with actual service and governance challenges being beyond demolitions and evictions.

This special issue explores the land and housing precarity in Zimbabwe's emerging settlements. It draws on research insights from 2016-2022 focused on understanding resident marginality and models of emplacing infrastructure inclusively. The emerging successes of some of the settlement transitions will be presented in articles by practitioners involved in the studies and those participating in the Urban Informality Forum<sup>7</sup> at the University of Zimbabwe. The multiple factors explaining why some informal settlements are not yet fully on sustainable transitioning pathways toward formal suburbs are explored. The involvement of different actors is explored to illuminate emergent governance frameworks for supporting service delivery in informal settlements.

The special issue consolidates emerging policy insights for inclusive urban growth. Articles speak to:

- The prospects of Inclusive Urbanisation in Zimbabwe

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<sup>6</sup> Government of Zimbabwe: Ministry of Housing and Social Amenities (2020). Zimbabwe National Human Settlements Policy.

<sup>7</sup> A platform established in 2018 and co-hosted by DEGI, DOS and the Department of Architecture and Real Estate at the University of Zimbabwe.

- Methodologies and Limitations of Pro-poor Policymaking
- Ideas on Capacities and Capacity-building Models and Content for Inclusive Cities
- The politics of land and service delivery governance.

Normally, the solution to handling urban informality is located within introducing and engaging urban management as both a tool and a package with instruments to various ills that are introduced by informality. Just by way of settling into an urban set-up, households are introduced to a gamut of challenges. One is faced with the cost of urban living that may cause them to look for alternatives – that include improvising of housing and ancillary service provision. The special issue thus speaks of any experience by one of the authors with others and then zeros in on urban management as a concept, tool and way of unlocking better opportunities in keeping the urban milieu a habitable space.

# Evolution of Urban Food Markets in Zimbabwe and Strategies for Enhancing their Contribution to Urban Resilience

THISETSO DUBE<sup>1</sup>, MARGARET MAREWO AND EDWIN CHATIZA<sup>2</sup>

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## Abstract

**Food markets in Zimbabwe's urban areas have evolved in several ways. There have been changes in the types of markets, players in the food markets, and local and market-level functions. While markets operate under the Departments of Housing and Community Services or Social Services, this department works closely with other council departments to ensure the functionality of food markets. The allocation of trading spaces at markets to marginalised residents such as widows, the aged and urban poor is changing as employed, non-poor residents and the unemployed are also seeking trading spaces. Market management functions now involve traders' associations or committees with direct or daily council involvement receding to strategic functions. The roles of local authorities in terms of identifying traders, regulating trading activities, providing infrastructure, and maintaining markets are shifting, pointing to the need for dynamic policy-making. The article discusses the findings of a study on the state of urban food markets in 10 local authorities in Zimbabwe. A mixed-methods approach was adopted for the study in a two-stage assessment process. Stage One involved the collection of information on the state of food markets in all local authorities in Zimbabwe focusing on each council area's main market. Stage Two was administering questionnaires at 10 markets in 10 local authorities to traders and customers accompanied by key informant interviews (KIIs). The article examines factors affecting urban food markets' contribution to urban resilience in Zimbabwe. It contributes to a transformative approach to facilitating them as socio-economic hubs.**

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<sup>1</sup> National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> Development Governance Institute, Harare, Zimbabwe.

**Keywords:** *informal sector, urban food markets, market regulation, urban resilience, market actors*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Food markets are places within and run by local authorities where farm produce and other processed foods are handled and sold to the public. The original function of food markets was the supply of fresh produce to the population with guarantees of quality and at relatively favourable prices. This has been maintained, although other forms of commercial distribution have also taken on this role (Guzmán-Pérez *et al.*, 2021). Across the globe, markets make food trade an essential and ubiquitous part of the urban landscape (Stacey *et al.*, 2021). Urban food and agricultural produce markets in Africa constitute an integral part of the urban infrastructure, fulfilling a range of basic human needs and vital economic and political roles. Main urban food markets are in the most populous of Zimbabwe's urban settlements, the oldest townships. These are famed for being the cultural heartlands of each city. The 'oldest townships' also host bus termini linking rural and urban areas, which makes them critical social and economic contact points. Zimbabwe's buses plying rural-urban routes are ubiquitously called 'chicken buses' because of having a longstanding tradition of ferrying rural produce to the cities with varieties of fowl, a key farm produce on bus carriers.

FAO (2000) has noted that urban food markets in Sub-Saharan Africa are characterised by inadequately developed marketing systems resulting in congestion and overflow of traders onto streets and pavements. The marketing systems have underdeveloped chains for different value chains that affect the performance of some key services necessary to move food from producers to consumers. Ideally, most produce is processed, packaged, stored, and transported as it moves through the marketing channels<sup>3</sup>. Where some of these functions occur within the vicinity of the main market like Mbare Musika in Harare, it may help create jobs and generate additional value. The lack of value chain services may explain why a significant number of food markets are underutilised in Zimbabwe. For instance, in Kadoma, a study by Monga and Dzvimbo (2019) revealed that 55% of the food and non-food markets in various residential areas were not being utilised, while only 45% were being utilised. In Harare, 71.4% of

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.princeton.edu/~ota/disk3/1978/7806/780609.PDF>

the markets were utilised while 28.6% were underutilised (City of Harare, 2021).

### **THEORY/CONCEPTS**

The importance of markets is also reflected in the proliferation of markets as sources of food and livelihood. There has been a rise in markets of different levels all over the country, in the city centres, commercial centres, residential areas, growth points, and rural service centres as people seek means of making a living (Chigumira *et al.*, 2015). The sprouting of markets is linked to the Zimbabwean economic meltdown. It is noted that small food markets (both formal and informal) are generally characterised by low barriers to entry, relatively low capital requirements, and product homogeneity that in turn promotes a high likelihood of new entrants in the market (Matondi and Chikulo, 2012).

Safe urban food markets have become important nodes where residents interact with council policies and by-laws in ways that have not always been supportive of resilient livelihoods. The markets are not used as indicators of socioeconomic recovery but have become a means of last resort for marginalised groups with local authorities not fully tracking what happens at the markets as economic spaces. However, since markets are evolving, there is need for review/developing regulatory frameworks that are gender-responsive in the context of building resilience at the urban food markets. This supply-and-demand-side importance of urban food markets suggests their importance in local economic development (LED) specifically and local-national governance broadly.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A mixed-method approach was used for this study. Secondary and primary data were collected from national and local authority officials and traders and buyers. International, regional, and local literature on the informal sector, market infrastructure, safe food markets, and market governance were also reviewed. The literature provided an understanding of the informal sector, food markets, and strategies for improving food safety at markets. Apart from academic sources used to frame the study, informal sector policies, local authority minutes and reports, policies, bylaws, and development literature were reviewed. The first stage of primary data collection involved a checklist for all local authorities. The tool focused on collecting information on the state of the main food market in each council.

Thirty-eight (38) out of the 92 local authorities completed the checklist. Table 1 shows the total number of markets and the average by category of local authorities that responded to the checklist.

**Table 1: Number of Markets by Council Category (DEGI, February, 2022)**

<b>Council Type<sup>14</sup></b>	<b>City (6)</b>	<b>Municipality (6)</b>	<b>Town (6)</b>	<b>Local Board (4)</b>	<b>Rural District (16)</b>
<b>Total number of markets</b>	130	56	38	13	82
<b>Average per Council type</b>	22	9	6	3	5

Of all the local authorities, 10 were purposively sampled including five of the Zimbabwe Urban Resilience Programme and five others. A semi-structured question guide was developed and used with key informants in the 10 local authorities, reaching 18 key informants. These included officials at the national, council, and market levels. At national and local authority levels, key informant interviews were undertaken with officials of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise Development, local authorities, representatives of informal traders’ associations, and market committee members. Key informant interviews allowed the research team to gain an understanding of the status quo, policies, and other statutory instruments used to regulate market operations.

A questionnaire was also used to gather data from traders and customers, selected on a ‘chance basis’ over the duration enumerators were at sampled markets. Survey data were collected using tablets loaded with KoBoCollect Software. A total of 182 questionnaires were administered. About a third (33.52%) of the respondents were males and 66.58% were females. The age of respondents was dominated by middle-aged respondents aged between 36 and 45 years. Traders (64.3 %) and customers (37.7%) participated in the survey.

The emergence of food markets in Zimbabwe is influenced by the prevailing socio-economic conditions. The phenomenal growth of informal trading is deeply rooted in the economic policies that the government pursued especially after the first decade of political independence from 1990. This resulted in an increase in designated food markets in all local authority areas. Urban areas have the largest number of formally designated markets. This has also put much pressure on the local and national governments in terms of managing trading and related spaces. The designs and range of services available at the markets vary across local authorities. In terms of several markets, larger local authorities tend to have the highest overall, suggesting a positive correlation between the urban population and the demand for trading spaces. Population density has a close correlation with high-density residential areas having more markets than low-density ones.

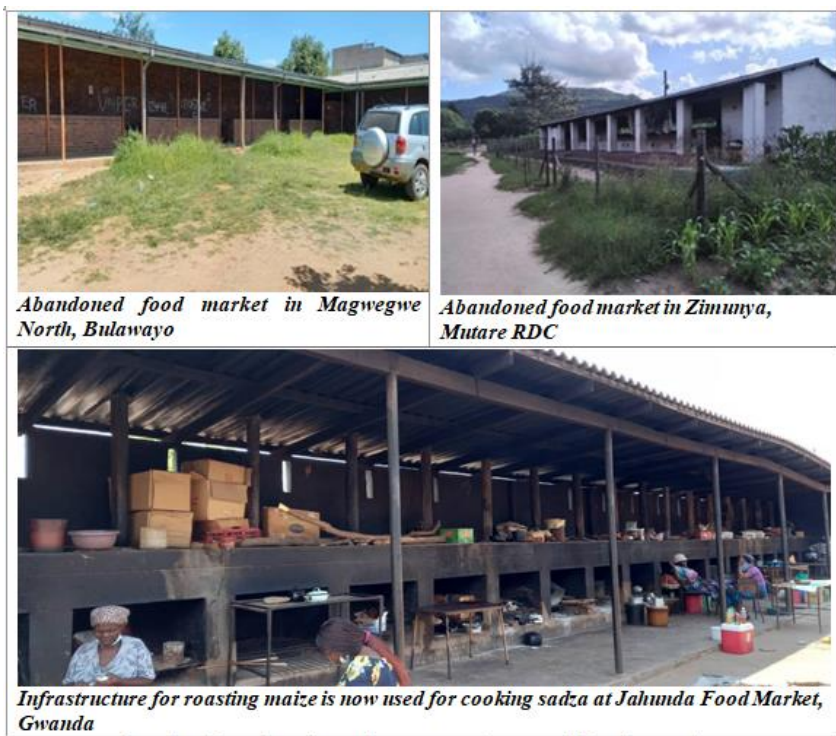
Local authorities have designated main fresh fruit and vegetable markets. In urban local authorities, the markets are in the commercial business districts (CBDs) and at neighbourhood commercial centres in residential areas. For rural district councils (RDCs), these are mainly at growth points, and district service centres. The markets are at different stages of development. For Chipinge Town Council and Mutare RDC, traders are currently using makeshift markets. This was also the case in Harare's Mabvuku, and in Masvingo City where the establishment of new markets or refurbishments of existing ones was in progress. For Mutare RDC (Zimunya Market) traders abandoned the existing shed mentioning that it was at an 'unprofitable location'. Recent market infrastructure had been established and commissioned in Mutoko (Bulk Shed, 2019), Mutare (Diamond, 2017) and Gwanda (Fresh Fruit and Vegetable, 2022), Gweru - Kudzanayi (Fresh and Vegetable, 2021).

### **MARKET UTILISATION**

There are varying levels of market utilisation within local authorities. This was established by looking at design capacities and 'actual use' (number of trading places provided for versus trader numbers). Half (50%) of the markets were operating below capacity with some abandoned, while 25.5% were at capacity and 24.5% were above capacity or overcrowded. The above capacity existed where traders exceeded the design capacity.

Seventy percent (70%) of the councils indicated that not all trade occurred within the provided market structures. While part of this might arise from the absence of sheds at some markets, there are socio-economic factors that have led traders to operate outside market structures. The cases at Zimunya in Mutare RDC, Sekusile in Bulawayo, Bulk Shed in Mutoko, and Jotsholo markets in Kusile RDC were explained concerning i) changes in public transport services and infrastructure such as bus-stops and modes (buses to *mshika-mshika* and kombi's that stop anywhere), ii) evading council regulations and fees, iii) profitability challenges at the designated places, and iv) location of markets at sites that the traders felt were non-profitable. Existing markets are, therefore, not fully utilised. An extreme case of underutilisation was represented at the Jotsholo Market where only two traders out of a potential 16 traders were at the market at the time of the study. For Mutare RDC, only one trader sometimes used the council-provided shed.





**Figure 1:** *Abandoned Food market Infrastructure* (DEGI Fieldwork, 2022)

Emerging socio-economic trends have changed trading patterns and generated new uses that at times contradict market locations and designs. Food markets are no longer just physical or retail spaces but accommodate several uses including wholesale, storage, and processing spaces. Due to these changes, markets have adopted broader land uses. While the uses have changed, the infrastructure and services provided to these markets have not been adopted. Chatiza *et al.* (2021) observed this at Chigovanyika Market in Chitungwiza where a council market had become an entertainment place for youth and men forcing mainly female traders out of the shed. Drawing insights from other main markets, local authorities are experiencing challenges in regulating both market-level and surrounding socio-economic activities. In essence, councils are failing, like other public agencies in the country, to effectively facilitate local economic

development (*ibid.*). At the Jahunda Market in Gwanda, traders used infrastructure meant for roasting maize, and groundnuts to prepare hot meals for sale. Further, at all the markets, grocery sales had become common at times replacing fresh fruit and vegetable markets.

Due to increased trader competition and reduced use of mass public transport termini, mobile trading to reach customers has resulted in some established food markets being abandoned. In addition, some of the traders were not willing to pay for trading licenses as that would confine them to the markets while those traders without permits are making more sales by being mobile. The markets have not adapted to the rapid transitions related to i) characteristics of traders, ii) trading patterns, iii) preferred trading locations, iv) types of customers and preferences, and v) complexity and variety of traded goods. The study observed that infrastructure and facility flexibility in public sector-provided markets was difficult, if not impossible, without direct investments from users or other private investors. Further, collectively and individually, traders and their associations were not sufficiently concerned about the negative consequences of abandoning physical markets in favour of mobile or street trading. This reflected a lack of ownership of publicly provided urban market infrastructure. Collectively, traders appeared capable of but disinterested in engaging councils to avoid urban market infrastructure disuse.

Market over-utilisation arose from the unavailability of adequate trading spaces. Traders were setting up stalls so close to one another or sharing the same spaces making it difficult to distinguish one business from another. Though COVID-19 prevention measures forced local authorities to closely monitor over-utilisation to ensure adherence to social distancing, inspections were neither systematic nor regular. Due to lack of space, some traders had also put their wares in front of designated tables.

## **MARKET DESIGN AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Designs and space organisation at food markets vary. There are no minimum design standards and fittings for market stalls across the

country<sup>4</sup>. For interior designs, traders use wooden tables and concrete slabs. The shed designs and associated infrastructure are also different across markets. Some had sheds with concrete floor slabs and plastered brick or concrete shelving. However, not all markets had lockable shelving for storing produce. Food markets are not always separate from non-food ones. For instance, Diamond and Lusaka Markets in Mutare and Harare, respectively, combine a range of goods beyond food. The food markets that are under construction had improved ventilation and provided for better human movement compared to existing (and not adapted) ones. Figure 2 shows some of the designs at the various food markets.



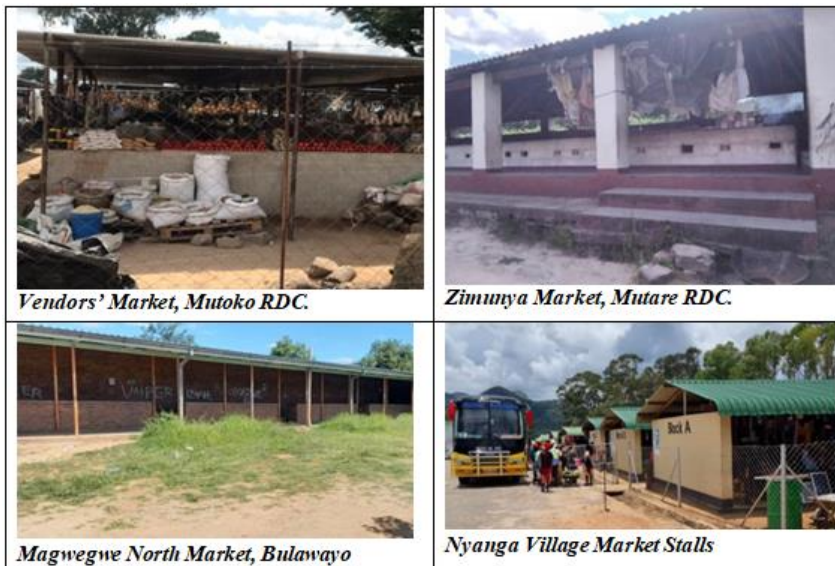
*Fruit and Vegetables Market, Gwanda Municipality*

*Diamond Market, Mutare City*

*Lusaka Market, Harare City*

*Bulk Shed Market, Mutoko RDC*

<sup>4</sup> Safe Markets Guidelines Workshop Report, 15/07/2021: 08:29 AM, Harare. Attended by Urban Local Authorities (Mutare, Chipinge, Gwanda, Bulawayo); Responsible parties (Care, Oxfam, DCA), Informal Sector Representatives, UN Women, ILO, Development Governance Institute, Ministry of Local Government and Public Works and UNDP.



*Pictures by Dr. Percy Toriro*

**Figure 2:** *Market Interior/External Designs* (DEGI Fieldwork, 2022 and Dr. Percy Toriro, February 2022)

Some of the markets had makeshift structures, unpaved floors, and storage spaces. These include Nkulumane's Sekusile in Bulawayo, Zimunya and Chipinge's fresh fruit and vegetable markets. Some of the traders at Sekusile traded from council-demarcated bays while at Zimunya, Chipinge traders were not organised and mixed with those trading in non-food items. Traders and customers were using open spaces exposed to weather elements such as rain, wind, and the sun with negative impacts on trader/customer health and perishable produces. In general, the interior and exterior designs of most food markets do not meet some of the basic design and infrastructure standards necessary for food safety.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING MECHANISMS**

Funding mechanisms for the construction and maintenance of food markets vary. They include council capital budgets, funding by donors (directly and through UN and NGO projects), and private players including traders. Local authorities have funded most of the existing market infrastructure. Councils were also partnering with the private sector and international and local development organisations for support. In such

partnerships councils were providing land, technical designs, and making service connections while partners financed actual construction works and trader capacity development.

In general, traditional state funding for market infrastructure (council capital budgets and Public Sector Investment Programme loans) has slowed. As a result, councils are now looking to the private sector and international and local development organisations for support. In Mutare City, a local radio station, Diamond FM, funded the renovation of the Diamond Market. Key informant interviews at the City of Bulawayo and Mutare RDC indicated that due to limited capital budgets, local authorities were looking for external funding for the reconstruction of food markets at new locations acceptable to traders. As a result, most food markets remain public assets whose sustainability is correlated with that of the sponsoring public agencies, mainly councils. Given shrinking capital budgets prospects of sustainability and expansion of existing markets and establishment of new ones is therefore in doubt.

## **THE MANAGEMENT OF FOOD MARKETS**

### ***LOCAL AUTHORITY***

Urban food markets fall under departments of housing and community services (urban local authorities) or social services (rural local authorities). They constitute an important social safety net for people not formally employed in other key sectors of the urban economy. This suggests a poverty reduction focus as trading spaces were allocated mainly to widows, the aged, and the urban poor. As a result, food markets have, for the most part, been developed for, run by, and benefited the urban and rural poor. While markets still fall under the same departments, growing job losses in other sectors of local economies have resulted in the 'non-poor' becoming key actors in markets. The traders equally serve a segment of society not adequately served by formal food retailers. Increasingly, markets are no longer exclusively serving the urban poor. Food commodities at the markets are cheaper and readily available to a wider population of varied socio-economic characteristics.

Councils have remained the main actors at food markets. However, they have not sufficiently adapted to the reality of the emergence of other new actors and the changed nature of traders. No appropriate institutional transformations have taken place within councils. Local authority departments, other than housing and community/social services, with a

stake in the operations of markets have not redefined their roles regarding market regulation and the provision of services. Staff responsibilities and competencies have not been adjusted accordingly. Even where the functions of different council departments are clear (Table 2) their performance concerning food markets remains unadjusted thereby limiting the ability of Councils and other market stakeholders to appropriately facilitate markets as high-performing and diversified hubs for food-related economic development.

**Table 2:** Council Departments/Sections that have a stake in the food Markets (Adapted from Chatiza *et al.*, 2022)

<b>Department/Section</b>	<b>Role</b>
Housing and Community or Social Services	Allocation of trading spaces and managing traders' operations
Physical/Town Planning	Spatial planning and regulating land use, i.e. identifying land suitable for trading areas
Chamber Secretary /Administration	Development and enforcement of relevant regulations
Finance/Treasury	Budget preparation, setting tariffs for markets, and collection of revenue
Health	Health inspections, safety awareness, and waste management
Engineering	Infrastructure design, development, and maintenance

Coordination across Council departments to ensure effective management of food markets was observed to be weak for various reasons. As a result, data collection on market operations including the collection and application of revenue was inadequate. The research team was referred to different council departments to access data on market regulation. This confirmed that information on food markets was neither collated nor analysed for effective use at policy level and managerial decision-making. In some councils, databases of traders were not shared across different council departments which presents a challenge in terms of management

of issues that cut across departments for instance revenue collection and application for infrastructure maintenance and relevant service expansion.

### **NON-COUNCIL STAKEHOLDERS OF FOOD MARKETS**

There are other stakeholders in the operation of markets within council areas. The mandates of these stakeholders are derived from Acts of Parliament for state institutions. Even though the legislated mandates of national state agencies and local authorities are defined, coordination concerning market infrastructure and regulation appears inadequate. Some non-state support towards market infrastructure is not accompanied by plans for infrastructure maintenance and expansion. However, the development and management of council-run markets by different stakeholders are gaining momentum. This is important in terms of socio-economic development and contribution towards LED. At the same time, it reflects the emerging complexities that councils alone are unable to manage. The latter factor arises from the negative implications of the weak macroeconomic framework and performance on local economic regulation. Table 3 shows different examples of actors and the roles the study <sup>13</sup> consolidated.

**Table 3: Stakeholders at food markets and their roles (Chatiza et al., 2022)**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Role</b>
Ministry responsible for home affairs – Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)	Enforcement of the law to ensure a secure trading environment
Ministry of responsible for health	Ensure health standards, food safety, etc. are followed, raising awareness on diseases and relevant prevention
Ministry responsible for women's affairs and SMEs	Business development (and group formation/strengthening) facilitation, regulatory compliance, providing & brokering access to finance, and awareness of women's rights
Environmental Management Agency (EMA)	Monitor regulatory issues affecting the environment, on waste management

Development Partners (e.g. UNDP), NGOs/CSOs	Infrastructure development at markets, group formation/strengthening, providing and brokering access to finance lobbying, and awareness of rights
Private companies and financial services institutions (e.g. banks)	Business linkages, some infrastructure development, providing access to finance, and awareness of women's rights
National Social Security Authority (NSSA) <sup>5</sup>	Safety and health information dissemination and ensuring compliance
Trader/Market Committees	Working closely with councils and other stakeholders, e.g. CSOs
Trader's Associations	Pressure groups that articulate mainly traders' interests or rights, lobbying for alternative policies and practical approaches to meeting their members' needs, strengthen member organisations, mobilise technical and at times financial support for their members

### FOOD MARKET COMMITTEES

Food markets have some structures to assist in their day-to-day management. A big number of councils (89.5%) indicated that there were committees at the food markets, while 10.5% indicated that they did not have any. These findings were corroborated by traders and customers, with 84% confirming the existence of markets, while 11% stated there were no committees in place and the rest (5%) did not know. The committees were selected mainly by the traders with cases of market 'pioneers' being consulted on market issues cited at the markets in Mutoko (Bulk Shed), in Harare (Hatcliffe 'Dust'), and Gwanda (Jahunda). Most committees were reported to be balanced concerning sex, age, and disability. The markets had constitutions and regulations guiding their operations. These regulatory instruments helped committees address issues of health and hygiene at trading spaces, operating times, new traders, security, and negotiations with regulators.

Market Committee roles were limited to basic functions that include organising market cleaning rosters, monitoring COVID-19 compliance, organising security personnel to guard the premises, and consulting and

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<sup>5</sup> NSSA was noted as a relatively emerging function at the food markets



being consulted by councils on issues related to trading activities. As such, concerns with more strategic issues of economic management remain as limited with market committees as with councils. This may explain why documented conversations relate to tariff levels and blame councils for the non-collection of waste rather than job potentiation for instance. Relations between the committees and local authorities were noted to be cordial. Engagement meetings were undertaken on issues of traders' expectations from local authorities, encouraging traders to pay their rentals, challenges being experienced, and possible solutions. Eighty-four percent (84%) of councils indicated that market committees were active and assisted them to keep markets functional, while 16% said they were not. Close to sixty percent (59.5%) (with 30.5% very good, 29% good) of traders and customers rated the market committees positively, 24% rated them as average, and 16.5% negatively (12% poor and 4.5% very poor). This shows that market committees are a key food market governance institution.

Their structures are clear, and they had constitutions with well-defined roles and obligations. The Mutoko Association is actively involved in the allocation of tables/stalls to applicants. This in some markets is a role assumed by market gatekeepers and space barons for instance in Gwanda at the Jahunda Market where there are *old madhalas* (market elders) performing functions of a food market committee. For Mutoko, the local authority has delegated the association to perform the functions of assessing applicant statuses and recommending allocations to the council. This is not the case for other markets. These functions remain under the council while in some instances, councils do so in close consultation with the committees as was noted in Gwanda at Jahunda Market.

These varying operational models suggest a considerable change in the role of councils in the food markets. This is a gap that market actors identified and formulated strategies while in some instances, councils are no longer sufficiently connected to the markets in governance terms, as there are many organisational dynamics beyond local authorities at the markets. Some of these strategies/innovations point towards alternative and more sustainable models where food market traders have taken additional roles, unburdening councils in the process. However, this process requires adequate engagement to ensure that the different emergent models are assessed and agreed on as opposed to leaving it to the unfacilitated festering of alternative governance models.

## CONCLUSION

Food markets are evolving but local authority operations have not changed to accommodate the increasing functions of the markets. The business-as-usual approach that councils are still using is creating problems in terms of infrastructure provision, support services, and overall governance. Large capital investments are required to make food markets business hubs and complex workplaces but are beyond the capacities of local authorities. An investment package is needed that has several options: i) do it alone (individual council efforts), ii) do it with others (partnership) and iii) get others to do it (overseeing). These various components must be held together by a clear LED strategy and implementation plan. Due consideration has to be given to the planning, and regulation to ensure enabling food markets. They must be viewed as socio-economic nodes and workplaces as part of local government LED competencies. Food markets must be seen and developed as workspaces meeting relevant standards, hence their operationalisation must prioritise specific value chains. Works are underway to make food markets compliant in terms of occupational health and safety (OHS), drawing on the momentum created under COVID-19 prevention protocols. This includes redesigning most to ensure inclusivity. The national and provincial governments are expected to play a supportive role to enable councils to execute their functions at food markets.

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# Lodging as a Housing Informality Fueler: Revisiting the Family Unit Dwelling Concept in Zimbabwean Suburbia

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## Abstract

Instead of working as landlords, millions of Africans are tenants (lodgers). This article investigates and debates the notion of family units living in Zimbabwean suburbia, with a focus on lodging as a source of housing informality. It stems from the fact that rental housing has been a partial solution to urban housing in Zimbabwe, but it must be acknowledged as vital, especially in developing countries where the urban poor cannot afford to own or build their homes. A desktop evaluation, as well as textual and contextual analysis, were all part of the method. Rental housing markets are impacted and respond to local economic, social and political situations, as well as regulatory frameworks, and operate somewhat differently in different locations. Together, landlords and tenants create and use rental housing in novel and imaginative ways to maximise the asset value of their buildings while meeting tenants' housing requirements. Despite this, the Zimbabwean government and other developing countries have done little to promote or boost rental housing affordability. Based on the study's results, officials understand the complexities of their cities' rental housing (both official and informal) and how to design effective, adaptive laws to promote and control it.

**Keywords:** *renting; Sub-Saharan Africa; tenancy; landlord; affordability, government, lodging.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

African governments have aggressively encouraged home ownership through a variety of strategies, such as subdividing additional land, extending infrastructure and transportation grids into new areas, and increasing the accessibility of home finance to a wider spectrum of people (Marcotullio, 2017). Increasing the number of owned homes and dwellings in a city produces jobs, strengthens neighbourhood economies, and is considered as contributing to social and political stability (Ashely *et al.*, 2007). Home ownership is frequently regarded as the most favoured housing choice in most regions, making it ideal for African city dwellers but it is beyond reach for many. However rented living space has a bad reputation: landlords are frequently viewed as predatory, willing to give overcrowded and inadequate flats to the helpless poor for the greatest possible returns, thus leading to housing informality.

Additionally, it has been consistently shown that rental housing, especially at the lowest end of the market, is unlawful and contributes to blight in inner cities (Marcotullio, 2017). Tenant eviction and migration have also been identified as sources of civic displeasure. Many Africans residing in cities rent their homes. For instance, 82% of families in Kisumu, Kenya, lived in condos in 1998; in the same year, 60% of households in Addis Ababa and 57% of households in Kumasi rented their homes (Ansah *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, rental housing is now a significant component of the urban housing stock in several African countries and other regions of the world.

Many individuals carefully consider and rationally opt to rent their homes (*ibid.*). This is because one aspect might be a lack of financial means to purchase a house, particularly in Zimbabwe. However, there are other strong reasons buyers should favour leasing. In order to meet their present requirements and goals, renters in a healthy housing market may choose their rental homes solely based on one or more of these factors (Marcotullio, 2017). However, if a city's condo (apartment) options are too limited or restrictive, the endeavour to find cheap apartment units can cause serious financial and social problems for city people.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Social housing rent is controlled and frequently set at the same level as construction and operation costs plus a little mark-up that represents a genuine profit for the owner (Kholodilin, 2020). A renter must be accepted

into social housing by proving that their income is sufficient. For example, when tenants move in, their income is never verified. As a result, families with rapid salaries continue to live in social housing even if they are no longer technically entitled (*ibid.*). As a result, many low-income persons are unable to get social housing. The problem is that confirming the salary levels of social housing households and settling evictions are both too expensive. This is one of the most serious concerns associated with shared apartment dwelling (Bratt, 2008).

### **THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND DENSITY OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION ARE CONSTRAINED BY CITY PLANNING**

As Hilber and Vermeulen (2016) illustrate, land-use management may restrict the charge elasticity of housing supply. As a result, supply may be limited at higher costs. Environmental restrictions that impose stricter standards on newly built homes (compulsory usage of solar batteries, thermal insulation, and so on) may result in higher expenses, higher house prices, and fewer building completions. In this sense, it changes the relative cost of both owned and leased homes, impacting the choice of a certain kind of tenure by making it more or less enticing economically. The tax policies of several countries encourage property ownership. For example, in the Netherlands and the United States, hobby payments are deducted from taxable wages; as a result, acquiring owned house with borrowed money is quite appealing. This can lead to the creation of speculative rate bubbles in real estate markets (Figari *et al.*, 2017).

Finally, it should be noted that legal acts are frequently rendered ineffective, if not defunct, in practice. First, policies that are extremely inconvenient for market participants are frequently avoided by using various loopholes (Hilber and Vermeulen, 2016). The imaginations of the millions of individuals looking for loopholes are far more fertile than the legislators seeking to close those loopholes. Second, in order for the laws to be effective, procedures to detect infractions of the legal norms are required. It usually involves occurrences (tenants) that document infractions of the law. Third, regulation enforcement is hampered by a lack of grasp of human legal principles. Ubeda (2016), for example, found that the top 1% of landlords and renters are aware of the norms governing the rental housing industry, based mostly on a study of attorneys, landlords and tenants in Quito, Ecuador. Similarly, 10.4% of low-income renters in Bogotá, Colombia, had tenant protection (CENAC, 2007), although nearly 30% of respondents in numerous Zambian towns "were uninformed of the

norms and regulations governing the relationship between a tenant and landlord" (Nzonzo, 2005: 28).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

One of the most fundamental human goals is to have a place to live. It is also one of the sectors with the most stringent regulations. Since World War I, most governments have been actively involved in the housing industry, attempting to correct real or perceived market flaws. For example, leasing rules have been implemented at all international sites at some time. By the early 2010s, most countries had abandoned comparable laws (Kholodilin, 2020). For instance, employment restrictions were enacted in Paris and Lyon (France) in July 2019 and March 2020, respectively; nationwide lease growth restrictions were implemented in California in January 2020 and are anticipated to stay in place until January 2031; and rents in Berlin (Germany) were fixed for five years starting in February 2020, to name a few examples (*ibid.*). The development of the COVID-19 pandemic has made such interventions even more critical. After most nations imposed sanitary restrictions, including lockdowns, in March 2020, the ensuing loss of income started a global wave of eviction bans and hiring freezes (Hiscott *et al.*, 2020).

A success story is cost-effective cooperative apartment living (Sørvoll *et al.*, 2018). It has helped social vendors in Austria, Denmark, and Finland who use this sort of rent setting to better protect their long-term capacity to develop new lower-cost homes and cover unanticipated financial demands, such as renovations or pulling the crucial power switch (Kemeny, 1993). Financing is more expensive than cost-based social housing. It is an ideology, a belief that cheap housing should be for the many, not the few.

The UK housing market is one of the costliest and supply-constrained in the world. It is a disaster. Although housing is a necessity, it has become a speculative commodity. Germany, Austria, and Switzerland have Europe's most stable property markets (Ball, 2016). The most untrustworthy housing units are in Japan and Europe, notably in Spain and Ireland, where values soared and subsequently plummeted following the recent banking crisis. These countries frequently have the smallest condominium markets. Most international locations in Western Europe, including France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, are in the centre. The United Kingdom

and Italy are in the intermediate organisation, and their conduct is the most erratic (Kemeny, 1993).

In many African cities, complex leasing and subletting connections develop between city dwellers and migrants from rural areas (Contreras *et al.*, 2019). Sharing rented rooms is widespread in Khartoum, Lagos, and many other West African cities. Industrial firm storerooms, as well as guest homes and hostels, can be rented for sleeping quarters. Non-governmental organisations and the government in South Africa established hostels at some time during the apartheid era to shelter unmarried black men and women who were not authorised to bring their families to cities because they worked as labourers (Rakodi, 1995). Thousands of people are still living in these filthy and overcrowded dormitories, thus fueling informal habitats. It is common for up to seven people to share a 10m<sup>2</sup> room and up to 16 families to share a restroom. Furthermore, in Botswana, the failure of formal public and private businesses in the 1990s to meet the demand for homeownership, the revolutionary removal of homeownership subsidies, and the decision to promote plots to city residents have increased demand for forms of tenure such as renting out tenants' backyards (Nzonzo, 2005).

Landlords in African countries include corporations, affluent and impoverished individuals working in the official and informal sectors, private and public housing organisations, and government departments (Gilbert, 2003). Investors who build rental units on unoccupied property and lease them out, investors who acquire developer-built houses and lease them out and proprietor-occupants who supply apartment units on a portion of their land or within their own residences, are examples of private sector landlords (King *et al.*, 2017). The distinction between official and informal sector landlords is that formal sector landlords have possession and construction rights within the country's legislative framework, whilst informal sector landlords do not. Landlords can also be classified based on the size of their activities. Some landlords with building rights and access to huge cash may also create hundreds of rental units on various plots of land, whilst others may be individual families or retired people who work on a very modest scale, with one or two apartment rooms within or behind their own house (Gilbert, 2003). Small-scale landlords account for a large proportion of rental housing in African cities. Because these landlords want to maximise on rentals, they end up overcrowding tenants by building very small dwellings behind their main houses so as to



get maximum returns. The prospective tenants are not bothered because all they need is shelter despite it being sub-standard, clearly leading to the increase in informal housing units.

In these difficult situations, tenants have had to devise a variety of techniques to fulfil their household needs by sharing with their children and spouses. The shift from renters to sharers has resulted in a deterioration of living circumstances, with many individuals now sleeping in kitchens and living rooms with other sharers and/or their hosts' children (Roelofsen, 2018). This situation has implications on human dignity. Another alternative is to take public transit to villages and towns in search of cheaper rental apartments or real estate. This has put a huge demand on rural and peri-urban land (Nelson, 2018). Land invasions, which have become more common, are a last resort for renters. This is because most local governments have failed to create housing units, allowing private firms to gain more power.

In many regions of West Africa, poor housing is related to social connections and affiliations, and many people rely on their relatives for refuge (Roelofsen, 2018). In most West African civilisations, a homeowner is expected to shelter every member of the extended family and rent-free in 'circle of relative's residences'. In Nigeria, it is considered taboo to sell a family house, or any property, complex or residential site, where a head of the family is buried. Promoting this sort of property may be considered an embarrassment with the assistance of extended family contributions. The bigger advantage is that there are few homeless West Africans. When migrants arrive in town, they have a place to stay. Children beyond the age of 25 are permitted and have a place to live when they have grown up and raised their children and this is a significant advantage in negative communities (King *et al.*, 2017).

A lodger considers a variety of factors like the type of housing unit available, his or her income, the rent charged, the location of the available housing unit and the housing condition (Yirenkyi, 2014). Considering that housing units are expensive, especially in urban areas, lodgers with low incomes tend to rent the available units to provide shelter, even though it may not be what they prefer. Some rented apartments like the council Mucheke hostels in Masvingo tend to be overcrowded because the rentals are lower compared to the private market. According to Chirisa and

Mlambo (2012), informality in housing occurs when a house designed for occupation by a single family ends up being used by more than one family, diverting from its intended use. The hostels are overcrowded with a family of 15 in one housing unit. The hostels themselves have been condemned due to their dilapidated state and poor sanitation facilities. The constant sewerage blockages are a result of overpopulation as the sanitary facilities available had been made to serve a population which has far surpassed the designated capacity. Most tenants have pleaded with council to give them ownership of the hostels so that they make improvements on their own (cf. Abubakar *et al.*, 2017; Contreras *et al.*, 2019).

The connection between the landlord and the tenant is primarily based on an agreement. For example, in Kariba, the issues include landlords arguing that their tenants do not take good care of the condo housing, delay paying the rent, misbehave, and do not appreciate that rising costs of utilities, maintenance and repairs make means that rents must also increase. On the contrary, the tenants complain that their landlords fail to maintain their houses, and also that they are unfairly made to pay high charges for utilities and can terminate the lease without warning.

Many condo agreements between landlords and tenants are non-public and casual in nature, concluded outside of any authorities' regulatory framework or formal legal machine. This informality and shortage of professional documentation make it extremely difficult to manage landlord-tenant conflicts. In a few instances, landlords will try to avoid problems by accepting only tenants who have been recommended by those known to the landlord. In Mbare and Highfield, the researchers noted that there can be a "dark side" to casual agreements between tenants and landlords. A landlord takes advantage of the absence of a written contract to squeeze more tenants in constrained areas, to neglect the building, or trample upon other rights of the tenants. Where there may be a severe scarcity of low-income housing in a city, unscrupulous landlords realise that tenants have little choice but to put up with exploitative and regularly illegal apartment situations.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A case study methodology and a multi-stakeholder approach were employed in this study. This is critical for effective coordination and system thinking since it brings together many stakeholders for the benefit and good decision-making (Bruno *et al.*, 2016). The target demography of

students, tenants, and landlords was studied using an interpretative research technique. In this case study, this technique was employed since it gives data based on individuals' experiences and phenomena, specifically accommodation. Key informants were employed to provide relevant lodging information. The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the Ministry of National Housing, and the Harare Residents Association were major key informants. These institutions helped in providing information on renting and lodging in the study. This study's content was gathered using Google Scholar, journals, newspapers and government documents. In addition, textual and contextual analyses were used. The essential academic evaluation was, therefore accomplished. Information on rented housing as a catalyst for informality was gathered from a variety of neighborhoods in Zimbabwe, including low-income areas like Mbare, Highfields, Kuwadzana, and other cities nearby like Gweru, Mutare, and Kariba.

## **RESULTS**

In Zimbabwe, both men and women work as landlords, sometimes in collaboration and at other times separately. Whether male or female landlords dominate, the apartment housing market is heavily influenced by neighbourhood norms and metropolitan demographics. In Nairobi, for example, more men are landlords than women, owing to the presence of many men in the political and administrative classes that oversee landlordism in that city. However, "slum landladies" are a widespread occurrence. Landladies are frequently more powerful than landlords in other areas.

In housing initiatives in Botswana, there are more female landlords than male landlords, but in South Africa, more women rent out lodgings in their backyards of municipal houses, especially when their husbands have died or abandoned their family (Rakodi, 2015). Even though a male is the legal owner of the property, women who handle domestic matters are more likely to address renters in small-scale condo settings. Unlike in Zimbabwe, many widows and separated women prefer to rent out a portion of their homes or build new apartment units to augment their income (Grant, 2007). Divorce settlements, inheritance features, and age can all play a role. Because women live longer than men, they commonly lease out the property left to them.

Small-scale landlordism is frequently the best available source of profit for ladies, either because they have not engaged themselves in other profit-

generating activities, or lack access to finance to set up a small business. In Zimbabwe, for women who wish to stay at home to care for their children and elderly or ailing family members, renting out a portion of their property to renters is a financial lifeline (Grant, 2007).

In Zimbabwe, the number of rented houses has gone up by at least 60% (Langa, 2015), while the number of houses bought has gone down by 15%. The vast majority prefer renting as opposed to buying houses. In Zimbabwe, this comes as no surprise given that many cannot afford to buy houses. According to Masiyiwa (2022), since most people will inevitably rent, it is worth exploring the cost of renting in Zimbabwe. The number of bedrooms, security (being gated for example), backup water supply, and backup power are some of the rent determinants. The presence of super convenient features (e.g. 24-hour security) drives the price up. The location also comes into play, i.e. rental prices depend on where the house is located: low, high, or medium density. One of the interviewed participants had this to say

“...one room in a high-density area like Epworth can cost anything from US\$10 to US\$20 per month. One room in a low-density area can cost anything from US\$80 to US\$100. That difference is also reflected when one is dealing with full houses. The number of rooms will usually determine the price for renting the full house. The same largely applies even when dealing with cottages. Full-house rentals in high density areas range from US\$200 to US\$500 per month, while in low-density areas the rentals are from US\$500 to US\$1 500 per month. Bed cottages rental costs in low-density suburbs range from US\$200 to US\$350 per month.”

Thus, the rent per month varies according to location and size, amongst other things. It is possible to find a full house costing US\$200 per month and still find another costing US\$2 000. Cottages tend to cost a bit less than the main houses. Due to the comparison, the researchers noted that it was possible to get a full house in a high-density area costing less than a cottage in a low-density area.

### **CITY OF HARARE LODGING EXPERIENCES**

Before 2000, all aspiring homeowners were given lodgers' subscription at \$5 per month. All housing allocations were drawn from the lodgers' list on a first-come-first served basis. Allocation of council-rented houses was also drawn from this list. From 2000 the lodgers' cards system was discarded and a new allocation system called Housing Waiting List was developed. The concept was the same in that all residents who required accommodation were put on the Housing Waiting List (like the lodger's card list) and allocations were also drawn from this list on a first-come-

first-served basis. Council constructed several flats in both low-density and high-density areas and rented them out through lease agreements to aspiring residents, thus reducing the housing backlog but increasing continuous revenue collection to finance general housing developments.



(Source: Masiyiwa, 2018)

Important to note during the study was the issue of fake agents. Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents said that they suffered at the hands of fake agents when trying to find a house to rent. For example, one of the participants said:

“...due to social media use like Facebook, I have seen several groups on Facebook where people could find houses for rent. The first agent I contacted said he had a vacant house, but I needed to pay a \$20 viewing fee before he could give me the address ... He shared an office location where I could pay the fee, but it was far from Harare. There was another option. I could pay through mobile money, then the agent would send me the address ... After I sent the money, he then became unavailable, and I was blocked on his mobile phone”.

In Zimbabwean suburbs there is an increase in the number of unscrupulous third-party agents. As a result, some of the houses advertised are already occupied. Thus, it becomes a scheme of fleecing people because most of these fake agents who are not registered with the real estate council, take advantage of the shortage of housing.

In Zimbabwe, information from the Letting Agents and Landlords interviewed in the study area further point to the fact that due to ‘studentification’, investors have taken note of this opportunity, and now buy property in the study area with the intention of re-modelling, if they need to, and leasing the properties to student tenants. This discourse

suggests that the large number of students who desire to live in the study area guarantee a steady demand for student accommodation from the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and depend on the housing stock supplied by the PRS to meet their demand for accommodation. The 'new demand' for housing by students has led to homeowners extending their homes and sometimes building extended quarters with very small dwellings to maximise their space. This leads to informality in housing since the intended use of the homes would be altered.

In Zimbabwe, as years progressed and continue to go by, enrolment in most universities increased and accommodation became a problem for institutions authorities. In addition, students are charged exorbitant rental charges in Gweru in areas that include Senga, Nehosho Daylesford, Windsor Park, Kopje, Ivone and other surrounding suburbs. Also, accommodation issues are evident at the Great Zimbabwe University in Masvingo, where most students seek accommodation in the Rujeko area and other suburbs close to the campus. Students at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Bulawayo also face these accommodation problems. The lack of accommodation entails students commuting to and from campus every day at their own expense. In Harare, most University of Zimbabwe students stay in the dormitory town of Chitungwiza, about 30km away, because of cheap lodgings. This means that students have to get in town, then to campus twice every day. On a monthly basis, an out-of-campus student will need USD\$80 for transport. This expense drives students to opt for the crowded houses that are close to the campus. .

Informal housing is also characterised by inadequate and sub-standard building structures, illegal subdivisions of land and unauthorised construction of buildings (Srinivas, 2003). The study shows that residents in Mount Pleasant in Harare have changed their way of thinking, knowing that their houses and land can be a valuable source of income. The researchers noted that 40% of existing homes have transformed their appearances and function as dwellings and/or businesses. This concurs with what happened in India, in that pieces of land that nurtured rice fields and gardens previously have now turned into buildings. . Facilities that initially served only a limited population, have become constrained by the increase in the populations in the suburbs. The once prestigious middle densities have been reduced to hostels with dwellings being built behind the main houses using low quality materials. The need to raise income from rentals has led to an increase of unauthorised buildings. Most homeowners

simply extend or subdivide their land illegally to accommodate more people.

Box 1 shows how the lack of accommodation has hit Zimbabwean universities

**Box 1: Accommodation challenges university students**

The population of Zimbabwe has increased over the past years. This has come up with more negative than positive benefits if examined from the perspective of studentification. Universities in Zimbabwe have been submerged by huge numbers of students living outside the universities, in nearby suburbs. Many landlords have converted their houses into boarding houses to cater for the lack of accommodation, a state which most universities have failed. Midlands State University is not the only state college in the country that has a problem with residential flats for its students. The same problem has also been seen with the National University of Science and Technology in Bulawayo and the University of Zimbabwe in Harare.

Years of economic slump triggered by the illegal sanctions imposed on the country have not helped the situation as Government which is the largest shareholder has failed to construct additional student accommodation flats at universities leaving students at the mercy of the rent seeking landlord. The increase in rentals has forced students to live in groups with some ranging to as much as 10 in a room and up to 20 per house. One of the interviewed students had this to say:

“We have to put our resources together so that we can pay US\$300 that the landlord requires every month. As such each room can have as many as five people. The rooms also act as our study rooms so most of us have designed makeshift reading desks.....What is important is not comfort but to come to Gweru to study and go back to the comfort of our homes with degrees. Seek luxury and you will lose your goal in this place. It’s common that students are crammed in small rooms, but they have graduated to lead important sectors of the economy,”

Another interviewed student had this to say:

“..It’s no use worrying about accommodation but about school. It is October and soon exams will start and sleeping comfortably will be an unnecessary luxury. I can pay the US\$50 a month per room the landlord is asking so I have teamed with three of my friends to share costs.....We use foam rubbers that we remove every day and put behind the door to create space,”

Source: Langa (2015). *The Herald* (2021). Accessed on: <https://www.herald.co.zw/accommodation-woes-hit-university-students/>

Private accommodation facilities are managed by independent owners. Some private homes also have been turned into residences for students. Some of these private homes also have the owners as well as other tenants staying with students. This kind of accommodation pattern is termed ‘homestay’. These homestays are not considered or regarded under the Office of the Dean of Students. Most of the students off campus or non-resident must find their own accommodation for each academic year for the duration of their undergraduate degree programmes. The only help offered to them by the Office of the Dean of Students is to publish a list of approved private hostels in which students can stay. However these

facilities alone cannot accommodate all non-resident students. A major challenge facing most students is the exorbitant prices students must pay to secure rooms in their hostel of choice. Currently, prices are estimated from at least US\$100 to US\$500. Another challenge is the issue of protocol lists being attended to before the ordinary student. To get accommodation, one must go to the extent of paying the porter an extra amount of money to secure a room.

Most students like to have space and privacy. Students do not have privacy when sharing accommodation. This has led to most of the private hostels admitting three students or less in a room. Most students prefer these rooms hence the demand for it has led to the managers of these hostels providing such rooms. Others also had to find accommodation with relatives or stay in newly built hostels that are more expensive than that of the hall. This arrangement was due to the fact that there were not enough rooms to accommodate the students that were admitted. Students have to go through a stressful ordeal when accessing private hostels. This is because many students are also seeking accommodation, hence one has to walk for long hours and enquire from various hostel managers if there are rooms available.

## **DISCUSSION**

It is difficult to acquire and obtain comparative data on condo housing in Zimbabwe. This is because the government does not distinguish apartment dwellings from non-condo types of housing that are not ownership and sharing. Sometimes the distinction is also difficult to establish, particularly in certain African nations where extended family households are still widespread, with relatives and grown-up children with their own families still living inside the paternal home. National condo statistics can also be deceptive since they will promote general countrywide trends of condominium housing that do not account for local reality. The share of rental accommodation is higher in cities than in rural areas, and it varies substantially between cities. Official statistics also do not account for the number of informal rentals in towns, when landlords negotiate private deals with tenants. These arrangements may be exploitative since tenants who desperately require lodgings may be made to pay very high rents for poor-quality accommodation with no tenure security. The terrible circumstances that these tenants face are not reflected in the city's recognised picture of rental housing.



## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, the government should look at techniques and incentives that make big and small-scale investments in low-income rental housing more appealing and sustainable to buyers, in addition to tax advantages for investors who develop new condominium housing. Long-term planning is an effective technique for maximising the social advantages and sustainability provided by a value-based social housing. As a result, it is vital to make the right decisions now to establish the framework for better housing outcomes in the future.

In the meantime, there is hope that the Zimbabwean government will revise its policy in the direction of apartment housing. At present, the authorities have no tenure policy beyond the implicit intention of turning every tenant into a proprietor-occupier. Given the ever increasing members of family formation and the huge backlog of housing demand, that is utterly unrealistic. In any case, renting is a housing preference that is very important to the unmarried, migrants, students, newly established families, none of whom can afford buying or building their accommodation. Without rental housing, urban land invasions are likely to worsen.

Housing solutions ought to conquer value and spatial inequalities as tackling housing inequality call for a technique of funding and coverage exchange. Investments must be geared towards the provision/building of low-priced, modern-day, and aesthetic houses that have access to all the essential public infrastructure that help facilitate an everyday and complete existence.

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# Developing Pro-Poor Land Policy for Zimbabwe: The Role of Peri-urban Land Governance

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## Abstract

In 2007 UN-HABITAT published pro-poor land policy development guidelines. The guidelines dwell on managing the political, technical, and participation aspects of the land policy development process at the expense of fundamental governance issues. This article explores the role that wise peri-urban land governance can play in enabling access to land by the poor. It interrogates the rules, processes, and structures through which decisions are made concerning access, use, and control of land, how the decisions are implemented and enforced, and the way that competing interests in land are managed in peri-urban areas of Zimbabwe. The research methodology relies on documentary analysis of central and local government policy and regulatory frameworks, and procedures for urban land governance; and is complemented by interviews with public officials and councillors. Study findings reveal incoherent and uncoordinated jurisdictional authorities for state land within peri-urban areas. It offers suggestions for rationalising control of land within these areas and governance mechanisms for enhancing access to land by the poor and other vulnerable groups.

**Keywords:** *land policy, pro-poor, governance, peri-urban, control, Zimbabwe*

## INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa has seen a rise in urban governance challenges particularly concerning the poor who are geographically, economically, socially, and politically disconnected from wider urban systems, and excluded from urban opportunities and decision-making (Amin *et al.*, 2021; Home, 2021). The world's urban

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population is projected to increase rapidly to at least 66% by the year 2050, and most of the increase is expected to take place in developing countries with the spotlight being on peri-urban areas (Steel *et al.*, 2019). In developing countries, poor people are settling in peri-urban areas where access to land is more affordable, enforcement of regulations is weak, and where they can eke a living from multiple livelihoods such as farming, trading, and natural resource extraction. In a bid to address the condition of the poor, the core mission of the World Bank has changed since its origins in the 1944 Bretton Woods conference, from post-war reconstruction to ending extreme poverty (Home, 2021). Likewise, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 11 aim at ending poverty and developing inclusive cities and communities, respectively. However, efforts at developing inclusive cities are yet to yield outcomes that effectively address the housing needs of the poor residents in peri-urban areas.

The article explores how good peri-urban land governance can be used as a framework for empowering the poor as part and parcel of the inclusive cities' agenda in Zimbabwe. One of the national objectives provided in the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe is good governance. To this effect,

“the state must adopt and implement policies and legislation to develop efficiency, competence, accountability, transparency, personal integrity, and financial probity in all institutions and agencies of government at every level and every public institution” (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013 p. 15).

In the same paragraph, the Constitution requires that measures be taken to expose, combat and eradicate all forms of corruption and abuse of power by those holding political and public offices. Building on the 2012 National Housing Policy, the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS 1) provides a governance framework for improving housing delivery (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012, 2020). One of the policy's targets is to ensure equitable housing provision to the poor amidst growing housing provision challenges arising from rapid urbanisation. Despite such provisions in national policy, there still exist inconsistencies in governance that result from bottlenecks in the land delivery process and unequal participation in development matters. This has resulted in the elite continuing to acquire more land while the poor remain challenged.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **THE RIGHT TO THE CITY**

Sustainable development fosters equity that sees everyone in the city as of equal importance to benefit from the city. This anchors on the notion of 'the right to the city' – a theory that was propounded by Henry Lefebvre in the 1960s (King, 2019). A consideration of the marginalised and the poor to attain equity can be done by making it everyone's 'right to the city.' A right is a given, an assertion that gives power to an individual that liberates and privileges them (Marcuse, 2009). Everyone, regardless of gender, colour, or social status deserves a right to the city and its benefits. This entails a foundational basis on that equity and justice are sought (Friendly, 2013). Peri-urban governance is an issue because the poor are often ignored when it comes to enjoying urban benefits. Existing land governance instruments have not been cognisant of the poor in every aspect of the policy cycle.

### **THE JUST CITY**

Understanding human rights in the city enable the shaping of governance systems that result in just and equitable access to the city by all citizens. As espoused by Fainstein (2006), a just city comprises three basic elements. Firstly, it serves democracy as people, despite status, must have control over their environments. However, efforts to pursue democracy may result in unjust outcomes such as when poor residents get evicted or relocated to elite estates in a bid to promote social mixing. Secondly, a just city promotes diversity. Thirdly, it is characterised by equity. Equity is key and central to the notion of the just city as it withstands some of the ills of diversity and democracy. For example, urban renewal policies, in a bid to increase diversity, may force the poor to relocate from their concentrated neighbourhoods, and this, though with the rightful intentions, may be at the cost of democracy and equity.

### **LAND GOVERNANCE**

"Land governance concerns rules, processes and structures through which decisions are made about access to land and its use, how the decisions are implemented and enforced, and the way that competing interests in land are managed" (FAO/UN-HABITAT, 2009).

In every society, good land governance is the key to achieving sustainable development (Essien, 2015; Chavunduka *et al.*, 2021) Land governance is good when it is inclusive of the youth, the poor, the disabled, and other vulnerable groups. In the international context, the World Bank (2020) and GIZ (2016) have focused on six dimensions of good governance: voice and

accountability, political stability and the absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and control of corruption. Land is an important asset that has to do with the control of resources relevant to livelihoods and identity. Its management is contentious and heavily politicised and thus requires good governance (Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2008). Good land governance provides avenues to equitable development when driven by pro-poor policies. However, the processes of land governance in most developing countries are failing to deliver, especially to the poor due to high levels of corruption in some cases (Chiweshe, 2020; Gisselquist, 2012).

### **PERI-URBAN AREAS**

Peri-urban areas are the urban fringe or edge and are neither wholly urban nor rural (Laquinta and Drescher, 2000). This is where the urban and rural environmental aspects intertwine and are often referred to as the buffer zone of cities (Schlimmer, 2021). It is the urban transition and experiences changes in land uses that have a greater chance of being absorbed by the city as it expands outwards. Due to their hinterland characteristics, they are often in high demand from developers and investors in the form of agricultural activities and parks. They are connected by demography and population density. Often near urban areas, the peri-urban is constantly expanding and is home to most poor who would have failed to access city life. Also described as the peri-urban interface, the area is situated just outside the urban core, often dotted with villages (Brook and Davila, 2007). Rapid urbanisation in most developing countries is witnessing the conversion of many rural areas into urban settlements (Chauduri, 2015; Steel *et al.*, 2019). As cities fail to accommodate the increasing population, many people end up living in informal settlements on the urban fringe. UN-HABITAT (2007) has called for proper policy formulation that regards all citizens as equal including those living in slums of peri-urban areas, to reduce poverty and foster sustainable urban development.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **GLOBAL INITIATIVES**

Global efforts have always been in play regarding the promotion of pro-poor land policies. Brazil is one of the countries making efforts to reform land policies following the launch by the World Bank of the Land Policy Report in 2003 and the European Union's Guidelines on Land Policy in 2004. The United Kingdom also embraced land policy reforms in 2007

through its international development department (Bergeret, 2008). The major themes on land governance driving urban development oscillate around two major themes, which are 'governance' and pro-poorness of policies. All policies that link to land require review to incorporate primary inclusive factors. Land reforms that provide a redistributive means towards redressing inequities are the major need of modern-day sustainable development, especially in peri-urban areas where much development is taking place (Saturnino and Franco, 2010).

### **PRO-POOR LAND POLICIES**

Pro-poor policies are targeted toward improving or upgrading the capabilities and assets of the poor (Bird and Busse, 2006). These include interventions that are specifically targeted at the poor and aimed at reducing poverty. From formulation, the policies put the interests and needs of the poor at the forefront of development. Some policies tend to have results that are pro-poor though, from the beginning, their emphasis may not be clear. All these are necessary as they cover a wide spectrum and deal with the root contributors to poverty and inequalities. Some of these policies include but are not limited to macroeconomic reforms and gender equality. The process of formulating pro-poor policies should be backed up by knowledge of where the poor are located, who they are, what contributes to their poverty, and the escape routes from the challenges. For pro-poor policies to be successful, it is imperative to change the paradigm that focuses on the rich. It has been observed that most policies benefit the elite, and this makes the poor secondary benefactors as they indirectly benefit from the rich (Kawani, 2001). This means the poor continue to receive a small fraction of what they deserve and in worse scenarios, they get trapped in poverty. Poverty traps are a perpetual condition in which the poor often find themselves due to existing external causes of underdevelopment (Matsuyama, 2008).

Weak government systems in peri-urban governance of most African countries often deprive the poor of their right to the city as they will be surviving under threats of eviction (Kedogo *et al.*, 2010). Of the poor confronted by these challenges, women often suffer more. Most land policies that are presently governing development in peri-urban areas segregate the poor as their provisions are out of reach of the majority (Saturnino and Franco, 2010). Pro-poor strategies are central to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups (Dzvimbo *et al.*, 2020). These



should enable the poor to acquire and own land because land-based wealth is key to poverty reduction.

### **THE ROLE OF THE STATE**

“Well-planned and managed urbanisation can generate wealth, maximising the benefits of scale and agglomeration, allowing for integrated territorial development and connecting rural and urban areas” (Amin *et al.*, 2021 p. 108).

The state has a central role in this. The African continent lags behind other continents like Latin America and Asia in terms of land governance and one of the challenges is the monopolisation of land power by central governments (UNACTAD, 2017). This problem derives from the centralised decision-making system in most developing countries (UN-HABITAT, 2004). Achieving sustainable urban development thus remains a pipe dream if land policies fail to become pro-poor in their approach. The disadvantage of centralisation is that land will be gotten by the well-connected, and when distributed through private developers, it will be out of reach of the poor. Often, local authorities are not empowered to make decisions about land. Scholars have called for a paradigm shift that decentralises land power and ensures fair distribution (Nuhu, 2018). Associated with centralisation is the politicisation of land whereby it is considered a national asset and used as a political instrument.

Centralisation of power in most sub-Saharan African countries and lack of effective leadership denote redundancy in most development policies. The effects of poor land governance have led to a multiplicity of challenges that have been seen through the encroachment of public spaces, insecurity of land tenure, and poor consideration of human rights to accessing land. Good land governance is enhanced by efficient institutional frameworks and policies and when these are formulated to address sustainable urban development, they counteract the complexity arising from rapid urbanisation amidst poverty and inequality (*ibid.*). It is a complex context because most sub-Saharan African countries lack political will, financial resources, and public participation in decision-making to push agendas on equitable land distribution (Durand-Lasserre, 2005; Toulmin, 2009; Post *et al.*, 2010).

Centralisation is a key issue because the state contributes to land shortage through control (Iliffe, 1987), yet it can do much to help its citizens, by providing parcels of state land for homeownership by the poor, offering low-interest loans, withholding from summary forced evictions. With full land titling rather complex and expensive, the state has a role in facilitating

incremental tenure regularisation linked to the physical upgrading of parcels and infrastructure.

### **THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

Civil society makes an important contribution to land governance development. For example, the International Land Coalition supports the interests of the land-poor and endangered groups on a global scale. But the rise of local civil society in land governance has been found to require the active participation of professionals with the capacity to mobilise collective leadership (Home, 2022). Land for housing may be provided through community self-help movements as new approaches are changing the relations between citizens, communities, and government.

“Land governance at a local everyday level means communities and neighbourhoods negotiating their own formal and informal rules, which seems to be occurring across sub-Saharan Africa, and new legal structures for land management are developing, such as co-operatives or community land development trusts.” (Home, 2021 p. 13).

Hence, the challenges for land governance in sub-Saharan Africa today require a re-envisioning of professional roles, especially the greater recognition of the importance of local community-based organisations. Going local is conducive to the use of participatory strategies that improve prospects for meeting the needs of ‘the poor.’

### **GOVERNANCE INDICATORS**

A brief review of some of the governance indicators presented in the conceptual framework would make explicit the forces impinging on peri-urban land governance. Out of the six governance indicators that were listed in the conceptual framework, the control of corruption has been identified as the main challenge. Most governments shun the need to implement pro-poor policies as they go against their political agendas. Pro-poor land policies have to do with democracy in all its varied forms (Saturnino and Franco, 2010). However, this goes against most governing principles in the developing world in contexts of rampant corruption and the use of land as an instrument for amassing political power (Chiweshe, 2020). In a corrupt context land tenure, security of the poor is dependent on their political allegiance rather than being assured property rights.

Regulatory quality has been an issue because of continued reliance on colonial policies and laws by post-colonial states despite the changes in socio-economic and political circumstances (McAuslan, 2000). Anti-poor policies from the colonial period have continued. In this respect, town

planning seems stuck in the traditions and techniques of colonial planning, existing to assist with government land development but with little public involvement and accountability. In most sub-Saharan African countries, no urbanisation policies are resulting in ad-hoc government reactions to problems of peri-urbanisation.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research made use of both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained from multi-stakeholder consultations conducted in the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe in 2020 and 2021 as part and parcel of the development of a comprehensive and gender-sensitive land policy. Stakeholders included government departments, rural and urban councils, civil society, state enterprises, traditional leaders, and representatives of youth, women, and other disadvantaged groups. The evidence was complemented by interviews with three key informants, the first a land developer (Key informant 1), the second a retired city planner (Key informant 2), and the third a senior government town planner (Key informant 3); and secondary sources such as books and journal articles.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Land governance issues explored in the study can best be understood in the context of peri-urban land reform. In this land reform, the government acquired privately-owned peri-urban farms to transfer them to urban councils for development. Further, the government put in place a national housing programme that was to make use of the acquired land. It is the development of these farms that form the spotlight of contemporary peri-urban land governance in Zimbabwe. A group of multi-stakeholders in Mashonaland Central Province summed up the land governance problem in peri-urban areas by saying ‘the feeling was that land reform suspended some laws and established new authorities.’

### **OF UNREGULATED DEVELOPMENT**

The laws applicable to peri-urban areas that could have been suspended are the Regional, Town, and Country Planning Act, Rural District Councils Act, Urban Councils Act, Traditional Leaders Act and Communal Land Act. A close examination of peri-urban land governance challenges, questions the credibility of the government’s commitment to the implementation of policies. The law provides for the expansion of urban areas through the incorporation of peri-urban farmland whereby the government acquires farmland and then transfers it to urban councils for development. The

procedure enables the urban council to take control of the transferred land, do spatial planning, and install basic infrastructure in the form of roads, water, and sanitation before the disposal of stands that would have been appreciated. The reality on the ground is that accessing land in peri-urban areas has been hampered by governance challenges that include corruption, unregulated land markets, and rising land use conflicts.

Evidence shows that the government has not been able to expedite the transfer of acquired agricultural land through the incorporation procedure and that, on average, the process has taken three to five years. Delays in processing incorporation have left farms in a state of weak regulation with spatial planning and environmental challenges. In these places, cooperatives and land barons have developed dysfunctional urban settlements with inadequate infrastructure in the form of roads, water, and sanitation (Key informant 3). Development in these areas is fragmented with some segments occupied by the poor. Historically, peri-urban areas were occupied by middle-income whites and those of mixed race who wanted to supplement their income with smallholder farming. The poor have been pushed to peri-urban areas where land is more affordable and there are no controls (Key informant 1). They are where they are by default not because of pro-poor policies. Some multi-stakeholders felt that these people should become landowners who can generate employment.

Before the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act of 1976, the regulation of peri-urban areas was done through town planning schemes that defined permitted land uses. With the coming of the said Act, local development plans took the place of town planning schemes, but these have not been prepared for peri-urban areas, leading multi-stakeholders to observe that planning and development in peri-urban areas are poorly regulated. Thus, all provinces are beset with illegal subdivision of land and change of land use, uncoordinated sectorial planning, and resource extraction (fuel, wood, sand, and stones) directly by peri-urban residents and those trading in these resources for the benefit of urbanites. Spatial planning is centralised at the Department of Spatial Planning and Development which has not addressed the issue of peri-urban areas. This finding confirms the problem of centralised decision-making that is common in developing countries (UN-HABITAT, 2004)

A key driver of informality is the parallel development policy that during peri-urban land reform allowed the development and occupancy of lands

before the provision of necessary infrastructure, particularly water, sanitation, and roads. The import of parallel development policy is that nobody enforces the law in peri-urban areas (Key informant 1). Although parallel development policy was abolished, the practice has continued leading to the development of urban settlements that lack physical and social infrastructure and are characterised by environmental degradation. Ineffective enforcement of the law has been an issue of resource availability and political will; however, it is essential for the restoration of trust and public confidence in land governance systems. The literature identified the lack of political will and leadership as a problem common to sub-Saharan African countries (Post *et al.*, 2010).

Reference has been made to policy voids concerning housing provisions for the poor. Much could be done in terms of providing access to land, introducing affordable technology, housing subsidies, tax incentives, and access to mortgages. Weak property rights in peri-urban areas impede investment and sustainable development. The poor have been pushed to the urban edge because there has been no policy to facilitate the supply of affordable rental accommodation (Key informant 1). There is need to go back to social housing – as not everyone can afford to build a house (Key informant 3). This call is being made as housing policy is seen to be promoting home ownership and this has constrained affordable options of shelter for the poor. Key informants saw a vacuum of governance systems in peri-urban areas where land barons instigated residents against the Urban Development Corporation (UDCORP) as its success in regularising development would have left them without a role. As has been shown, the poor in peri-urban areas are exposed to socio-political, legal, and economic challenges (Manyanya, 2021).

### **NEW AUTHORITIES**

In all the provinces, multi-stakeholders believed that peri-urban land reform established new authorities in addition to those already in place. Before land reform, peri-urban areas were undoubtedly under the jurisdiction of rural district councils. The situation changed when acquired farms became state land that was allocated to A1 and A2 farmers by the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Resettlement. Some of the state land, for example, Hertfordshire and Woodlands in Gweru and Caledonia in Harare, was allocated to land developers and cooperatives respectively; and residents considered these to be land administration authorities.

The combination of old authorities, that is, rural districts and urban councils, and new authorities have given rise to multiple institutions in land governance. There has been a lack of institutional harmony with agencies often making land use decisions in isolation. For example, Provincial Ministers of State and Devolution have been allocating state land to private players and cooperatives without engaging local authorities (Transparency International Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, 2021). This has resulted in the development of new peri-urban settlements that lack requisite on-site and off-site infrastructure. It is also worth noting that Provincial Ministers of State and Devolution have been allocating state land when this responsibility was decentralised to local authorities. Precisely because of this myriad of challenges some stakeholders referred to a vacuum in peri-urban land governance. There are overlaps, duplications, and conflicts of authority that have left the poor in a complex cycle of poverty, insecurity, and vulnerability (Kedogo *et al.*, 2010). The effects of these challenges have also resulted in gendered inequalities (Nuhu and Mpambije, 2017).

#### **CONTROL OF CORRUPTION**

Corruption has been a scourge in the governance of peri-urban land. Corruption is about “perceptions of the extent to that public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption and the ‘capture’ of the state by elites and private interests.” (Duran-Diaz, 2021 p.95). In peri-urban areas, land has been used as an economic and political asset and this has been a source of corruption (Chavunduka, 2018; Chiweshe, 2020). The abuse of political power is rampant, leading to the accumulation of land by a few political elites (Transparency International Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, 2021). Land development is politicised and, on state land, has been used to create political constituencies (Brook and Davila, 2000). Land developers who are often politically connected individuals have sold urban state land without the approval of the Minister responsible for local government. In these illegal transactions, land developers are facilitated by some officials in the Department of Spatial Planning and Development and urban councils. This has also involved the sale of stands by council officials (Transparency International Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, 2021). These problems have been ascribed to the capture of the local governance system by political parties leading to non-adherence to legal provisions. This land corruption has impacted badly on good land governance as the poor have

been subjected to unplanned developments, without infrastructure, the unsanitary living conditions of informal settlements, poor environmental management practices, and insecure tenure.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Land policy has not been pro-poor, and much scope exists for improving peri-urban land governance. Over the years, social housing policies have waned and given way to homeownership that has not benefited the majority poor. Peri-urban land governance issues are dominated by land corruption, poor enforcement of the law, and government ineffectiveness in policy formulation and implementation. Sources of these problems include centralisation of decision-making power over land, ineffective implementation of the law, and multiple authorities over land, particularly since the implementation of peri-urban land reform.

The way forward requires the building of a developmental state, not one intent on control, as has been demonstrated, and civil society. A developmental state would be charged with developing a pro-poor peri-urban land policy, one that is based on decentralisation of power and authority, and not top-down approaches that have created a governance void in peri-urban areas. In this set up the centre retains a policy and facilitation role while local authorities get empowered to implement the national vision. Peri-urban planning regulations would be needed for responsible and sustainable land management (GIZ, 2016). An active civil society is needed because some land governance policies often fail to meet the needs of neglected classes due to the failure of policy-makers to acquire on-the-ground knowledge (Kanyenze, 2021). The success of public policy-making is dependent upon the participation of all social classes, particularly the poor who are often neglected.

Improvement of accountability and efficiency calls for the introduction of participatory local strategies for land management, otherwise land will remain a resource of the political elite. In this, civil society has an important role to play. Utmost is the role of professions and stakeholder organisations for collective leadership in land governance. The adoption of professional roles will especially recognise the importance of local community-based organisations in land governance. Planning in peri-urban areas should be collaborative across institutions led by the local planning authority for the area.

Peri-urban land governance needs streamlining and effectiveness through the restoration of this role to local authorities, that is, as a shared responsibility between rural districts and urban councils. Addressing the problem of too many authorities in peri-urban areas will rid the system of land barons and other extra-legal authorities although this requires political will give that they are most likely to resist change that will result in loss of benefits emanating from current practices.

The state has an important role in securing the land rights of the poor in a way that enables them to realise improved value arising from urbanisation. Since a large proportion of the poor lives in informal settlements, incremental tenure regularisation linked to the upgrading of physical and social infrastructure provides the way forward. Incremental tenure upgrading can include registering land in favour of the poor, providing basic services, and resolving land disputes. When these measures get put in place, good peri-urban land governance will not be far off.

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# Infrastructure Self-provisioning on Urban Peripheries: Sustainability and Settlement Governance Implications<sup>1</sup>

TARIRO NYEVERA AND KUDZAI CHATIZA<sup>2</sup>

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## Abstract

The study discusses community-based infrastructure provision strategies that are used to improve the settlements of the urban poor. It engages with the question of how residents in settlements of the urban poor access services that would otherwise be provided with state support. This is in recognition of the fact that the Zimbabwean state (local and national) is less active than local communities and their organisation in service provision. A complex web of structures, agents, processes, and relations influence access to services in the emerging settlements. Based on evidence from a household survey, focus group discussion (FGD) sessions, resident interviews, and literature review, the article explores the array of context-specific determinants of access to and use of livelihood and infrastructure-related services. Residents work as individual households and collectively towards infrastructure provision. The combined contributions are indicative of the hope that communities of the urban poor can improve their settlements. Their efforts require more strategic support by the state alongside non-state actors at different levels. Such leveraging on community-based strategies is key to the transitioning of settlements of the urban poor from marginalisation and under-served ones into sustainable and well-governed settlements.

**Keywords:** *residents, emerging settlements, self-provisioning, infrastructure development, community-based service delivery*

## INTRODUCTION

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Zimbabwe's urban population reached 38.6% in 2022 (ZIMSTAT 2022) following years of 'missing urbanisation' (Mbiba 2017). Increasing urbanisation is putting a strain on housing, urban services, and infrastructure (Muchadenyika, 2016). Zimbabwe's urban areas are experiencing increasing socio-economic challenges. Within this context, inadequately planned, incompletely serviced, and often yet-to-be-fully recognised dense settlements have emerged in Zimbabwe, especially after the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme of 2000 (Chatiza and Gotora, 2021; Chavunduka, 2018).

It is important to note that the emerging settlements are extraordinary human accomplishments and those living there often have a strong sense of community, notwithstanding on-going challenges (Chatiza and Gotora, 2021). Streets are named, houses are numbered, and public spaces are built. This shows how urban populations individually and collectively respond to challenges affecting their everyday life in an effective manner (The Shift, 2022, Capprotti *et al.*, 2022). These positive experiences point to the establishment of new relationships between citizens and local governments. Despite their varying degrees of informality, the settlements are often critical to the economies of most major cities and are a major provider of housing around the world, hence the need for government support.

In practice, emergent settlements are often viewed as a problem requiring "clearance" rather than as valuable communities that should be supported (Potts, 2006; UN, 2005). In Zimbabwe, officials synonymise them with 'slums', 'informal and dysfunctional settlements' (Chatiza and Nyevera, 2022). Some of this terminology is derogatory. Instead, it is recognised that ownership of such settlements, and the right to name and define them, lies in the hands of the people who live there (The Shift, 2022; Capprotti *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, it is those residing in those settlements who can decide what term best matches their living environments. This is reflected by their actions that unmistakably focus on settlement improvement.

Traditionally, poor communities were perceived as passive beneficiaries or hostile adversaries of settlement development (The World Bank Group, 2020; Matamanda and Chinozvina, 2020; Mpofu 2012; Satterthwaite, Mitlin and Patel, 2011; UN 2005; Solidarity Peace Trust 2005). Policy frameworks in Zimbabwe are promoting active community participation in development (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020a, 2013). In particular,

the devolution policy seeks to “make the system of governance community based and people centred” (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020b: 177). There are many local initiatives by groups of residents to address their own needs and improve their settlements. These are generally too local to get the attention of academics or the support of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or aid agencies (Satterthwaite, Mitlin and Patel, 2011). While these are rarely documented, they hold valuable lessons that can be adapted to different contexts.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Settlements considered emergent in Zimbabwe’s context are under 30 years and thus post-independence. They are therefore in the early stages of their development, which has become somewhat stagnant and longer owing to limited state support. Their policy and popular visibility have been rising (Chatiza and Nyevera, 2022; Chatiza and Gatora, 2021; Muchadenyika, 2020; Mbiba, 2017). This growing importance relates to the size of individual settlements, their fast-paced growth, their overall number nationally, their spread throughout the country, and the issues associated with their development and management (Muchadenyika, 2020). Emerging settlements are neglected spaces in which residents improvise in their daily life activities to enhance the liveability of the settlements (Matamanda, 2020). The concept of emergent settlements is being used by the Zimbabwe team of the Inclusive Urban Infrastructure project<sup>3</sup>.

Access to infrastructure and services is key for human dignity and survival. Settlements of the urban poor often lack the necessary services (Chitekwe-Biti, 2009). Yet, they devise their strategies and provide their services through individual and community-organised strategies. The participation of citizens through civil society engagement is critical for social, political, and economic development (Chatiza, 2016). This study looks at how the residents address their context-specific issues, define their problems, and devise workable strategies for improving their settlements. This is being looked at from an individual level, organised community groups, and partnerships of residents with different entities including government, the private sector, civil society organisations (CSOs), and NGOs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.inclusiveinfrastructure.org/>

The study draws from a GCRF-funded project<sup>4</sup>. It is being implemented from 2020 to 2023. The project had primary data collection methods of household survey, focus group discussion (FGD) sessions and resident interviews conducted in Harare (Budiriro 5B Extension, Churu Farm, Hopley Farm and Hatcliffe Extension) and Masvingo (Old Mucheke and Victoria Ranch). Harare was selected as a study site because it is the primary city that has been experiencing growth in emergent settlements. Masvingo was selected as a secondary city experiencing dynamics in settlement growth. In addition to primary data sources, the study uses development, policy, and academic literature to understand the governance implications of the self-provisioning models.

## SETTLEMENT PROFILES

### ***BUDIRIRO 5B EXTENSION***

Budiriro 5B Extension is located about 25km southwest of the Harare central business district (CBD). The western part of the settlement is bordered by the Marimba River that drains into Lake Chivero, the main source of water for the City of Harare. Budiriro 5B Extension came about because of the rising need for housing and the policy of parallel development made it possible for housing cooperatives to acquire and develop the land (Goto *et al.*, 2020). There are ownership wrangles between two housing cooperatives given land in the area (Tembwe and Events Housing Cooperatives) but the main part of the settlement has relatively more stable cooperative consortia (Common Vision and Ngungunyana) and a CABS<sup>5</sup>-City of Harare Housing Project (Mbiba, 2020; Muchadenyika, 2020). There are other smaller pockets of self-allocated land and a walled and gated Apostolic Church Village. Tembwe and Events Cooperatives are under Ngungunyana Housing Cooperative (Potts, 2011).

### ***HOPLEY FARM***

Hopley was established in 2005 on planned city land (mostly 200m<sup>2</sup> residential stands) (Matamanda, 2020a). Following *Operation Murambatsvina*, national government negotiated with the city to settle people from holding camps in Caledonia, Porta Farm, and other areas of Harare that had been displaced (Matamanda *et al.*, 2020). The settlement has six zones (1 to 6). The national government allocated land in the first

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<sup>4</sup> The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), grant number ES/T008067/1

<sup>5</sup> Central Africa Building Society, a member of the Old Mutual Group.

five zones to eviction victims while the city allocated its staff and other beneficiaries land in Zone 6. The settlement forms part of Ward 1 stretching from the Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport in the east to Churu Farm in the west (Matamanda, 2020b; Ndoziya, 2015). Based on Hopley having 10 to 15% of this ward's population, estimates put the population at over 20 000 (Matamanda, 2022). Most land was allocated on formal state leaseholds. Those not allocated between August and October 2005 informally allocated themselves land on open and institutional spaces in Zones 5 and 6 *gada*/informal areas (Zivhave and Dzvairo, 2022).

### **VICTORIA RANCH**

Victoria Ranch is a peri-urban mixed-density residential area in Masvingo Rural District. It is located on the city edge to the southwest of Masvingo CBD. Formal planning of Victoria Ranch began in the aftermath of *Operation Murambatsvina* (Takuva, 2017). The plan was prepared and approved by the national government but lacking resources to service the land, the 10 000 residential stands remained unallocated until October 2011 when the government started parcelling out the land to private developers and housing cooperatives (Karakadzai *et al.*, 2022). The land was once a cattle ranch/farm belonging to Tender Meats. Settlement establishment was led by the Ministry responsible for local government at the provincial and district level. The two local authorities were not directly involved in the planning and land allocation. The first phase to be developed is known as *Lot A*, with 5 000 residential stands (Chavunduka and Chaonwa-Gaza, 2021). It was developed between 2011 and 2012 by five land developers. The second phase, known as *the Remainder*, has more than 5 000 stands and was developed in 2012 by 11 land developers (Macheka and Chikoto, 2021). As such, the settlement involves a total of 16 land developers.

### **SERVICE PROVISION MODELS**

Many aspects of emergent settlements reflect exclusion from government processes (Satterthwaite, Mitlin, and Patel, 2011). However, there are changes to this narrative as new modes of government involvement in public infrastructure provision are emerging. Local and national authorities are inadequately connected with the residents and promoters of these settlements. Residents of the study areas generally rely on self-



provisioning strategies for water, sanitation, and energy. This includes access to and maintenance of the infrastructure and services.

### ***HOPLEY FARM***

Housing structures in Hopley are predominantly unapproved. The majority are temporary to semi-permanent partly because most residents 'lack proper paperwork'. Common materials include sun-dried bricks. Some houses collapse during the rainy season, especially in the *gada* section. Generally, the settlement has no connection to reticulated basic urban services. Residents resort to improvised solutions such as wells and pour-flush toilets connected to septic tanks. They rely on candles and solar for lighting and gas and fuelwood for cooking. Water is increasingly a big challenge. Home wells often dry from late winter through the early rains in November. Residents end up buying water from those with more reliable wells, 'commercial water vendors' and wells at the nearby Mbudzi Cemetery.

### ***BUDIRO 5B EXTENSION***

The area is a planned high-density settlement with a layout plan that was prepared by Harare City Council. The houses in the area comply with council standards. However, the challenge is in service provision. One part of the area has reticulated water and sewer connections, but the city council is unable to provide water regularly. Sanitation is not fully reticulated with some households using septic tanks on small stands served by family wells. Transport services are inadequate and expensive, forcing some residents to walk to the nearest hub, Current Shops. Across the Marimba River is the, Crowborough Sewerage Treatment Plant that often discharges untreated waste polluting the river and the whole area. There are no public amenities in the area.

### ***VICTORIA RANCH***

Infrastructure and service production remains a challenge in Victoria Ranch with no water, sewer, and electricity reticulation and social facilities such as schools and clinics. The provision of infrastructure in the settlement is led by developers and the City of Masvingo. The City of Masvingo is sometimes involved in process of providing off-site infrastructure but the process is slow. The developers in the settlement are

responsible for the provision of infrastructure. However, they are not coordinated. Each developer focuses on residents and stands within their area.

**THE EXTENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE SELF-PROVISIONING FOR WATER, SANITATION, AND ENERGY**

***HOUSEHOLD LEVEL***

At the household level, there are efforts that the communities are making to provide their services. Self-provisioning methods are used by the majority of residents on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in the study sites as depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1:** *The extent of self-provisioning for WASH*

Agents	Water	Sanitation
	Valid Percent	Valid Percent
Neighbourhood Group	8	16
NGO/CBO	24	4
Public utility	15	13
Private provider	10	5
<b>Self-supply</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>49</b>
Other (specify)	6	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

For electricity, 98% of the residents were not connected to the national electricity grid. Only 2% were connected. This indicates that residents used other methods including solar, candles, battery-powered lights, and sawdust.

The sustainability of these individual strategies is important to look in. Many times, residents individually use desperate measures to provide their services. The use of unprotected water sources such as rivers and uncovered wells are some of the sources used by residents. Findings from Hopley revealed some of the desperate water sources that are hazardous to human safety and health.

**ORGANISED COMMUNITY GROUPS**

There is growing recognition across the social sector that community-driven change increases the odds of achieving lasting impact. Initiatives are being taken by groups of the urban poor to demonstrate their capabilities. These groups try to negotiate the change in the relationship with local government agencies. The underpinnings for many of these

initiatives are organisations formed by the urban poor around their livelihoods and their homes. In many nations, these local organisations have joined together to form city-wide and then national federations or networks. Collectively, these groups and their networks and federations have gone beyond successful local initiatives to influence city-level developments, and some have even influenced national government policies (Satterthwaite, Mitlin, and Patel, 2011).

Social movements pool resources and skills, acquire land, install infrastructure, and build houses. Planning institutions change policies, regulations, and traditions to embrace and support a new form of urban development driven by grassroots movements (Muchadenyika, 2021). This is noted in the three settlements of Victoria Ranch, Budiriro 5B Extension and Hopley, where public authorities worked with social movements. In Budiriro 5B Extension, a vivid example is energy provision. For Hopley and Victoria Ranch, there are elaborate examples of water provision. These examples are presented in the subsections below.

### ***ENERGY PROVISION IN BUDIRIRO 5B EXTENSION***

For over 10 years, the Budiriro settlement was not connected to the national electricity grid. In an FGD<sup>6</sup> with residents of the settlement, energy infrastructure was rated 2 out of 5, with 1 being the least performance and 5 depicting a good performance. This was because residents relied on self-provisioning models including candles, solar panels, and mobile phones for lighting. FGD findings show that for cooking, residents were using firewood, and charcoal. Some used maize cobs, and plastic, others used dry maize stalks, paper, and sawdust. These results were confirmed during a household survey. The findings show that 61% use liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), 30% use firewood, 2% use sawdust and 7% use other sources that include charcoal, agricultural crop residue, and shrubs. For lighting, the FGD findings show that residents use candles, solar panels, and mobile phones. Household survey findings reveal that solar panels were used by 70% of the residents, with 24% using candles, and the remaining 6% was shared for torches and battery lamps.

Juru (2020) notes that Zimbabwe's spatial planning is not effectively integrated energy production into the development process. This integration gap has resulted in the growth of settlements pressurising the already underperforming national power infrastructure (Chipango, 2018;

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<sup>6</sup> FGD held in Budiriro 5B Extension on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 with 8 participants.

Chiteka and Enweremadu, 2016). Energy policies and frameworks that apply for Harare have a national focus (Mungwena and Rashama, 2013). It is the responsibility of the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) (guided by the National Electricity Act) to connect settlements to the national electricity grid. The City of Harare consults and engages ZESA on the provision of servitudes for power lines and power stations and on approval of plans (Juru, 2020). ZESA is engaged to assess the electricity needs on proposed layouts and plans. However, the emergent settlements were developed without following all the planning processes (Chavunduka, 2018).

There is an irregular spatial distribution of energy demand and supply sources in Harare (Juru, 2020; Chipango, 2018). The study findings show that the Budiriro 5B Extension settlement was not connected to the national electricity grid for 10 years. What usually happens is for residents as individuals or groups to pay fees to ZESA to get their homes connected. Individually, the connection fees are higher as compared to that of organised groups. The residents in Budiriro 5B Extension realised the electricity challenges they were facing and resolved to take a lead in addressing the situation. Community leaders organised themselves and visited ZESA to assess the electricity provision plans for the settlement. The community leaders realised that on each transformer that would be provided, there would be a certain number of households that would get connected to the transformer. The community leaders and ZESA established that 118 households in Budiriro 5B Extension were sharing a transformer.

A development committee, comprising 118 households clustered in one section, was established after the visit by the community leaders. The establishment of the 118 households had challenges. In an interview<sup>7</sup> with a community leader in Budiriro 5B Extension, it was established that in the beginning, some residents were sceptical of the process. There was assurance from ZESA that once residents were organised and did all processes properly, electricity would be connected. There were lessons from other settlements in Harare where the model had worked. This assured residents that the project would succeed. However, there were some residents who refused to participate.

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<sup>7</sup> Key informant interview with a Budiriro community leader, July 2022

The committee engaged the services of a private contractor for guidance on what was required for electricity to be connected. Their activities involved raising funds for all electricity connections in their settlement. The news about this development spread across the whole settlement. Other residents approached ZESA to adopt the same model. ZESA and other residents in the community managed to establish six groups (referred to as Blocks A to F). The first group of 118 households was named Block A of households based on sharing the transformer. To date, Block A has an electricity connection. The other five blocks are still processing their electricity connections through a similar model that was used by Block A.

Interviews with residents show that the community and ZESA made agreements toward electricity infrastructure installation in the settlement. The residents were organised enough to the extent that they were in alignment with all the protocols used by ZESA on electricity infrastructure installation. Ownership of the infrastructure is transferred to ZESA on completion, despite the community contributions. This is important for sustainability purposes. This can be interpreted as a facilitation role played by the residents to complement the efforts of a public entity. It is becoming increasingly understood that the efforts at the community level are limited if they are independent of government or public agencies (Satterthwaite, Mitlin, and Patel, 2011). As such, residents are building relations with government agencies to support processes of co-production.

### ***COMMUNITY SAVINGS GROUP IN VICTORIA RANCH***

Residents in Victoria Ranch are supported by the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation (ZHPF). ZHPF was founded in 1997 by the federal process (spirit) of *Umfelandawonye* (we die together) (ZHPF, 2009). *Umfelandawonye* provides an interesting and revolutionary case of housing provision and innovation, varying from planning, engineering, construction, roofing, and plumbing to reduce the cost of incrementally built core houses (Takuva, 2017; Shand, 2015; Chitekwe and Mitlin, 2001). ZHPF works in partnership with Dialogue on Shelter, a supporting technical arm, that mobilises funds to augment the daily savings and revolving loan fund (Shand, 2015). Its main task is to facilitate an interface between the central government, local authorities, and other external agencies and communities (Muchadenyika, 2015).

ZHPF and Dialogue on Shelter have built a collaborative relationship with local authorities, the central government and the residents (Chatiza, 2016;

Chitekwe-Biti, 2009). The partnership of ZHPF and Dialogue on Shelter has been engaging the City, entering into formal agreements on slum definition and upgrading protocols, redefining planning procedures, and working alongside the City's professionals to co-design infrastructure models (Chatiza, 2016). Since its formation in 1997, ZHPF has developed into a national movement of the urban poor. It has worked in several local authorities in Zimbabwe (Muchadenyika, 2015). This helped the urban poor to secure land from local authorities at favourable terms. ZHPF provides access to a basic financial service in the form of savings and loans, which are otherwise unavailable to the poor (Chitekwe-Biti, 2009).

The ZHPF members in Victoria Ranch started their savings in 1998. Members were making savings specifically for land, livelihoods, and water infrastructure. In 2005, they got their land on Victoria Ranch under the Masvingo Rural District Council. There are around 100 stands including residential, commercial, and institutional ones. Through their savings, they have managed to construct their houses in Victoria Ranch. About 20 members have completed the construction of their homes. Others are at varying levels.

Members of the ZHPF in Victoria Ranch were encouraged to have savings that are contributed towards infrastructure development. One of the key infrastructure developments supported by these savings are water boreholes. The residents used part of their savings to drill a borehole at the ZHPF office. All the money that was used for the borehole drilling was from savings. Developments underway include roads and sewer systems. Through saving, the residents are procuring construction materials.

What gives the grassroots groups their organisation and their capacity to act are savings groups. The foundations of these federations are community-based savings groups in which most savers and savings managers are women. Many savings groups also provide emergency and income-generation loans to their members.

### ***WATER PROVISION IN HOPLEY***

Reticulated water supply started in 2006. With financial support from UNICEF, between 2006 and 2011 there was water from bulk water points in Hopley. From 2012 to 2014, the water infrastructure was there but without water. In 2015, community members decided to get their residential stands connected to the reticulated system. Through a

development committee, they started by making contributions towards household water reticulation and managed to cover 1 000 households.

Their efforts by the community members were financially constrained. The Vitens Evides International (VEI), in 2020 assisted the community members and managed to cover 2 020 households with water reticulation in Zones 1, 2, 3, and 4. Materials needed for household reticulated water connections were bought by VEI and administered to the development committee. VEI and the City of Harare decided to let people pay for meter connection fees despite the materials being supplied by the VEI. VEI and the District Officer for Hopley requested the Committee to mobilise residents. The committee was meant to encourage residents to pay for water meter connection fees regardless of having all the materials bought by VEI. The idea of reconnection fees was to create a sense of ownership of the project between council and residents. As of May 2020, there were about 2 100 households who had paid the connection fees. Ownership of the project by both residents and the Council is key towards rebuilding relations between the two entities. It is also key to the sustainability of water infrastructure in the settlement of the residents' financially contributing to its establishments.

Other residents are not paying for water meter connection fees. One of the challenges is that the community is less privileged. There are some challenges regarding the coordination of the residents and their understanding of relations between VEI and the City of Harare. One of the challenges faced is that residents know that they got all the equipment from the donor. The Hopley Water Development Committee engaged with the community for them to understand the basis of paying connection fees. Some residents understood and are making their payments. Evidence showing that people are paying is a deficit of 70 water meters that needed to be installed between the 3rd and 6th of May 2020.

Another challenge faced is that people are not used to being managed and coordinated especially when they know the materials were bought by a donor. Before the VEI project, the City of Harare was less visible in the water development processes. In an FGD with the members of the Hopley Water Development Committee, one participant had this to say about the residents' coordination on water provision: *"Tanga takagara munzvimbotisina sabhuku, kuunzirwa management becomes an issue"* (We are used to doing our things without any authority to report to, having an organisation

managing our affairs becomes an issue)”. This explains that gaps are being experienced currently in the installation of the water infrastructure. Some alterations need to be made to the 6-metre pipes that were bought by VEI. It is the responsibility of the residents to make those alterations. There are U-shaped pipes needed for water meter connections. The pipes also need threads for joining purposes. Residents should facilitate the re-shaping of the pipes and the creation of threads. Residents are paying for those services and members of the committee are offering the services. The process of making alternations to the equipment brought by VEI was not properly communicated to the rest of the community members. Some members feel that VEI brought all materials ready for use without any alterations on them.

### **EMERGING ISSUES**

The summed cases demonstrate that the involvement of public service providers agencies (councils and parastatals) is critical for sustainable infrastructure provision. Different models of the engagement between residents and public service providers can be drawn from the cases provided in this study. These include the public service providers i) being the facilitator; ii) co-producing with the residents; and iii) getting the residents to do the work. These models are influenced by the extent to which residents are organised and also the type of infrastructure. Non-state actors, particularly CSOs and the private sector, have been instrumental in shaping the relations between residents and public agencies. On one hand, they lobby for cordial relations where public agencies are convinced of the positive efforts towards infrastructure provision and settlement provision. On the other hand, they enable the creation of a vibrant citizen agency committed to settlement transformation.

Despite having the community assuming control over its funds and activities, the state remains critical to i) guard against wasteful public expenditure; ii) unaccountable activities and spending; and iii) activities that are at odds with policy and good principles of governance (The World Bank Group, 2020). This explains the ownership transfer of electricity to ZESA by the residents of Budiro 5B Extension. Also, the water connection fees for Hopley residents explain the role of the state in assuming an oversight role of community-based self-provisioning strategies. The oversight role of the state agencies is critical in self-provisioning strategies by the residents of emerging settlements.



The contributions by community members towards service provision and infrastructure development are indicative of the hope that the community has in improving their settlements. Leveraging community-based strategies is key to transitioning into formal settlements. Community leadership structures are established to steer the development processes. In the article's study areas, there are development committees that were established to coordinate all the infrastructure development activities. The committees comprise residents within the settlements. They coordinate with public agencies, CSOs, international development partners, and NGOs.

## **CONCLUSION**

Emergent settlements are transitioning into mature suburbs through different self-provisioning strategies. There are models of community-based infrastructure provisions that need to be acknowledged and supported. Support to these models can be in the form of pro-poor infrastructure provision policy frameworks. These policy frameworks can detail the acceptable infrastructure models at different stages of a settlement's growth until full suburb maturity is reached. The community's strategies have demonstrated that they can lead to viable pro-poor infrastructure provision models. These strategies can assist towards settlement recognition and improvement on tenure security. Mediated by CSOs and residents' committees, these models are key towards inclusion of the urban poor in accessing infrastructure.

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# Interrogating Emerging Land Access and Tenure Documentation in Zimbabwe's Informal and Semi-Formal Settlements<sup>1</sup>

THOMAS KARAKADZAI<sup>2</sup> AND RUMBIDZAI MPAHLO<sup>3</sup>

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## Abstract

The study debates the nexus between land access and land rights, particularly the definition and documentation of the latter in Harare's peri-urban and urban settlements. The article discusses the diversity of documents referred to by respondents in emerging settlements of Churu Farm, Hopley, Budiriro 5 Extension, and Hatcliffe Extension. The article discusses important indicators of tenure security defined in the many documents held by land beneficiaries. Findings show that residents considered certificates of ownership, inheritance, and utility bills as conferring tenure on residents of emerging settlements. Documents held do not fully secure beneficiaries' claims to the land they are settled on. This is partly because these shadow or alternative documents are issued by non-state agencies like cooperatives and utility bills do not confer tenure but simply communicate with one to meet financial obligations associated with services received. However, these documents take off part of the policy and administrative burden from local and national authorities considering that some of the land administration processes are incomplete in some settlements. Their issuance bridges a gap and thus allows land development processes to ensue. The only challenge is that local and national authorities have not built onto these primary tenure documents for formalisation by state institutions mandated to do so.

**Keywords:** *Land tenure, land rights, Peri-urban settlements, the conventional approach*

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<sup>2</sup> Dialogue on Shelter, Harare, Zimbabwe

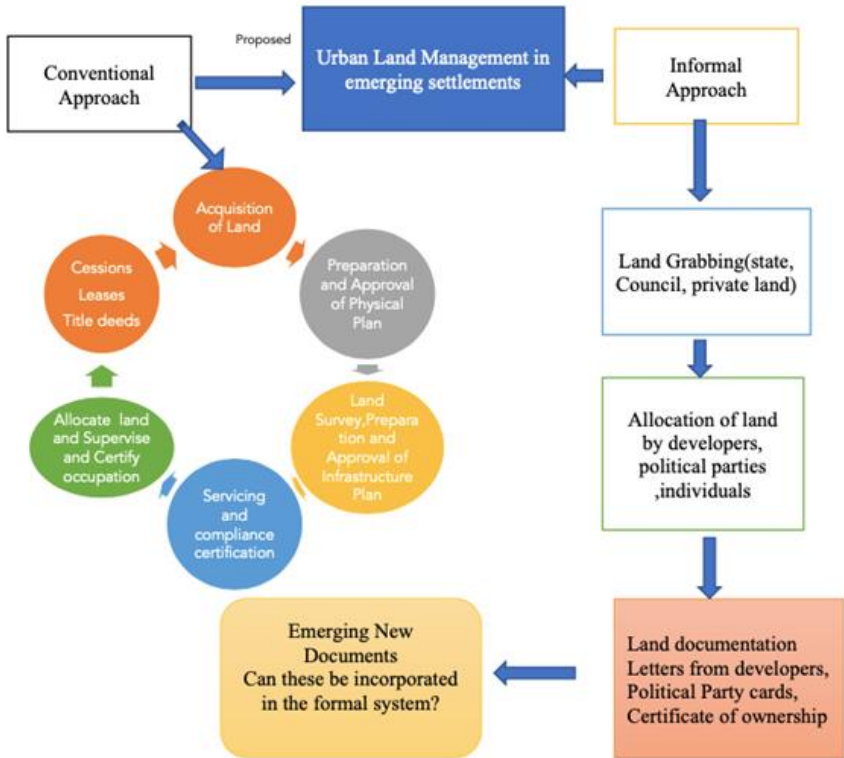
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Urban land management systems in Zimbabwean urban areas have changed over time. The set regulations and the roles of different organisations have been shifting. Since the turn of the millennium, state land administration functions have been affected by land invasions, resulting in a massive shift in spatial arrangement and physical boundaries. The random way peri-urban farms were occupied under fast-track land redistribution resulted in a significant departure from planning and land allocation procedures (Marongwe, 2003). This has led to a severe battle over housing and governance in Harare's urban and peri-urban settlements, which has also skewed traditional land tenure and land rights documentation in new settlements. State and non-state organisations working in the land and built environment sectors have not effectively collaborated, nor have they had adequate capacity to properly implement Zimbabwe's National Human Settlements Policy (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020).

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework displays the approaches to urban land management that are applied in Harare. There are two approaches in Harare: the traditional and informal approaches. The traditional or formal system involves public and private players, with the process culminating in proper land registration and documentation. The informal approach covers the informal process of land acquisition, which is frequently carried out by players such as cooperatives and property developers through land invasions or land grabbing. These informal actors have a habit of parcelling the land into various stand sizes and issuing various sorts of ownership certificates. Letters of occupation from developers, letters from political parties, party cards, and certificates of ownership are among the documentation. These party cards are used as a basis for gaining and defending land access. Despite these papers, tenure insecurity or instability persists. Informal players issue pieces of paper with only one's name on them. These are at times violated by the issuing actors when it suits them.



**Figure 1:** *Conceptual Framework of the Study (Authors; 2022)*

## **THEORETICAL CONCEPTS**

### **LAND REGISTRATION**

"This is the process of documenting official land rights through deeds or as the title on properties." It denotes the existence of an official record (land register) of land rights or deeds relating to changes in the legal status of defined pieces of land. It responds to the queries of "who" and "how" (UN 1996: 107). It should be mentioned that land registration is critical for recognising, documenting, and safeguarding land tenure rights (Omwoma, 2016). However, without papers, one has no proof of their possessions (Mwathane, 2016).

### **LAND REGISTER AND REGISTRY**

This consists of two parts: the legal attributes, which include the owner's name and other identifying information, the nature of tenure, encumbrances, the price paid for the land transfer, and caveats or cautions (Omwoma, 2016). Aside from the legal features, it includes a description of the land that includes or refers to registry index maps or cadastral plans, parcel numbers, size, location, and adjacent lots. The land registration system in Zimbabwe is assigned to the Deeds Office located in Harare and Bulawayo in terms of the Deeds Registry Act (Deeds Registry Act (Chapter 20:05) and operates based on rules promulgated under the Deeds Regulations, of 2018. Section 14 of the Deeds Act makes the registration of real rights on alienated land in Zimbabwe compulsory, such rights range from *dominium* or ownership which is the mother of all real rights (Pienaar, 2015) and includes limited real rights that are real to the extent that a legal subject can enforce them against the rest of the world.

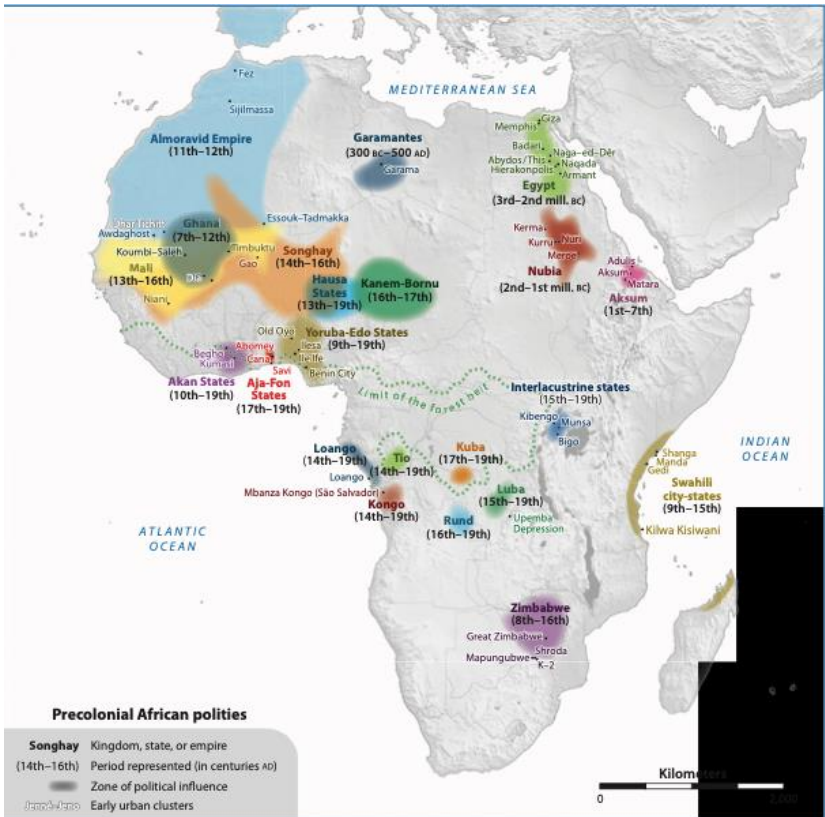
### **DEED**

A deed is a legal document that expresses an intention to perform an act on its face. This legal document, which usually concerns the transfer of property, must be signed, sealed, and presented in the presence of a witness or witnesses (Bone, 2001; Chambers, 2006).

### **EVOLUTION OF LAND REGISTRATION IN AFRICA AND ZIMBABWE**

The section examines the literature on the land registration and documentation procedure, and experiences throughout the world, particularly in Africa and Zimbabwe. The literature review determines how growing settlements have entered traditional approach processes, and how informal land acquisition practices have influenced the documentation process.

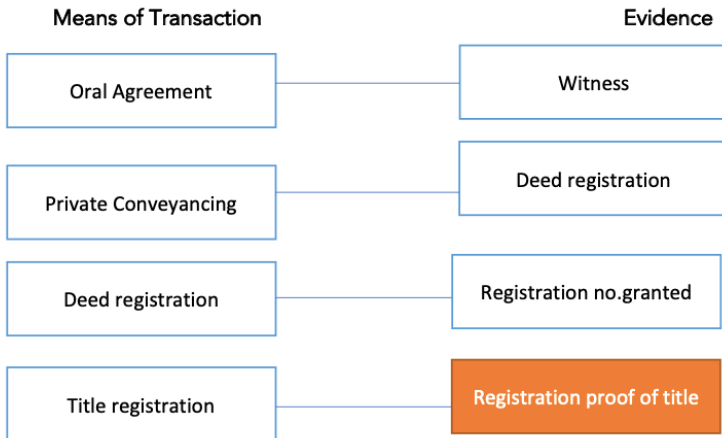




**Figure 1:** *The pre-colonial States in Africa* (Cameron, 2013).

The Great Zimbabwe City State, which existed between 1100 and 1500 A.D. (Mufuka, 1983), Munhumutapa (c. 1100-1900), Khami, and Dhlodhlo are where the land registration system in Zimbabwe originated. Transactions in this close-knit, paperless society were based on verbal agreements, and then the transfer was completed through symbolic actions that were seen by everyone in the neighbourhood (Mburu, 2017). Planning arrangements in these pre-colonial governments were not often uniform or even similar because of disparities in social organisation amongst tribes. For example, cave and rock paintings showed cultures using a certain location and the activities they carried out. As a result, it served as proof of their presence in a land area. However, the African states (Great Zimbabwe State, Munhumutapa state, Khami, and Dhlodlo) grew larger and conflicts over

land increased, with the aid of colonisation. In West Africa in the second part of the 19th century, colonisation introduced some conveniences for land registration (Lagos 1883, Liberia 1861, Sierra Leone 1857). (Dickerman *et al.*, 1989). The first piece of legislation that gave the British South Africa Company (BSAC) permission to occupy a region and exert political control over it was the Royal Charter of 1889 (Moyana 1984:9). Despite the Charter making no mention of property ownership specifically, this clause served as the justification for land acquisition by European settlers from 1890 to 1894 (New African no. 387:8). As seen in Figure 2, land registration progressed through numerous stages before becoming what it is today. Oral arguments were used to conduct transactions in a paperless society, that later evolved into private conveyancing, registries, and title registration systems.



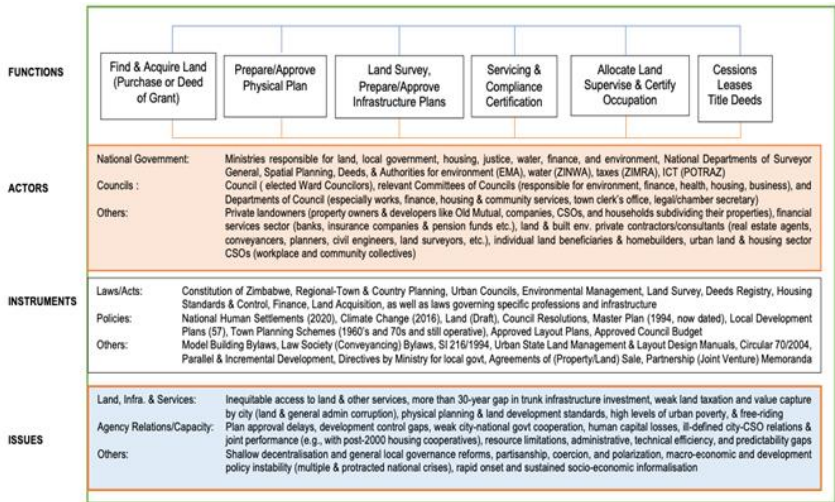
**Figure 2:** *Evolution of land registration* (Mburu, 2017)

The deed or title system of registration is used to register land all around the world. Land documents are submitted at face value under the deed system and are not subject to detailed procedural scrutiny (Akingbade, 2005). Developed countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Canada, and the United States of America have adopted computer-based, web-based, and entirely digital land registration systems (Mburu, 2017). Land tenure was largely introduced to Africa through its colonial towns (Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012). This has influenced the evolution of land in African countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, and Ghana. Land

management in Kenya is accomplished through a structured acquisition and allocation process. Deeds systems in South Africa are likewise more robust and better, including most, if not all, of the qualities of a well-run titling system (Deininger and Feder, 2009).

### CONVENTIONAL APPROACHES FOR URBAN LAND MANAGEMENT IN ZIMBABWE

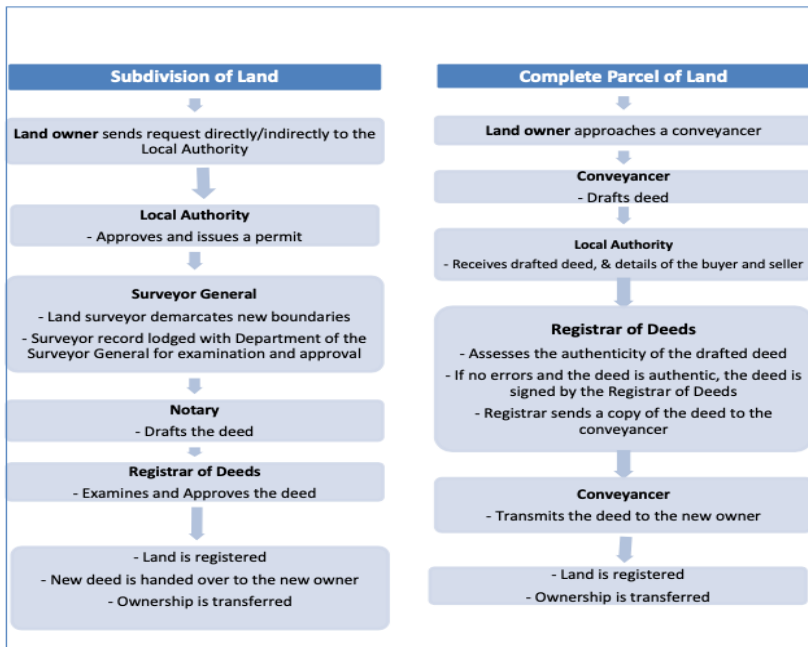
In Zimbabwean cities, access to urban land is managed and regulated by established norms and mediated by different organisations, with such interactions taking place between formal state and duly recognised non-state private and civil society organisations (Marongwe *et al.*, 2011). The basic government functions provide the framework for Zimbabwe's urban land management system (Chatiza, 2022). The organisational, legal, and policy framework for Zimbabwe's urban land policy are depicted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Urban Land Management System in Zimbabwe (Chatiza, 2022)**

Although Figure 3 includes provisions for urban land management methods, players and policies, it should be emphasized that the implementation of urban land management does not always go linearly. Instead, it depends on how the land was obtained, which also affects how the land documentation process will be carried out. Depending on whether it is a subdivision or a total transfer of a land lot, the land registration process would follow a formal process. This was a legal procedure that was followed to verify that at the end of the process, ownership of that specific

piece of property was clear and that the land was properly documented. Figure 4 depicts the processes of both a subdivision and a complete land parcel transfer.



**Figure 4:** *The land registration Process of a subdivision or complete transfer of a land parcel in Zimbabwe (Kadenge and Chavhunduka, 2019)*

### LAND INVASION AND URBAN LAND MANAGEMENT IN HARARE

The beginnings of the land invasions in Zimbabwe go back to the time before, during, and after Zimbabwean independence (Chigora and Guzura, 2008). African tribes and states used to battle and invade one another's territories before colonisation for lucrative economic motives. However, the Pioneer Column began a large land-grabbing operation in 1890 during which the native population was forced off all the best land. As land distribution procedures came under scrutiny, including disagreements between housing cooperatives, local governments, the federal government, and land developers due to the non-application of traditional legal procedures, land invasions in Harare's urban and peri-urban districts started in 2000. The City of Harare's 2010 Harare Land Audit revealed a

variety of illegal activity, including exploiting dual currency markets to purchase land for a pittance, selling developers land that was reserved for uses other than construction, selling land more than once, and flouting rules regarding service provision (McGregor, 2013). The fast-track land reform has led to the emergence of human settlements in Harare's peri-urban and urban zones, which are described as gray realms of indefinitely situating residents between the "lightness" of legality, safety, and full participation and the "darkness" of expulsion (Yiftachel, 2009:241).

The haphazard way farms were taken or settled resulted in a significant divergence from planning procedures (Marongwe, 2003). The land occupations that began in Zimbabwe in the year 2000 have sparked a heated debate, with particular focus on the involvement of the state, non-state actors, the traditional approach, and political parties in the occupations. In other words, two conflicting land allocation systems evolved in the post-2000 era, one run by the City of Harare and the other by the local government ministry (Muchadenyika, 2017). This has resulted in a heated debate about housing and governance in Harare's urban and peri-urban areas. Before 2000, land ownership in Zimbabwe was lawfully transferred from one person to another through a document of transfer (title deed) prepared by a conveyancer and signed by the Registrar of Deeds (Matondi and Dekker, 2011).

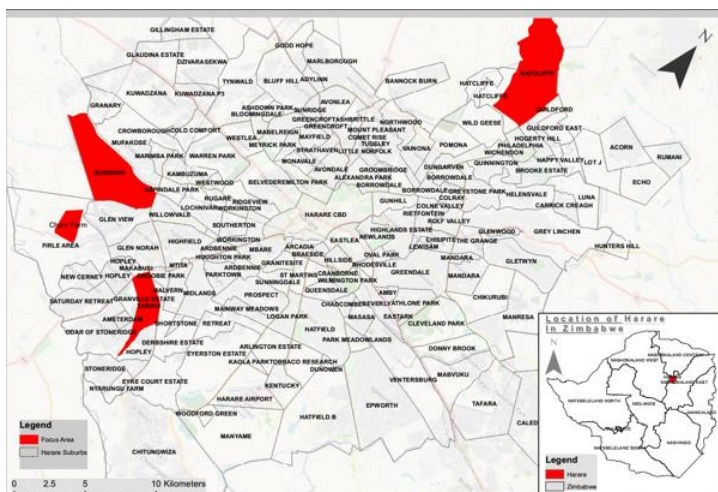
## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The article draws on the *Inclusive Urban Infrastructure Research Project* (IUI) in Hatcliffe Extension, Hopley, Budiro 5 Extension, and Churu Farm in Harare. Harare as the capital city is witnessing unique configurations and a massive shifting of physical borders. Data from the four rising settlements were collected using qualitative methods. The research is based on data from 16 focus group discussions (FGDs) and a household survey with a total of 2 303 participants. During the first quarter of 2021, 152 residents participated in focus groups. The household survey took place from July 5th to July 10th, 2021. An FGD Guide and a questionnaire were used as data collection instruments. Table 1 shows the range of reach.

**Table 1:** *FGD and Household Survey Reach*

City	Settlement	FGD Session Count & Reach		H/H Survey Reach
		Count	Participants	Participants
Harare	Budiriro 5 Extension	3	21	464
	Churu Farm	1	22	432
	Hatcliffe Extension	3	37	486
	Hopley	3	24	921
<b>Total</b>		10	107	2303
<b>Total number of research participants</b>				

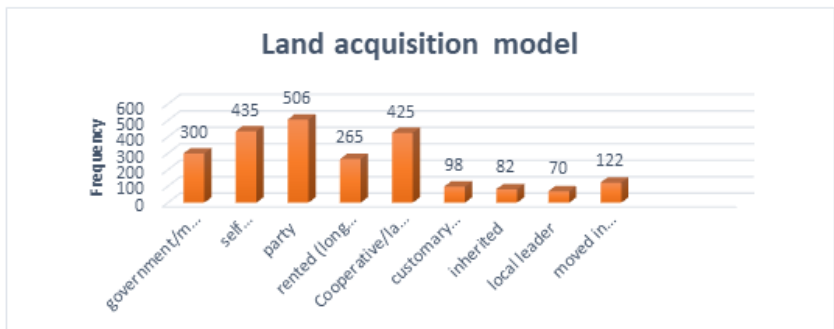
For quantitative data analysis, MagPi+ was employed, while tables, charts and graphs were used for data display. For qualitative data about inhabitants' perceptions of housing schemes' efforts and obstacles in obtaining suitable homes, a thematic analysis was employed. The four settlements/sites covered by the study in Harare are depicted in Figure 5. Churu Farm, Budiriro 5 Extension (Ngungunyana Cooperative area and Consortium, established from surplus Ngungunyana co-operators), Hopley, and Hatcliffe Extension are among them.



**Figure 5: Map Showing Harare Sites (Chatiza et al., 2022)**

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The method and techniques of land acquisition in the four case study areas were investigated through interviews with landowners about how they acquired the plot. As shown in Figure 6, 506 respondents acquired land plots through political parties, 435 respondents self-acquired land plots, 300 claimed to have been allocated by the government or municipality, 425 respondents acquired land plots through co-operatives, 225 respondents are renting, 122 respondents just moved in by themselves, 98 respondents acquired land through custom, 82 respondents inherited, and 70 respondents acquired land through inheritance.

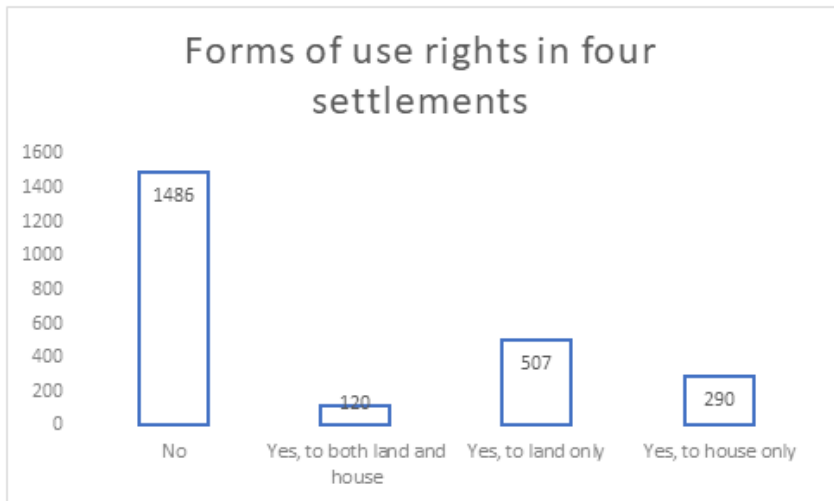


**Figure 6:** Land acquisition process in Churu Farm, Budiriro 5 Extension, Hopley, and Hatcliffe Extension

Some of the case study regions (Budiriro 5 Extension and Hatcliffe Extension) had land subdivision schemes, while others (Hopley and Churu farm) had an unplanned site arrangement. The diversity in stand sizes in various places demonstrates this. For example, stand sizes in Hatcliffe Extension and Budiriro 5 Extension range from 200 to 600 square metres, whereas in Hopley and Churu Farm, the minimum stand size is 50 square meters, and the maximum is 200 square meters. There was little regularity in the allocation of land plots by 'nhanho.' Most of the land was given to the state on a formal leasehold basis. Those who were not assigned between August and October 2005 were informally awarded land in Zones 5 and 6 gada/informal areas on open and institutional spaces. Overcrowding is a problem in the settlement, with some 50m<sup>2</sup> residential lots.

#### FORMS OF USE RIGHTS IN THE FOUR CASE STUDY AREAS

The respondents in Churu Farm, Hopley, Budiriro 5 Extension, and Hatcliffe Extension were asked to describe the type of usage rights they have. According to the findings of the study, 1 486 of the 2 303 respondents have no use rights to the land or home they are inhabiting, 507 have use rights to the land only, 290 have use rights to the house only, and 130 have use rights to both land and house, as shown in Figure 7.

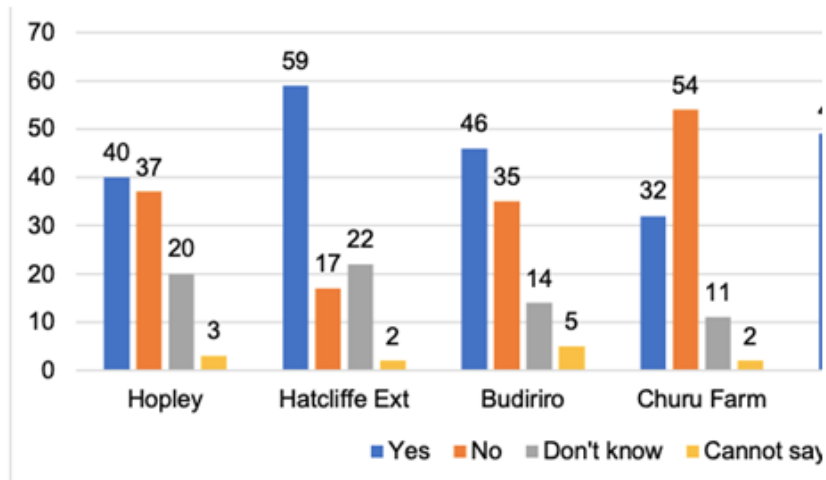


**Figure 7:** *Forms of Use rights in Budiriro 5 Extension, Churu Farm, Hopley, and Hatcliffe Extension*

#### **LAND/HOUSING DOCUMENTATION**

The research wanted to know if the people at Budiriro 5 Extension, Churu Farm, Hopley, and Hatcliffe Extension had any land or housing documents. Figure 8 shows the status of document availability for each settlement. 'Having papers,' as it's known in settlements, is a significant measure of tenure security. Hatcliffe Extension received the highest score of 59%, while Churu Farm received the lowest score of 32%, indicating that this is the community with the most informal land access style. Figure 8 depicts land/housing paperwork in the Budiriro 5 Extension, Churu Farm, Hopley, and Hatcliffe Extension.

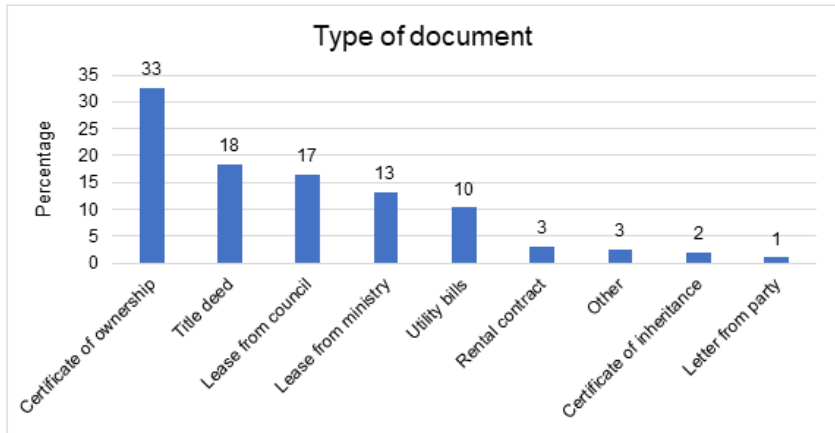




**Figure 8:** Land/ Housing documentation in Budiriro 5 Extension, Churu Farm, Hopley, and Hatcliffe Extension

**DOCUMENTATION TYPE ACROSS ALL FOUR SITES**

In addition, as indicated in Figure 9, the type of documentation differs. A third stated that they had a 'certificate of ownership', which is an odd 'document' in Zimbabwean property law. State leases (municipal and national government) come in second with 30%, followed by title documents with 18%. Another intriguing discovery is the use of 'utility bills' as 'documents' to prove formal land/house allotment. Residents' perception of this as a proxy for tenure security provides possibilities for regularisation paths. It confirms the frequently perplexing overlaps among formal institutions in Zimbabwe's emergent settlements, much like the issue of leases controlled by two levels of government.



**Figure 9:** Documentation type across all Four sites.

## DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS

According to the findings, several land acquisition models exist in settlements, including a mix of land development and housing brokers. In other words, the land distribution and access issues raised in the four studies have underlined the need for new sources of authority, such as political party leaders and land barons with clout in Harare's extremely informal urban land management system. In the Churu Farm and Hopley study sites, the informal method is the most prevalent. This method is concerned with illicit players such as individuals, land barons, and political groups, and it differs from the traditional method. The informal approach to land acquisition frequently employs land invasions, and distributive policy is frequently employed. This has produced a new void in Harare's land management system, which has entered both legal and informal processes.

Because there were no legal statutes to guide their decision-making, unlawful players (individuals, land barons, and political parties) were forced to rely on their judgment and directions from either their political party or cooperative leaders. This has resulted in major issues such as insufficient land surveying and delineation, land claims and counterclaims, offer letters that cannot be fully accounted for, multiple land ownership, oversized and too-small land sizes for others, and property disputes. These variables have an impact on tenure, and they must be addressed regardless of the government's or inhabitants' preferred form of land tenure. In these

growing settlements in Harare, the informal land registration procedure violates the logic of official land registration in terms of fixing and ensuring title to land and minimising fluidity in the face of social dynamics. As a result, the quality of one's title is determined by whether the acquisition of any piece of land followed the proper registration procedures and processes.

Respondents in emerging settlements relied on a variety of papers, according to the survey. Political letters, cooperative letters, certificates of ownership, letters from community leaders, and utility bills are among the documents. Although these documents are uncommon in terms of Zimbabwean property rules, residents of these settlements regard them as a proxy for land tenure security. Unlike the traditional approach, which provides solid proof of ownership guaranteed by the state, these residents' documentation is done piecemeal. Despite residents' ownership of these odd documents obtained from informal players, it should be underlined that tenure security is more than just having a piece of paper with one's name on it.

The analysis discovered that several people and organisations were functioning unofficially and illegally in the municipal land management process. Two conflicting land allocation systems evolved in the post-2000 era, one run by the City of Harare and the other by the local government ministry, resulting in a severe contest over housing and governance in Harare's urban and peri-urban areas. Disjointed operations of relevant institutions involved in the land administration process have caused institutional problems in Harare's emerging settlements in peri-urban and urban settlements, as relevant offices are housed under different ministries, further fuelling inefficiencies in land governance (Kadenge and Chavunduka, 2019). State institutions must reconnect with these new settlements and players. This will enable coordinated exploration of methods for inclusive infrastructure construction and management. Connecting the dots necessitates engaging carefully selected non-state actors in discussions that lead to realistic, inexpensive, and scalable response plans. Residents appear to support adequate state participation, especially in places where private and civil society actors (land developers, trusts, corporations, cooperatives, and citizen groups) have been active but weakly controlled for more than 15 years.

According to the findings of the study, there are several institutional deficiencies in the land management systems of growing settlements. Land governance has not been backed by a comprehensive and accessible information system, as Kadenge and Chavunduka (2019) argue, and this has provided the potential for corruption. The government institutions responsible for land, local government, national housing, small businesses, and cooperative development operated in silos, were not coordinated, and did not speak with a single voice, which allowed the housing cooperatives to take advantage of the void (Chatiza and Gotora, 2021). It is important to note that these major departments are spread across various ministries, each of which oversees carrying out a particular piece of legislation, that presents administrative difficulties in land management (Marongwe *et al.*, 2011). This led to the emergence of conflicted areas and lines of division within various governmental organisations (McGregor and Chatiza, 2019). It is also important to note that there is no active forum that brings together illegal and formal actors to discuss and shape how the land distribution system in these nascent settlements should be implemented. Information on land delivery in Harare is fragmented, as evidenced by the study areas since numerous agencies collect land information for their purposes with little sharing of the information. This has a significant impact on the collection of land delivery information and information management, both of which have an impact on policy development in Harare in the direction of a better land management system.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research investigated the land tenure procedure and paperwork fluidity in Harare's Churu Farm, Hatcliffe Extension, Budiro 5 Extension, and Hopley communities. In these growing settlements, most of the land access and documentation process is dominated by informal actors who have developed a parallel system to the regular or traditional land delivery system. As a result, inhabitants are relying on a range of documents issued by non-state entities to serve as proxies for the security of tenure. Given the existing gap between non-state actors and formal state actors, the study recommends assimilating, adapting, and modifying non-state actors' existing efforts into the formal land delivery process through the collection and management of land delivery information in these emerging settlements.

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# Bringing the Human Dignity Thrust into the Housing Informality Debate in Zimbabwe: Lessons from Makokoba, Mbare, Sakubva Housing Habitats

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## Abstract

**Informal settlements present a challenge on human dignity by infringing on people's rights to basic services and exposing them to inhumane conditions. The article focuses on human indignity in informal settlements that have been caused by poor planning, implementation, and monitoring of the urbanisation trends in major cities in Zimbabwe. The study used secondary data, that is, desktop method of data collection. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the data. Results illustrate that little research has been conducted on human dignity in housing schemes and the implications of personal responsibility for food, water and accommodation standards in informal settlements. Results also show that human dignity is affected by the lack of sanitation and provision of adequate facilities by local authorities, resulting in some unethical behaviour like crime and violence from the residents of the informal settlements. Based on the findings, housing principles provide both rights and personal responsibility and the role that human dignity plays in the provision of better living standards. The study recommends a model that should be implemented by local authorities that involves participation, responsibility and accountability of residents to provide better access to sanitation for the underprivileged people, hence promoting human dignity. Informal settlement upgrading should also be implemented to pursue human dignity.**

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**Keywords:** *human dignity, human right, governance, informality, principles rights and duties*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Urban housing provision is a big issue on a global and national scale. Even in industrialised countries, a rising number of individuals have become homeless in recent years (Maloney, 2004). While the causes of this problem differ by nation, there is evidence that the largest cities are failing to meet the demand for housing, particularly among the poor. Between 35% and 50% of urban residents in Africa, according to Tevera and Chimhowu (1998), are tenants or lodgers who live in privately-owned rented homes without electricity, or running water. The lack of adequate housing has led to the mushrooming of informal settlements in major cities especially among the poor.

One of the most important aspects of government social policy in Zimbabwe has been the supply of housing, particularly since the country's independence in 1980. There has been a severe housing scarcity in most major areas of Zimbabwe, and the backlog is growing. Low-income earners are the most impacted (Chitongo, 2017). The scope of the housing crisis in Zimbabwe has continued to grow during the country's more four decades of independence. Chirisa (2012) argues that despite greater attempts to ameliorate housing conditions made by both the government and the impoverished people, this is still the case. Housing is viewed as a fundamental necessity and human right according to the Habitat Agenda, a global framework on human settlements that was adopted by more than 250 national governments in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996 (UNCHS, 2000). If the current situation of informal settlements persists, social stability and internal order are jeopardised because of disgruntled citizens' protests and riots. Health problems are likely to arise as evidenced by the endemic cholera outbreaks that plagued Harare (Nyarota, 2018); disorder and chaos will reign, and citizens' social fabric will eventually deteriorate (Mbiba, 2019).

The concept of human dignity is often neglected but is of uttermost importance in housing provision. In Zimbabwe, most people are still living in the colony, while those who could afford to have moved out have done so. *Operation Murambatsvina* (Restore Order), first implemented in 2005 to reduce disorderly urbanisation, had a significant impact leaving many people vulnerable to poverty. According to accounts, the operation did not

only occur in urban areas, but in rural areas as well. Police went into rural regions and destroyed homes that were illegally constructed on some properties that were taken from white owners and given to black Zimbabweans. It was necessary to seek court orders in several of the peri-urban regions. Hunger and illness, both with implications on human dignity were hazard to evictees. Many evictees and the homeless risked starving because of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe and *Operation Murambatsvina*. There were reports of severe overcrowding in Epworth, outside of Harare. This was due to displaced individuals relocating to Epworth to build new homes. Concern should be expressed over the rising population being housed in an 'eviction-free' area. As a result of the inadequate amenities for such a big population, there was an increased risk of violent riots every day which affect human dignity.

Like most African countries, Zimbabwe has experienced a surge in urbanisation. This has made it difficult for urban local authorities to keep up with the sharp rise in demand for services like housing and water. As a result, Zimbabwe has started to see a growth of informal settlements in all urban areas for over 15 years due to high urbanisation trends in towns and cities. Given the catastrophic economic condition Zimbabwe has been in over the past 20 years, the growth of informal settlements and new settlements has led to a massive demand for water, that most cities and towns are unable to supply. Consequently, cholera, typhoid and other water-borne diseases have been a problem in Zimbabwean towns in recent years. Natural calamities like floods and cyclones have also been common in Zimbabwean cities. Since the office opened in Zimbabwe in 2006, UN-HABITAT has focused on supporting urban governance, housing laws and policies, urban planning capabilities, water and sanitation in peri-urban communities, and city resilience measures (Muderere, 2011). The need to uphold human dignity even in informal settlements has necessitated this study.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework that is directing our research framework emphasizes two scenarios: first, the government may conduct urban planning activities in informal settlements, or there may be circumstances when there is no urban planning since several unethical activities are being carried out in informal settlements. Uncoordinated growth assures that informal settlements occur in the latter situation. On the other side, urban planning may be effective, or local governments may plan to fail (Saidi, 2019). If the planning is strong and successful, the legislation and policies

directing human settlement growth are typically long-term and support coordinated development, which may result in the creation of a sustainable city (Chirisa and Matamanda, 2019). Alternatively, failing to prepare may result in the formation of legislation and regulations that merely wreak chaos and generate disorganised growth, ultimately leading to informal settlements. As a result, the formation and existence of informal settlements appear to be the result of a variety of circumstances that must be analysed through the lenses of a sustainable city framework.

## **HUMAN DIGNITY AND HOUSING INFORMALITY: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

In cities and towns across the Global South, there has been an alarming rise in the number of informal settlements due to high urbanisation trends recorded in recent years (UN-HABITAT, 2016). About 61.7% of Africa's urban population lives in slums, and this number is rising daily (UN-HABITAT, 2014). By 2025, 1.4 billion people are projected to be residing in slums (Todes, 2011: 116). It seems utopian for the region to attempt to create the attractive cities envisioned in the New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, and Africa Agenda 2063 (Parnell, 2016). Human settlement development issues remain a political priority in this environment despite the rise of informal settlements (UN-HABITAT, 2016: 47). Furthermore, in African cities, inappropriate urban planning conceptions and paradigms are commonly used, resulting in the formation of informal communities (Matamanda *et al.*, 2020). The informal habitats go hand in glove with shortages of resources such as water which is a human right and has an implication on human dignity.

In Zimbabwe, informal settlements are mostly residential areas where housing units are built on land by people, and they have no legal claim of occupation on that land which results in unplanned settlement areas where housing does not comply with statutory plans and building regulations. This is frequently located in peri-urban areas of major towns and cities (UN-HABITAT 2003). Furthermore, informal settlements arise because of real estate speculation for urban residents, especially the low-income earners where they try to find cheap and affordable accommodation and the desire to own properties. Natural disasters such as floods and cyclones mostly affect such unplanned settlements since they have no adequate services to contain other damages associated with channelling water into drains. Since the office's inception in 2006, UN-focus Habitat in Zimbabwe has been on supporting urban governance, housing legislation and policies,

capacity in urban planning, water and sanitation in peri-urban communities, and city resilience solutions to enhance human dignity.

Human dignity has an intrinsic value that ensures the equitable distribution of possibilities for all to have adequate access to water and sanitation services in the water management industry and other domains (Mbiba, 2019). In this context, the UN Human Rights Council has acknowledged the human right to access clean water to drink and adequate sanitation, which remains a fundamental human right for all societies (Nyarota, 2018). Thus, society has a special duty to uphold these rights and should refrain from infringing them. Since everyone has a right to access to basic water and sanitation, even if it is disregarded, society should evaluate how well people are exercising this right.

Water provision is amongst the rights that an individual should exercise. It draws attention to water management, where its mismanagement may lead to infringement of the right to access to water. Water management has received much attention in international conferences over the last several decades to provide suggestions and measures to safeguard the environment. The Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) concept and the Global Water Partnership (GWP) were emphasized as a roadmap to water management in the 21st century in Brazil. The IWRM and GWP implementation were viewed as critical features for water provision and natural environment conservation as it has a bearing on human dignity. Water management was built on technical knowledge in these viewpoints to enhance water supplies for integrated and prioritised needs in living environments (Mbiba, 2019). Human equity has evolved rapidly in recent times based on two schools of thought: subjective human wellbeing theory, which measures the level of personal disposal to access material resources such as water, and human capabilities theory, which measures access to necessities that control human development (Nyarota, 2018). Alkire (2002) has established the idea of human dignity as a description of the lack of prejudice, humiliation, and feelings of shame when individuals do not have enough access to fundamental resources, based on human welfare and capacities theories. Any unalienable and inviolable human right is supported by human dignity (Gauri, 2004).

In addition, the materiality of informal housing and surrounding neighbourhoods shapes their defensive capability and is discussed in connection to three major concepts: criminalisation, crime and violence, and hyper-permeability. Informal settlements are not neutral areas; rather,

they nurture certain sets of political and legal processes that impact how crime evolves and is resolved, therefore affecting security. Informal settlements are frequently criminalised locations, and their inhabitants are frequently criminalised by association. Most are or were unlawful in terms of land occupancy and the construction of non-standard buildings. They are symbolically formed as areas of crime, spaces of aberrant, contaminating, and harmful traits since they are excluded from the proper cosmos (Chirisa, Dumba and Mukura, 2012). They continue claiming that "predictably, residents of such areas are likewise regarded as marginal. It is generally argued that an anti-establishment, or oppositional, culture prevails in slum communities, that is broadly supportive of all types of unlawful activity.' There is no visible law and order; wandering juvenile gangs, muggers, drug dealers, prostitutes, and the poor are visible, and marginal activities are tolerated (Clough Marinaro, 2021).

This criminalisation influences the perception of informal settlements as crime hotspots that affect people's dignity: It is frequently argued that an anti-establishment, or oppositional, culture exists in slum regions, that is broadly supportive of all types of unlawful activity. (Saidi, 2019). However, Cook (2015) points out that the criminalisation and crimes committed in informal settlements are more complicated. He cites the ubiquity of criminal cartels bribing authorities to pose as property developers of informal dwellings on state-owned land (Davis 2006: 41), and the presence of severely vulnerable inhabitants in such settlements, including those escaping wars and strife. These populations, especially the kids, are particularly prone to recruitment into street gangs and other violent groups as paramilitaries (Davis 2006: 49). The UN agrees but claims that such settlements have structured social control (Cook, 2015). Residents in Zimbabwe use vigilantism and religion to regulate crime in the lack of adequate official judicial processes (Meth, 2009; 2013). Understanding crime in informal settlements demands taking into consideration a wide range of variables. The places are criminalised in and of themselves, and crime and violence are frequently the results of local discontent and grievance over their terrible living conditions. Maloney (2004) noted that "violence risks related to the characteristics of unplanned and undeveloped urban places inside African states.

Informal housing is frequently badly built because of poverty, the possibility of eviction, temporality, and a lack of resources, although the materiality of informal housing varies across settings and time. According to the UN (2003), impermanence is one characteristic of "slum housing",

and "nearly half of the housing in the least developed cities is composed of non-permanent materials of various sorts likely to endure for less than 10 years". Most of the informal housing in Zimbabwe (and the rest of Africa and Asia) are typically one-storey and made of very simple, temporary, not weather-proof materials (such as cardboard, mud, plastic, wooden boards, and metal). This housing type differs significantly from the "end-point" types of informal housing one might see in Latin America, where housing, despite being informal, illegal, irregular, or slum, frequently undergoes a process of consolidation, constructed from brick or concrete (using relatively formal materials), and may lack the dignity of people's habitability. The UN claims that the continent-wide data illustrate how ubiquitous impermanent and non-complying housing is, especially in Africa and Asia in support of evidence of worldwide variation in the material features of informal housing (UN 2003). To conceptualise the various ways in that properties might be penetrated and accessible by criminals, frequently because of the property's materiality, the term hyper-permeability is presented here with an emphasis on these more transient housing forms. Extreme indefensible housing is characterised by hyper-permeability. It covers housing that exhibits numerous types of permeability, openings without glazing, construction materials that are not strong enough to handle pressure, walls, and roofs that are permeable to water, and fundamental building materials including joists, beams, and insulation.

Informal settlements have become common in the urban areas of most developing countries. Despite the abundance, many people still lack access to basic amenities like water and toilets and go hungry in highly urbanised areas. They also grow up without receiving an education, a general problem in slum developments due to the lack of schools. This is due to carelessness and bigotry in addition to a lack of resources. Simply put, governments are hesitant to act. This is a horrific human rights crisis, not just a sad fact of life (Muchadenyika, *et al.*, 2018). Amnesty International works with communities all around the world, giving locals the information and resources, they need to interact with government representatives to assert their rights and better their lives. People who live in poverty are frequently stuck because they are disenfranchised, without a voice, and at risk of violence and instability. People must exercise their rights to escape the cycle of poverty as it affects their dignity. Respect for human rights necessitates that everyone is included, has a voice, and is protected from security risks by those in positions of authority.

On another note, overcrowding, poor or no access to clean water, sanitation, or healthcare are common poor living circumstances that affect the general dignity of a person (Chirisa and Matamanda, 2019). Because their right to live there is not recognised by the law, many residents of slums or informal settlements are not protected against harassment like forced evictions. When individuals are evicted from their homes and property without warning, consent, or payment, this is referred to as a forced eviction. They are against the law and infringe on the right to dwelling (Muderere, 2011). Forced evictions frequently result in violence, the loss of livelihoods, and homelessness. People who live in poverty frequently lack or have limited access to the things that keep us healthy, such as clean water, wholesome food, shelter, and knowledge, including sex education. Additionally, people seldom have access to quality medical treatment when they become ill. Everybody has the right to the best physical and mental health that is attainable (Saidi, 2019). No one can always be in perfect health; thus, this does not imply that we have a right to be healthy. It implies that everyone should have access to health care and information, irrespective of who they are, where they reside, or how wealthy they are. Furthermore, it means that each of us has the freedom to decide what is best for our own body and health. Everywhere should have free, universal access to primary education. Children must be able to go to school without having to cross dangerous terrain or walk for hours. Saidi (2019) noted that several economic, social, and cultural rights should be protected by governments without restriction, and these are:

- Better prioritising of their spending, starting with the most vulnerable.
- Giving priority to necessary rights, like free elementary education.
- Ceasing evicting residents without providing them with adequate notice, compensation, or consultation.
- Ratifying the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Optional Protocol by signing it.
- Ensuring that economic development initiatives (such as infrastructure or mining) benefit the most vulnerable people and do not result in violations of human rights.

One of the situations that may have had implications on human dignity is the *Operation Murambatsvina*. The Zimbabwean government claims that the operation was required to purge the nation of its criminal underbelly. The goal was to eliminate unsafe and unlawful housing (Benyera and Nyere, 2005); putting an end to the sale of limited goods on the illicit markets such as mealie-meal and a stop to the illicit exchange of foreign

currencies. However, it has been argued that despite its legality, it left a lot of people homeless and without livelihoods which could have been avoided.

In addition, *Operation Murambatsvina* was characterised by forceful evictions which posed a threat to human dignity. Humiliation and loss of dignity as a direct result of the operation was reported in Harare (ActionAid, 2005). Kothari (2006), a special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, argued that to reduce the use of force, states must first guarantee that all practical options are examined in collaboration with the affected parties before carrying out any eviction. Second, persons impacted by eviction orders must be given legal recourse or processes for fair recompense for any lost personal property. Third, evictions must be carried out strictly in conformity with the international human rights laws and the basic principles of reasonableness and proportionality, in those instances when they are deemed justifiable. Furthermore, people must never be made homeless or exposed to other human rights breaches because of evictions. Therefore, before enforcing an eviction order, governments must verify that sufficient alternative housing or relocation is available for all persons impacted (Tibaijuka, 2005) as the practice of "forced eviction constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights," as indicated in decisions of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Slums or informal settlements constitute a growing issue for health promotion globally. Health disparities are shaped by how individuals navigate through their everyday lives and governmental institutions, and the living circumstances in complicated informal settlements. According to Zerbo *et al.* (2020), informal settlers in sub-Saharan Africa face health risks arising from lack of clean water, adequate sanitation and life in overcrowded houses. These health risks reduce people's dignity. There are serious implications of informal housing and health as well as human dignity. An improvement in adequate and decent housing leads to reduced health risks and an improvement of people's well-being and ultimately upholding human dignity. In this sense, the housing need is increasingly seen as a fundamental necessity and human right. Access to adequate and secure housing must thus be given national priority. According to Owen (2000), governments must focus on ensuring that this privilege is upheld by establishing institutions that make housing affordable and accessible to all citizens so as to uphold human dignity.

The 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe demands, although it does not expressly guarantee, that the state and all institutions and agencies of



government at every level take reasonable legislative and other measures within the limits of the resources available to them, to enable every person to have access to adequate shelter (Mavedzenge, 2018). The same constitution declares that every person has inherent dignity in their private and public life and to have that dignity respected and protected (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013). Although the Constitution provides for an equitable proportion of money to be distributed from the national to the local level to provide basic services such as shelter, such revenue is not distributed evenly to informal settlements to improve people's dignity. A fresh perspective on implementing human dignity methods should encourage increased engagement and openness in sustainable housing developments. However, a lack of enforcement and constant review of planning laws are generally causing high levels of informality in housing, a critical factor to human dignity in such settlements. Informal dwellers should be dedicated to contributing socially in terms of human dignity as a mediator between the rights and obligations of accessing water and sanitation, ecologically and economically with local authorities under the users-pay and users-polluters principles.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research engaged a desktop method for data collection, evaluating pertinent case studies across the country. Literature available on Google Scholar and other published documents on the cities' housing situation are the main data sources. Case studies were taken from Makokoba, Mbare and Sakubva because they are amongst the oldest townships in Zimbabwe. These townships are characterised by informal shacks, with some dwellings having become slums and others deteriorated to deplorable conditions. These case sites are being used throughout the article to explain, support or even refute claims made in the debate of informality and dignity.

## **RESULTS**

The study focused on Mbare, Makokoba and Sakubva as case studies. These study areas are marked by informality due to rapid urbanisation in the major cities. Thorough research was done to bring the human dignity thrust into the housing informality debate.

## **CASE OF DIGNITY AND HOUSING INFORMALITY IN MBARE, HARARE**

As Harare's housing shortage deepens, many citizens have resorted to informal settlements. According to Chirisa and Mlambo (2012) informality in housing occurs when a house designed for occupation by a single family

ends up being used by more than one family, diverting from its intended use. A case in point is Mbare which is situated in the southern central part of Harare. Mbare boasts of squatter settlements and backyard dwellings brought about by the need to secure housing. The majority of the illegal housing units are constructed using locally manufactured cement blocks and wooden materials although a few also have tiles. Most of the houses have been using cheap materials to build the illegal structures to avoid huge losses if another operation like *Operation Murambatsvina* (Restore Order) were to revisit them. Chirowodza (2018) noted that a huge population resided in backyard dwellings that ranged from single rooms with multiple uses divided by curtains to several rooms with different uses. According to Mpofo (2012), at least 18 families were residing at one residential unit in Mbare.

Chirisa and Mlambo (2012) noted that in flats like Matapi in Mbare, there is outright overcrowding where the population has fluctuated from about 3 000 males in the 1980s to between 24 000 and 30 000 in 2012. The overcrowding of people (men, women, children) compromises privacy as the rooms are most times demarcated by curtains only. This exposes children to adult activities, thereby reducing the moral fabric of the community. Men and women who are not married or related have been forced to share a room. This alone is a clear indication of the violation of human dignity.

In terms of service provision like water provision, the supplies are very erratic and unreliable (Chirowodza, 2018). Electricity is also unreliable, leading to poor living standards. The lack of access to water is rampant in the residential area. This manifests through sharing taps, insufficient water supplies in houses and queuing for water for long hours. Likewise, the toilets in the Mbare flats are usually messy and blocked half the time. There are also frequent sewerage bursts in the area. The blockages, coupled with erratic water availability, are a threat to residents' health and ultimately human dignity.

The occupants of illegal dwellings in Mbare fear evictions by the Harare City Council at any time. According to Amnesty International (2020), many people living in informal settlements are not protected from harassment such as forced evictions because their right to live there is not legally recognised. Often the forced evictions are violent, destroy livelihoods and make people homeless. The evictions threaten human dignity. To restore order in the city, informal settlements were demolished during the

*Operation Murambatsvina* in 2005 and residents fear a repeat of the operation. According to Amnesty International, *Operation Murambatsvina* was a major violation of human dignity to the majority of those who were in danger of being forcibly evicted. About 700 000 individuals lost their homes and means of subsistence because of the Zimbabwean government's 2005 policy of widespread forced evictions. The victims are still at risk of being forcibly evicted from both their homes and their informal enterprises years after the government failed to offer them alternative accommodation.

There is also a high record of substance abuse and theft that affect people's dignity. Mbare is labelled as a place of robbers, thieves, muggers, prostitutes, con-artists, and all kinds of evil (Chirisa and Mlambo, 2012).

#### **CASE OF DIGNITY AND HOUSING INFORMALITY IN MAKOKOBA, BULAWAYO**

Makokoba is the oldest township in Bulawayo. It has been characterised by informal overpopulated and dilapidated structures. By virtue, it was not spared by the Operation Murambatsvina. In Makokoba, many of the people were affected by the contentious *Operation Murambatsvina* clean-up programme in Zimbabwe and ended up living in slumps because they are still waiting for the new homes the government promised them. Due to this operation, some residents' property and their houses were destroyed during the campaign. This has led to a threat to human dignity as people were left homeless and destitute while many of them did not have rural homes to return to. As of now, the rehabilitation effort has assigned stands and homes to 5 000 individuals to improve the general dignity levels. The government restoration programme, known as *Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle* (Shona and Ndebele for living well), intended to build 4 900 homes out of 1.2 million within a few months. Planned annually this was done to address all the issues concerning informal settlements.

All city councils were expected to furnish lists of prospective housing recipients so that the government could "vet the names in terms of ability to pay, which includes earning a government-scale income. It said that *Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle* had nothing to do with a humanitarian assistance operation because the great majority of internally displaced people were unlikely to fit the criteria for ownership of the new residences. According to the study, the number of dwellings being built in Makokoba is "negligible" in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of people who have been displaced by the evictions, a worry expressed by UN

Humanitarian Relief Coordinator, Jan Egeland, during his recent visit to the nation.

### **CASE OF DIGNITY AND HOUSING INFORMALITY IN SAKUBVA, MUTARE**

Sakubva is the oldest low-income suburbs in Mutare. According to Mapira (2004) there are three forms of accommodation in Sakubva, namely hostels and flats for singles, small houses and flats for married couples as well as shacks for illegal occupants. The existence of the informal settlements in Sakubva because of conventional urban planning methods to the test as conflicts over land use between "planned for" zones and unplanned zones continue to rise (Saidi, 2019). This case of Sakubva provides an analysis of the informal housing experience and its general cause of human dignity and sanity in Mutare, Zimbabwe, as a challenge to urban design. As a result, it provides a fair evaluation of the origination of informal settlements because of high rural-to-urban migration, hence it provides pressure on the concerns of management, policy, regulation, and spatial planning that should guide urban planning concerning changes in human dignity.

The informal houses in Sakubva are poorly maintained. Sewage pipes frequently burst and are not repaired on time. The shacks which dominate the Sakubva township are made of cheap materials such as iron sheets and wood (Mapira, 2004). Most houses are old and cracking. Families now occupy sections that were originally meant for single people, leading to overcrowding. As in Mbare, this has negative implications on human dignity as people are exposed to health risks and poor living standards. The local authority should come up with sustainable policies to eliminate poverty in informal settlements so that it improves the general dignity of people living in informal settlements.

The impoverished residential and informal settlements in Mutare were affected by lack of resources to uplift the living standards of people. *Operation Murambatsvina* also hit the Sakubva township where a number of illegal structures were demolished. However, people have gone back because they have not received the houses that they were supposed to get after the clean-up campaign. Recently, the Government of Zimbabwe initiated the upgrading of informal settlements, with Sakubva been one of them. This will go a long way in advancing and protecting human dignity.

### **EMERGING ISSUES AND DISCUSSION**

The difficulties that informal communities in Zimbabwe are currently facing with their water services have prompted researchers to examine the

contribution that human dignity makes to enhancing water services. The government promises to renovate the suburbs of Mbare, Makokoba, Mucheke, Mbizo, Rimuka, and Sakubva. Government prioritises the construction of housing infrastructure in both urban and rural regions, backed by the essential infrastructure and long-term services. The government promises to recapitalise the Housing Fund and the National Housing Guarantee Fund to enhance the housing stock from a backlog of over 1,3 million units nationwide, ensuring affordable housing and good living for all. To do this, the government promises to work with the private sector to offer mortgages and other forms of easily accessible funding. It is a crucial method of wealth generation as we work to achieve the middle class as envisioned in our 2030 Vision. Residents noted that urban infrastructure restoration is a worthy undertaking, and that rehabilitation of the suburbs was a wonderful notion because some of the buildings were too old.

The complexities surrounding these transient communities, have not been adequately addressed in these informal settlements so as to improve people's dignity. This is because there are still no clear communal commitments regarding water concerns and on the contrary, they continue to live informal settlements, undermining people's sense of dignity (Mehta, 2014). No strategy has been developed by authorities or community members in informal settlements to jointly improve the condition of taps and toilets per person, which is connected to inadequate waste collection facilities (Van den Berg, 2013). People living in informal settlements and squatter camps use improvised pit latrines since non-flush septic tanks are not frequently cleaned (Westaway *et al.*, 1998). The population's health is at risk because of this (Miroso & Harris, 2012), and more terrifying when accessing such facilities after dark (Wessels, 2015). In this regard, relatively little research has concentrated on the relationship between rights and obligations and reasonable access to water, and how these rights and obligations are affected by individual human dignity. The great majority of water studies about the management of the human right to water in informal settlements has not considered the impact of better water governance for these vulnerable groups.

## **CONCLUSION**

Besides the issues of promoting responsible behaviour in vulnerable populations, this study sought to expand on earlier research studies by presenting a more thorough examination of the human viewpoint on sanitation and the level of dignity in slums. Hence this article leads to

several conclusions. Firstly, the social and human implications of sanitation and living conditions on human dignity in the informal settlement needs to be changed. Second, long-term sustainable and economic strategic planning for informal settlements should incorporate an environmental viewpoint and, more crucially, the dignity of its informal occupants' human situations by defining their responsibilities. Furthermore, the rights and personal responsibilities for improving water services are based on a cooperative partnership between municipal authorities and informal inhabitants. This might be accomplished by increasing the participation process and human development. Due to the complexities of connecting personal obligations with water services, efforts must be supported by lowering pollution levels and boosting awareness of justice in making economic payments based on personal wages. Local governments should educate informal residents to offer fair access to appropriate water and sanitation, and a healthy water distribution procedure (Macer, 1998). This education should emphasize ethical water usage by preserving water infrastructure and learning about water recycling activities.

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# Settling in the Urban: A Reflection on Personal Struggles to Secure Land Tenure in Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

Accessing and securing land is a major post-colonial contemporary issue that is still being faced by the urban poor in developing countries. The article outlines the avenues that people go through to access land in urban areas. It details the challenges encountered and ways that were used to circumvent such challenges. The lived experiences of people as they navigated different pathways to access land are presented. There are also issues to do with improved land tenure security once the land was accessed. There are four key stages that residents went through to access land that is elaborated in the article. The first is about one trying to understand city spaces, knowing whom to approach and the set of activities to carry to access land. This is followed by the actual experiences of accessing land and protecting it from anyone with eviction threats. The third stage is the integration of one's access into the city. This leads to the fourth stage of forming social movements aimed at pushing the recognition of the rights of the urban poor. The focus of the article is on the constraints the poor face when occupying land, seeking housing, and integrating into the city. The Urban Informality Forum was used to explore how the livelihoods of the urban poor and their associations in accessing land. A qualitative research design with a focus on personal experience informed the article. An individual was contacted and generated a story that was used as the object of the study. The individual experiences influenced the four sections of the article's findings which are 'Understanding city spaces', 'Seeking Housing', 'Integrating into the City' and 'Forming housing social movements'.

**Keywords:** *Housing, social movements, cityscapes, exclusion, homelessness*

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## INTRODUCTION

Land is an essential and significant factor needed for human survival. It is significant in the continued functionality of everyday livelihoods. Zimbabwe, a typical example of a developing country, has witnessed dual governance that manifested itself in racial discrimination (Rambanapasi, 1989). The black majority was forced to settle in the communal areas (ex-Tribal Trust Lands) while the white colonialists settled in areas with the most fertile soils on large-scale commercial farms. However, after the attainment of independence in 1980 that promised major changes and improvements for the black majority, particularly in respect of the distribution of land (Zinyama *et al.*, 1990), the country saw a mass rural-urban migration of people in search of a better quality of life (Munzwa and Jonga, 2010). This was exacerbated by the lifting of restrictions to the 'Rights to the City' (Lefebvre, 1968)<sup>3</sup>. The restrictions had barred the black majority from freely moving into urban areas and in some instances could not enter city centers. The cities, however, failed to keep pace with the work and housing demands for those flocking into them.

Securing land for housing in Zimbabwe has become a major challenge for urban poor residents and new immigrants from rural areas. Residents and land-seekers are often at the intersection of hindrances from socio-economic challenges, constrained local authorities, and the increased unavailability of land for housing. As a result, there are illegal ways of accessing land being used by residents to counter this challenge. The desperate home-seekers arriving in urban areas fall into the influences of illegal land barons that parcel out land earmarked for other land uses. In doing so, they become victims of evictions and displacement. Situations like this increase homelessness, risks and compromises general well-being. The article sets out to explore the experience of one of the victims of the land struggles that affected people from the period 1990 to 1994. The experience is shared in four sections: 'Understanding city spaces', 'Seeking Housing', 'Integrating into the city' and 'Forming housing social movements',

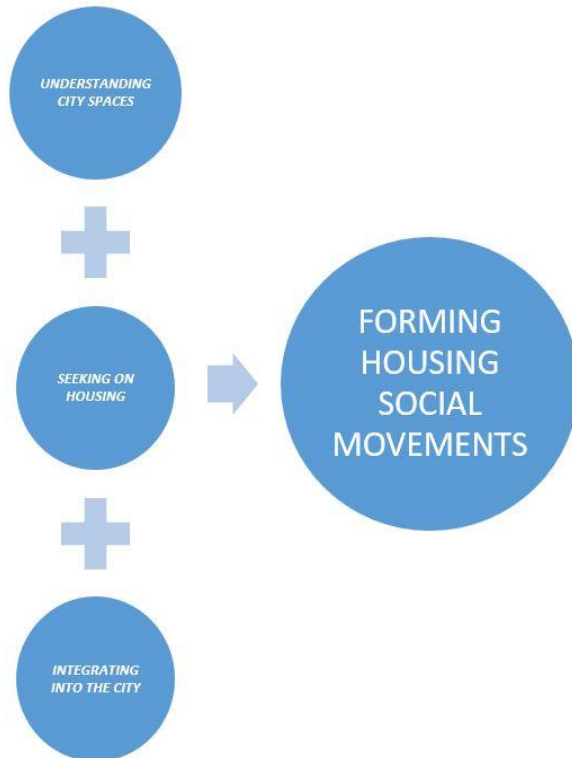
## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The article's conceptual framework is based on the lived experiences of the author whose struggles to access land provide a lens through which his

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<sup>3</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le Droit à la ville [The right to the city]* (2nd ed.). Paris: Anthropos.

urban experiences are explored. What started as a search for understanding and an individual search for housing later turned out to be a collective effort.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework** (Authors, 2022)

The struggle for land access starts at an individual level before it grows into a collective effort. One starts by trying to understand their surroundings, to get some bearing and a sense of direction. Understanding their environment, they can now start to look for a place of their own within that environment. These efforts can result in one being integrated into the city, albeit after some struggles. In the context of this case, these processes often lead to the collective effort of forming social movements and interacting with authorities as a group for access to land. However, for many other new urban area entrants, the experiences remain individual or

household experiences without horizontal or vertical institutional support in the search for housing and other urban services.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

More than half of the world's population (56.2%) is now located within urban areas and Africa is experiencing rapid urbanization at 3.44% compared to the world's annual average of 1.73% (UNHABITAT, 2022). The rapid urbanization puts a strain on land and housing delivery systems. In Africa, rapid urbanization often accentuates the vulnerability of the urban poor who are, in most cases, unable to participate in formal land markets. This has been termed the 'urbanization of poverty' (K'Akumu, 2018). The urban poor end up finding shelter outside the regulated land delivery frameworks of local authorities and national government. This has led to the proliferation of informal settlements in the developing world (Fernandez, 2011; Williams, *et al.*, 2019). Responses of local authorities have mostly been those of evictions, making the situation of the urban poor more unbearable (Roberts & Okanya, 2018). Some of the urban poor have now resorted to organizing themselves in forming social movements so that they can be part of the land delivery processes (Mitlin and Mogaladi, 2013; Schipper, 2015; Muchadenyika, 2017, 2020).

The contemporary world is the world of cities (Djokovic, 2011). To gain access to land in a city, it is important to understand what the concept of a city is. A city, according to Barthes (n.d), is a discourse and a language that the city speaks to its inhabitants and, in turn, the inhabitants speak to the city from where they are, simply by living in it, by wandering through it or even by looking at it. From this notion, it is important to note that accessing land is not the beginning but rather an output of having communicated and understood why things are as they are and not otherwise, in a city.

Most urban studies tend to look at cities with a wide-angled lens and a global or regional focus. However, valuable lessons can also be drawn from the experiences of individuals regarding how they perceive and interact with the city. Those interested in studying city experiences have gone beyond the visual to include other senses such as touch, smell, hearing and taste. These have also been called sensescapes - seescapes, soundscapes, smellscapes, tastescapes, and touchscapes (Borer, 2013). Lynch (1960) made five categories of physical elements that make up the image of the city, namely edges, districts, paths, nodes and landmarks. It is through

access to these elements that people can interact with the city and get to understand what it is about.

Land access is a controversial topic in most developing countries as it creates socioeconomic strata among people, hence access to it is very important (Nuhu, 2019). During the colonial period, land was used to separate people by race and class with this being perpetuated into the post-colonial African city where income is still used to spatially segregate people. Access is about all possible means by which a person can benefit from things. Property generally evokes socially acknowledged and supported claims or rights, that can be validated by law, custom or convention (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Lack of access to land in cities can lead to informal land development, especially when available options are not affordable. Small local contractors, strongmen and speculators are key drivers of this dynamic, usually working in collaboration with landowners, municipal officials and council members (World Bank, 2016).

The need to access land has resulted in a long tradition of social movement activism related to collective consumption in the towns and cities of the global North and South. This involves securing access to essential goods and services including secure tenure, access to water, sanitation, and other basic services, and housing that are generally supplied to groups of low-income citizens (Mitlin & Mogaladi, 2013). In cities, social movements challenge planning processes and housing delivery approaches, offering alternative approaches that are pro-poor and inclusive and they are important agents for social change and transformation in cities (Muchadenyika, 2017). Tel Aviv, Israel, gave rise to fierce political struggles as the city was swept by unprecedented social protests, social inequality and rising housing prices in the summer of 2011. It was a mass movement that occupied streets and parks for several months, holding mass rallies of up to 400 000 people weekly. In doing so, the new urban movement put, for the first time in a long while, social inequality and the housing question on the political agenda in Israel (Schipper, 2015).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Both primary and secondary data sources were used in the article, with primary data informing much of the article's content. The resident (Ben) was engaged as a key informant to narrate their experiences from the day they came to Harare. The story covered their livelihood activities, aspirations to access land, and the actual processes they went through. A

recording of the interview was produced and transcribed. The secondary source used is a draft book detailing the experiences and it constitutes a key inspiration of the article. The article adopted the qualitative research design to extract the personal experiences and actual events. A thematic presentation was employed to present the data. The findings present the personal experiences from moving into the city to the time they integrated into it.

## **RESULTS: THE TWISTS AND LESSONS FROM BEN'S STORY**

### ***UNDERSTANDING CITY SPACES***

Actionable knowledge is critical to understanding of a city, accessing what it offers, and contributing to its governance. One must know a city's physical boundaries and whom to approach when seeking to access land and other services a city government offers, including the conditions under which the services are offered. Understanding these issues is key to informing one's expectations and actual actions to take. For most new city residents this is where the problem starts resulting in failed integration. The first problem upon arriving in the city was knowing and understanding the setup of the city itself. Most people, after moving into a city, have no idea of how the city functions. Land struggles start the moment one moves into a city without any knowledge of who owns the land, what is where, and whom to approach to access land. Unlike in rural areas, city systems are completely different. The only thing on people's minds when they come into a city is safety. They start thinking of where to find shelter. In addition to that, people need food and jobs for their well-being. This adds confusion to the already struggling new city resident.

Having relatives in a city helps with soft landing. In this case seeking land was only deferred partly as they started at local level in terms of where one resides or has been given temporary residence. One often gets a place to sleep and no more. This raises questions about identity, personal space, and ownership primarily in physical (the house) and social (a household) terms. For one with rural traditional leadership powers the concern about owning land came much sooner than for ordinary new city residents. Triggered simultaneously were questions on life direction, security, and relations alongside basic needs like food, water, employment, and clothes. Yet each day highlighted concerns on a place to stay.

The daily thoughts and pressure triggered the view that having access to land was a priority. It became clear that there ought to be someone who owned city land, either an individual or an authority. The immediate next steps were to ponder whom to approach to have access and rightfully own land. That led to concerns on how the city was made up, its surroundings, and meaning. An urban area is any place that restricts its residents from doing whatever they want. One needs some people with experience of the city to help them but sometimes such people one may look up to cannot help. One needs forces prioritizing another as a precondition for accessing the principal one. In this, shelter had to be preceded by securing income, which in turn required that a job be found, initially paying only enough for one to afford renting a room. Thinking these through together and as individual life objectives is daunting for new residents in cities that lack adequate social assistance programmes and are unable to disseminate appropriate information to existing, let alone, new residents.

Land appears to be the number one thing to be given to a person at birth if possible. It must be accessible not only to a few selected groups but to everyone. To start renting, one needs money. This means access to land is sometimes related to one's livelihood strategies. One must earn money to pay for the rentals. This is challenging in a city, unlike in rural areas where one can easily access land from a village head.

Moving out of the social 'arrival home' was not easy but had to be done. The choice of Mabvuku/Tafara, was influenced by another relative resident in that low-income area. Getting out of the shadows of the first relative was important to better understand the realities of the city. Three days on a semblance of independence had been created with additional freedom to explore the city, familiarising oneself with the area, and beginning to realise that all roads lead to somewhere, commercial areas, industrial and other residential areas. Further road signs, community centres, city offices, and police stations assumed new meanings while also helping with directions and providing clues to hitherto unfamiliar cityscapes and functions. Wondering how more informative notice boards would help guide people, it became clear how the city experiences were less friendly and functional for new residents. The experience was thus of a city not friendly for newbies, and difficult to move through.

Relatives' positions in and knowledge of a city matters as well. Having a relative who was a policeman provided critical orientation on and safety in

the city. Usable knowledge on city rules and regulations that govern the city was shared early on alongside being shown nodes within a city as well as the local authority. This shapes city exploration and appreciation beyond the confines of one's immediate community to discover new places outside the 'arrival neighbourhoods'. City exploration was influenced by the need to know where relatives lived (a brother who lived in Epworth), public spaces like parks in the city, and areas to look for work (Masasa Industrial Area). The latter is where the resident got their first job (as Assistant Welder at ZWD104 every 2 weeks) resulting in relocation to Epworth where affordable housing was available.

### ***SEEKING HOUSING***

The Assistant Welder's job was later left for a Salesperson position at Shoelinn in Harare central business District (CBD) secured with the help of a relative (a nephew). Accessing land in Epworth involved application of the rural land access model as the area was still under a village head because it was still rural. On approaching one village head, a piece of land was allocated in no time, a one-roomed house built and occupied in five days. A seven-month stay outside Epworth taking an emigrating relative's house in Glen View 1 provided another opportunity to explore a different part of the city for those seven months.

While in Glen View 1, rumours spread that Epworth was to be demolished, forcing a return to protect the house and contents. The eviction and demolition were ordered because it was considered an unsuitable settlement. The reason was to make the city clean in preparation for Queen Elizabeth 2's visit to Zimbabwe in 1990. The actual eviction came in October 1990 to Porta Farm. This was the first experience of eviction and at Porta Farm, there were no houses, no water, and no toilets. Evicted people were just dumped there with nothing. Life became so challenging and inconvenient to commute to work because of the distance.

At one-point, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) visited the farm to interview people and the journalist asked a lot of questions including how people got there, and whether they were employed. The interview opportunity provided a moment to make suggestions regarding what the government could do, and what residents who had been displaced could contribute and the period over which any housing for them would be paid for. The journalist got the life stories surrounding the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1990 eviction, the jobs disrupted, livelihoods dislocated, and



suggestions for more participatory governance, i.e. consulting the people first and making it clear to the people the authorities to be approached for accessing land and housing.

'...I was willing to pay an amount less than \$2. Already, we were paying \$1 to the Ministry responsible for local government. We had no clue why we were paying the money. I told him [the journalist] that they [the state] cannot hold people and control them in a camp against their will. In terms of paying for a house, I only needed 3-4 years. It was during this interview that it was revealed to me that cabins were being constructed in Dzivarasekwa. However, that information was confidential. Later that night of the interview, I was on the news and that is where [Dialogue Founder] saw me' (Resident Ben, October 1990, Porta Farm).

Evicted residents were mixed in terms of where they had been evicted from. Some were evicted from Waterfalls and Mbare, extending the sense of dislocation and different members of homeless groups had been rounded up and brought to the holding camp. The building of shacks at the holding camp for shelter was the beginnings of setting up a new community. Council came about two months later to address and check on how people were living and registered people with those employed being issued with blue cards and the unemployed noted in a separate book. After living at Porta Farm for two months some transferred to other areas. In terms of employment, Ben moved to Chitungwiza Town Centre as a cashier, creating a different association with Porta Farm forcing change to rented accommodation. Having been evicted together with a relative helped in terms of looking after belongings left at Porta Farm Holding Camp and updating on government plans.

One year later in October 1991, a meeting was held that required everyone to be present. From that meeting, some evicted residents were allocated 596 cabins at Dzivarasekwa. At Dzivarasekwa Holding Camp, the priority was given to married couples in terms of shelter allocation. Each couple was allocated a two-roomed cabin, 300 in all with the balance of 296 being sharing, two families per unit. A thousand families resided at the camp. Communal water taps drawing water from Dzivarasekwa main and communal toilets served the new community. Ben did not get a cabin as he was regarded as part of his brother's family. To avoid crowding his brother's family, Ben opted to rent in Chitungwiza. On promotion to Branch Manager, Ben was transferred back to Harare, which forced him move to Dzivarasekwa to live with his brother to reduce travel expenses and cut on housing costs. At Dzivarasekwa Holding Camp, there were some restrictions put in place by the authorities to maintain order.

### ***INTEGRATING INTO THE CITY***

In 1992, a Pay-for-Your House Scheme was proposed, and everyone was encouraged to join. In 1993, the scheme was initiated by the then Minister responsible for Housing. However, the Ministry responsible for Housing was unclear in terms of sharing this information with the people. Although the scheme was initiated, others continued to pay cabin rates while others started to pay for their houses. Residents did not understand the scheme. Further, construction of the Presidential Guard Two Brigade in Dzivarasekwa from 1992 resulted in a concentration of developments in the area.

By 1993 there was growing camp-level political mobilization with Ben and others also forming cooperatives. Two Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) branches were formed, CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) and Samora Machel. During that year, there were demolitions in Dzivarasekwa Phase 1. Having started to emerge as a community leader, Ben became chairman of ZANU-PF youth and the secretary of the CHOGM branch of the party. Pay Scheme houses were allocated in 1994 but only to civil servants. The allocation of the houses was done from Makombe Building, a Government complex in the city. This was at a time other residents were still paying cabin rates to the Ministry responsible for local government, the same Ministry which was now allocating civil servants stands and houses. As community and political leader, Ben established the full details of the scheme, secured everything that was required and approached a government officer for registration, together with his friends under the scheme and started paying ZWD150 per month. Phase 1 houses were all allocated and started being occupied without anyone from the cabins being allocated. By the end of 1994, all the houses were occupied, and government was starting to build high-rise housing. Developing community and political clout had helped with accessing information and mobilizing others but at the time not yielding secure and upgraded housing from the cabin.

### ***FORMING A HOUSING SOCIAL MOVEMENT***

Formation of the housing movement began in 1996 with the Dialogue on Shelter founder tracking Ben. The story of establishing an organisation that represented the homeless began and so did advocating the rights of homeless people, becoming the voice of the homeless. This triggered conflict between Ben and officials of the Ministry responsible for local

government. The start of the conflict was around the beneficiary vetting and house allocation processes which were shrouded in secrecy.

The agitation somewhat paid off when in 1998 Ben and others were asked to be registered and sign offer letters at the City of Harare's Housing Department in Mbare. They were assured that they would be allocated stands. However, things did not go as we had hoped, forcing the community to organise a demonstration. Residents marched to the Deputy Mayors' offices who referred them to the local government Ministry. That same year, the Deputy Mayor was appointed as Deputy Minister and the community organized another demonstration with the ZBC (media) resulting in the story being covered and aired. The agitation paid off as the residents' concerns of being overlooked in Phases 1 and 2 housing despite promises being made. Having refused to disperse, the then Minister (John Nkomo) ordered them to go back promising them that they would be addressed the following day by the Vice President, Joshua Nkomo. The Minister relented and organized for an address the following day where residents were told that their stands were no longer in Dzivarasekwa but in Hatcliffe, were serviced and ready for allocation. Allocation followed together with victims of Churu Farm eviction.

### **CONCLUSION, LESSONS AND EMERGING ISSUES**

Entry into urban areas is a complex adventure for most people from rural areas. Not all residents that visit cities fully understand how to negotiate their stay and subsistence during the first few months. Even those with relatives are unable to count on being provided a launch pad as their folks may also be struggling in urban areas whose fast-paced growth means local and national state institutions have no programme of social assistance. Ben's search for an independent existence in the city partly arose from his rural 'royalty' that allowed him to place importance on seeking land for housing within months of arriving in the city. Securing land informally created a trajectory of marginalisation and eviction. While during the material period urban Zimbabwe still created jobs, the post-2000 period has become more difficult for new jobless entrants to the city. The experiences of acquiring land presented in the article show a real struggle to acquire land in urban areas, especially among the urban poor. Land information is key in influencing the decision of urban residents. This involves knowledge about the administrative authorities for different pieces of land in the city. Without enough land information coupled with socio-economic constraints, the poor often find themselves on land where

they are vulnerable to evictions and demolition of their houses. The forced evictions and demolitions advance the precarious conditions of the urban poor.

Availability of affordable land in urban areas is a challenge, particularly in Harare where land for housing is used as a social, political, and economic good. Land is sometimes used as a measure of wealth and store of value. This increases demand for land for residential purposes and the urban poor are the hardest hit. The urban poor and public authorities tend to have an opaque and distant relationship on land issues. The emergence of housing social movements comprising the urban poor have partly bridged the gap between residents and authorities (Muchadenyika, 2017; 2020).

The efforts of the urban poor to improve their houses are progressive. However, they are yet to be fully acknowledged and the administrative procedures of national and local authorities are poorly adapted to the needs of the urban poor and their movements. Their struggles got more complicated at the height of fast-track land redistribution when land access became more politically partisan and land criminals increased. Cities authorities require to robustly engage organisations of the urban poor to build inclusive settlements.

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# Urban Land Management in Zimbabwe: Stressed Points, their Urban Development Implications, and Ideas for 'New' Models<sup>1</sup>

KUDZAI CHATIZA<sup>2</sup>

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## Abstract

Accessing and securing rights to urban land in Zimbabwe is a growing area of interest. This is both in terms of practical development and policy research. The interests cover processes of making rural land urban through to developing infrastructure and superstructure. Innovations instituted to address shortcomings and to install good practices have not always led to equitable access and secure rights. Increasingly, the urban poor feel left out. Some have experienced evictions. Inadequate administration of key processes has stressed state institutions and confused land-seekers. Lack of resources and authority contestations due to the emergence of new actors are the key stressors. Based on mixed method analysis, the article notes that urban land delivery, development, and management functions have become weak. These are ripe for transformation. Urban land management focused on elite, overly commodified and single land use zones developed from 'Greenfields' is contradicted. Temporally flexible, physically adaptable, and potentially more just spatial governance anchored on evolving combinations of *de jure*, *de facto*, and perceived tenure security are emerging. Planners and allied professionals are yet to embrace the emerging transformations as part of consolidating altered urban land management practices into policy.

**Keywords:** *land governance, land commodification, transitional systems, land transfers, spatial governance, adaptable land uses, land tenure security*

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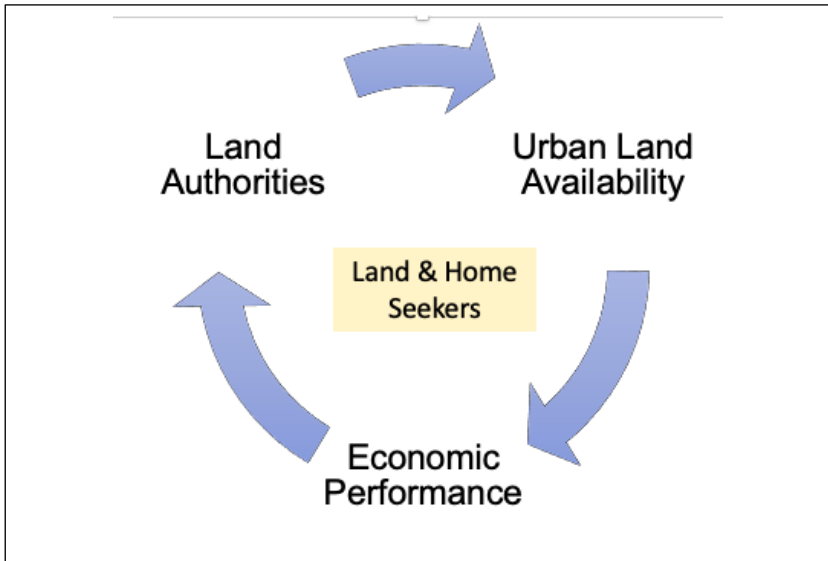
<sup>1</sup> The paper is based on research supported under the IUI Project, ESRC Grant Ref No. ES/T008067/1.

<sup>2</sup> Development Governance Institute, [www.degi.co.zw](http://www.degi.co.zw)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Zimbabwe's urban land management has generally appeared settled. Changing from rural (crop and livestock, wildlife, forestry, establishing rural housing, and other extensive uses) to urban land uses followed predictable processes in terms of acquisition and market-based channels defined in law and administrative guidelines. The settled nature of these processes was also evident in terms of the rights of individual residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial land users. Race-based, inter and intra-community urban and rural land struggles from before colonization in 1890 variously informed the core land policy, law, and administrative practice.

However, several post-independence changes strategically toppled Zimbabwe's 'settled' rural and urban land governance. These social and economic transitions included economic stress and structural reforms from the early 1990s, pressures towards political transformations including constitutional reforms after 1999, and politically radical and partisan land redistribution from the year 2000. Significant and enforced changes to land management occurred with implications for land policy, law, and administration. Several analyses have illuminated the nature, progression, actors involved and impacts of societal transformations (Bond and Manyanya, 2003; Vambe, 2008; Chatiza, 2003, 2010; Sachikonye, 2011, 2012; Coltart, 2016; Masungure, 2020; Muchadenyika, 2020; Sachikonye and Kaulemu, 2021; CCMT and TMMRI, 2021, Hammar *et al.*, 2003).



**Figure 1:** *Stressed context for seeking urban land and homes*

The article engages with the stresses and innovations that have affected urban land delivery and management. It also highlights the unresolved nature of some of the tensions arising from considerable adjustments to land access, rights articulation, and the role of local authorities (local governments). Some innovations were initiated, rolled out, and in some cases, abandoned with minimal consolidation of lessons. It is such experiences, based on an analysis of selected urban settlements that the article pulls together to inform the beginnings of a new urban land management framework. The article draws on the Zimbabwe National Human Settlements Policy preparation process (Chatiza and Dube, 2018), two University of Sussex coordinated studies (2016-2023<sup>3</sup>), and an African Cities Research Consortium study (Chatiza, 2022). These three research and consultation experiences respectively covered 23 rural and urban settlements, seven settlements<sup>4</sup>, and the City of Harare.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

<sup>3</sup> Migrants on the Margins from 2016 to 2018 (Grant No. ES/No1474X/1) and ‘Trajectories of Inclusion’ from 2020 to 2023 (ESRC Ref No. ES/T008067/1).

<sup>4</sup> Hatcliffe Extension, Epworth Ward 7 and Hopley (Phase 1) and cover Hatcliffe Extension, Hopley, Budiriro Extension, and Churu Farm (Harare) and Old Mucheke and Victoria Ranch (Masvingo).



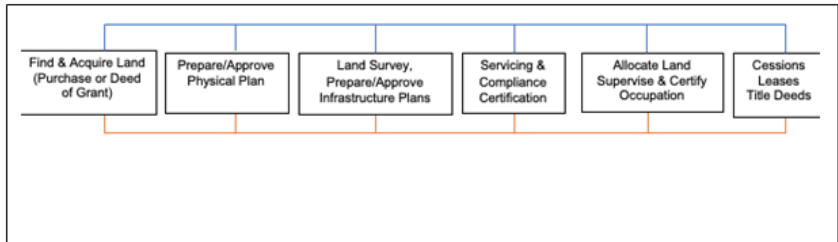
Urban land is managed to achieve three interconnected objectives of social equity, economic development, and environmental stewardship. Defining the objectives, the strategies for pursuing them, and targeting specific actions, involve a complex interplay of social, political, and economic actors, land authorities, and users of the land. Land authorities are at different levels from national government to private individuals and vary by land ownership and category. The nature and performance of an economy influence the demand for land overall, socio-economic groups that demand land and the uses they intend to put the land to. Information, power, and capacity asymmetries and strategic misalignment of objectives tend to exist between those seeking land and the land authorities. All these (information, power, capacity, and objectives) are changeable and impact choices available to land authorities.

The article discusses the changes that have taken place in Zimbabwe based on the insights of the work it draws on. It illuminates the stresses that have visited the 'traditional' urban land management systems. Some of the stress-induced changes have become considerably entrenched. It is also not always the case that the policy and technical sides of urban land management at different levels of government conceive the issues the same way. Some of the stresses have been deliberately created to log-jam systems generating corruption and dysfunctionality (Chatiza, 2010; McGregor, 2013) within contexts of decentralization, securitisation, and politicisation of local authorities (McGregor, 2002, 2013) significantly constrained inclusive service delivery (Chatiza, 2012a).

Marongwe *et al.* (2011) noted that formal land delivery capacity was surpassed by demand. This resulted in a debate on the policy and practice options regarding physical planning, infrastructure, building materials, and financing options (Chatiza, 2012b) and a general search for alternative approaches (Chirisa *et al.*, 2015). For instance, parallel development and alteration of standards through Circular No. 70 of 2004 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005) emerged as a response. However, this trajectory veered into considerable institutional disarraying when so much peri-urban land became available post-2000, that was allocated by the national government eschewing local authorities. Additional disarraying arose from the emergence of urban land (alongside the US Dollar) as a store of value, a source of funding for recurrent budgets for local authorities, and a key political patronage resource (City of Harare, 2010; McGregor and Chatiza, 2019, 2020; Chavunduka, 2018). These urban development processes in Zimbabwe occurred at a time the country lacked domestic

fiscal space to invest in large-scale infrastructure at national and local government levels (Chigwenya, 2019; ZIMCODD and AFRODAD, 2021; Kapesa *et al.*, 2021).

Residents seeking urban land have used alternative channels, other than local authorities. This was primarily because peri-urban land that became available in 2000 could not be immediately transferred to 'traditional' land and housing developers as it had not been fully acquired by the state. Additionally, land availability in the urban market became low, risky, and unpredictable. The introduction of the parallel development policy substantially affected urban land management (Chatiza and Gotora, 2021). Aspects of urban land management depicted in Figure 2 became difficult to follow, let alone regulate.



**Figure 2: Core Urban Land Management Functions** (Chatiza, 2022:2)

## METHODOLOGY

The suite of methods from which the article draws insights were both qualitative and quantitative. The settlements policy involved ten (10) provincial stakeholder consultations and assessments of 23 settlements<sup>5</sup> in rural and urban Zimbabwe. These data-gathering activities were conducted between March and November 2018. Synthesis of findings from the study informed the National Human Settlements Policy adopted in 2020. Based on population density and the mainly non-agricultural role played by all settlements from which insights for the article are drawn, it is fair to consider them all urban. All had populations above 2 500, the threshold for urban settlements in Zimbabwe (ICED, 2017). Even for farm settlements, the residents were not all employed by the new farmers but subsisted on petty trading, artisanal mining, and other off-farm economic

<sup>5</sup> These were 2 Mission Hospitals, 1 educational centre, 3 border towns, 1 mining settlement, 4 agricultural/farm settlements, 7 district service centres, and 5 urban neighborhoods

activities. Two study projects with the University of Sussex<sup>6</sup> that covered seven settlements (two of which were covered in both phases) involved focus group discussion (FGD) sessions, governance interviews, panel household surveys, and oral history interviews. In terms of the Harare City study, the focus is on land and connectivity using key informant interviews, and focus group discussion sessions with the city, provincial and national government officials working on land administration issues.

All three pieces of work have also seen a review of literature and processing of preliminary findings for use in engaging academic, policy, and practitioner stakeholders. For the policy assignment, a national validation complemented by alternative voices of UN-HABITAT and IOM added value to document finalization. Despite the varied settlement mix in terms of size, governance responsibilities, and age there are some common factors characterizing them. First, physical planning and infrastructure development are seriously stressed resulting in the settlements struggling to cope with the emergent political economy. Second, planning policy, law, and practice appear to be lagging the rising and ever-so-complex demand for relevant basic services, infrastructure, and land uses. Third, local agencies (from the community to whole local governments) overseeing settlements lack adequate technical and political capacity. Fourth, the settlements face socio-economic, environmental, and overall governance fragilities. These are seen in rising poverty, unemployment, informalisation, and de-industrialisation.

In all settlements, the interplay of land access and availability, the myriad land authorities, and the economy (local to national) impact residents' quality of life. This arises from the reality of decades of stress leading to underperformance. Land and housing delivery, emplacement, maintenance of infrastructure, and appropriate services have involved a combination of classic and 'new' models. For instance, the cooperative model was stretched while the introduction of 'indigenous land developers' eschewed local authorities in land and housing delivery. This model was weakly regulated resulting in unaccountable land developers. The resultant mix of competing land authorities has given rise to incompletely planned, and inadequately governed settlements.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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<sup>6</sup> „Migrants on the Margins“ from 2016 to 2018 (Grant No. ES/No1474X/1) and „Trajectories of Inclusion“ from 2020 to 2023 (ESRC Ref No. ES/T008067/1).

Appropriate urban land management is central to land-based financing of infrastructure (Berrisford *et al.*, 2018; ZIMCODD and AFRODAD, 2021). In Zimbabwe's context, the substantial dislodging of urban local authorities from effective land management (Chatiza, 2010, McGregor, 2002, 2013; McGregor and Chatiza, 2019, 2020) resulted in the loss of local fiscal autonomy often associated with decentralization of urban land management. In Zimbabwe's context, devolved land management inspired the Urban State Land Management Manual of 2002 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2002) whose roll-out was however deposed by the way urban and peri-urban state land was managed after 2002. Constrained urban land management by local governments is something that is also stressed in other jurisdictions by urban geopolitics (Shannon, 2019), land grabbing, competing stakeholders where one overshadows another (Anane and Cobbinah, 2021; McGregor and Chatiza, 2019, 2020; Chavunduka, 2018). It is perhaps Mbiba (2017) who cracks the urban transitions by saying the following on Harare:

'...post-1990s foundational restructuring of the economy centered on *jambanja* has transformed Harare from a settler-colonial city to a highly informalised 'zhing-zhong' African city'.

Applied to other urban areas, this may suggest Zimbabwe has decolonised its urban development. It is the state-level and state-sanctioned culture of disorderliness (*jambanja*) at times pursued violently as was the case with *Operation Murambatsvina* (UN, 2005; Vambe, 2008, Sachikonye, 2011) that best explains how urban land management has been significantly changed. Chigudu (2020) captures this version of politicised disorderliness as the political life of an epidemic showing how cholera was an outcome of dislodged service delivery models. Attempts at pro-poor urban land management steered through housing social movements like cooperatives also got corrupted politically (TIZ and ZACC, 2021; Mutondoro, 2018; Chiweshe, 2017; Chiweshe *et al.*, 2013) affecting the right to the city (Chigwenya, 2019). In keeping with the observation by Mbiba (2017) the article argues that individual land transactions considered or judicially proven to have been corrupt are only symptomatic of the corrupted urban land management system in Zimbabwe.

Making land a political resource (Muchadenyika, 2015), overly surveilling urban spaces (McGregor, 2014), politicising and centralising service delivery (Muchadenyika and Williams, 2018), corrupting land-related functions as well as professionals like physical planners (Muchadenyika

and Williams, 2017), and displacements (Hammar, 2017) completed the demise of the 'traditional' urban land management system depicted in Figure 2. Yet, it is also possible to note the disruption of the system democratised land access even if party politicised. This is because the urban residents who declared partisan alignment with Zimbabwe's main political parties or self-allocated before faking partisan identity to protect their 'loot' exploited the weakness of the system to access a resource they were seeking and needed anyway.

In this context, it is possible to again borrow from and possibly 'abuse' Mbiba's (2018) assertion that an overfocus on physical planning when addressing urban land issues results in a misunderstanding of the formalisation of access (see also Kamete, 2010, 2017, 2020). To do so is to ignore the other outcomes land access enables like delivering political support, raising resources, corrupting competing actors, and undermining reform trajectories not necessarily developing thriving settlements. The question for the article is about whether the urban land management system has changed or has just not been implemented. Pronouncements by national government that title deeds will be issued to those who self-allocated suggest an 'after-the-fact' execution of the 'traditional' system. Land professionals in and outside the state express the fear that such regularisation promotes informality, a sentiment suggesting a clinging to the 'traditional' system. In other words governing politicians and bureaucrats contradictorily yearn for orderliness despite having promoted disorderliness in recent times.

As discussed below, some land sector professionals suggest that under existing law the proposed titling forces government to do what should have been done in the first place. Using Figure 2, this means going back to the first step/function with implications that some residents' land rights may be challenged. Yet Caprotti *et al.*, (2022) suggest a needs-based approach that belies narratives of inadequacy and incompleteness or imperfection defined by others. It is this contestation over existing and new ways of doing urban land management that can be discerned from the leapfrogging of the former enabled by hefty partisan political interests that the article seeks to illuminate.

## **POLITICAL PARTY IDENTITIES AS URBAN LAND GOVERNANCE 'CURRENCY': FINDINGS**

### *POLITICS AS 'CURRENCY'*

'You don't leave your field to baboons' but 'You also don't completely deny them access to your field' (Ward Councilor, Epworth 02.05.2022).

The quoted insight was shared at a meeting facilitated as part of the IUI Project. On this occasion settlement, contacts from three Harare project sites were facilitated to meet the political leadership of Ward 7 in Epworth. The observation was in response to a question regarding managing political interference in technical processes of regularising an off-grid settlement. This question is a familiar concern that flows from a depoliticisation of development (Fergusson, 1994), that often opens the door for professionals to imagine it is their scientific or technical solutions that are implied. From experience, notions of politics, political will and interference are euphemisms for counter-articulating interests. The response amplified the inevitability of identifying and balancing interests of those who are politicians or conveniently labelled so. In the settlements studied as part of the three spaces relied on for the article, the convenience of party political identities was consistent with *jambanja* and *make-do*.

In a sense, it was a commonplace currency deployed to justify actions including determining access to land or other resources. So for instance, on July 3 2021 communities in Churu Farm asked that our team attend a meeting with ZANU-PF district leaders, to be introduced and be cleared to continue with the research. On arrival, the team was mobilised to transport local members to the district as the 'leaders' had become too busy to attend the meeting they had supposedly called. After waiting for hours, the meeting began with a request for the community to present their issues. The five speakers, leaders of the cooperatives at Churu Farm, prefixed their allegations against named members by stating their interest in ensuring ZANU-PF retained support and that new and old members kept supporting the party. Those accused of tempering with the party's security of votes were identified as misappropriating resources.

A separate group asked to meet the research team more than 12 months later alleging that the researchers were invalidating physical plans they had custody of. They had been informed that the researchers had helped with the submission of an alternative physical plan (of the three in circulation/use). The research team conveniently asked that the meeting be held at the University of Zimbabwe, a place that gave researchers some power. At the meeting held on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the residents informed the research team of their concerns stating their positions within ZANU-PF, the party, and the settlement. In this case control of the technical

processes of the land, and administration were seen as instruments of political power. Competing groups were selectively allowing each other to make moves as long as their legitimacy was not irretrievably harmed. In another settlement (Epworth Ward 7), three different ZANU-PF representatives were voted into Council in the 2008, 2013, and 2018 elections. The political party retained support. However, selecting different representatives suggested internal competition, that in FGD sessions revolved around leadership of the regularisation project. For Hopley (Ward 1, Harare), an opposition-affiliated member won in the 2018 elections in circumstances that suggested a shift in the support base with cross-party alliances playing a part.

In managing the regularisation of off-grid settlements, varying political interests are at play. Political actors that hold positions in parties can be undermined by residents or rivals as long as those challenging can mobilise sufficient political clout. Fights at settlement level are often a reason for closure of space to outsiders, technical and non-technical people. In the context of most urban local authorities being labelled opposition-run the deployment of a ZANU-PF party identity (actual or faked) is about interest advancement or defence (McGregor, 2014; McGregor and Chatiza, 2019; Kamete, 2017).

Political maneuvering has a lot to do with individual residents' agency in terms of mobilising party-focused clout to advance their interests as it is about actual votes during elections. Before and after voting day, this political contestation is not necessarily focused on votes but local influence and control. The advent of connections between past/serving municipal staff on one hand, and those involved in parcelling out urban land in emergent settlements, on the other, show that the local political 'currency' is aided by city-level contacts to validate land access and protect ill-defined land rights (ACRC research project launch meeting, May 26 2022). The relationship between settlement-based and city-level land grabbers and distributors is a financial one. These actors cloak themselves as political party leaders acting in the interest of the party controlling the area in question, sustaining their actions with support from public servants and allied professionals.

An interview with the Harare City Chair for Environment and Planning Committee captured the politics of settling on land as follows:

Political leaders calling people to settle. When people are there on their own, they start to use their resources...the political leaders have established

cooperatives...so they have established a leadership that controls the activity in those settlements, a leadership that ensures everyone pays money towards the so-called development of the area...you can see that the stands are different sizes as they were never surveyed and pegged' (April 6<sup>th</sup> 2017, Harare).

The precarity of land rights starts with the informalised land access, make-do organisation of residents steered by rapidly changeable leadership, and is sustained by informal or corrupt partnerships between politicised settlement leaders and public servants. In Churu Farm, for instance, some of the cooperative leaders are non-resident yet they maintain control over their pieces of land and those they allocated. The residents in particular are presented as 'my people', a resource that cooperative leaders 'trade' for influence within their political parties. This has created a parallel urban land management system for which national government is largely responsible in terms of establishing. The affected areas are difficult to integrate into relevant urban local authority systems not just in Harare (e.g. for Caledonia), but in Bulawayo (Cowdray Park), Masvingo (Victoria Ranch), Mutare (Gimboki), Bindura (Garikai), and other urban areas. The complexities of regularising these settlements also takes a political party twist as:

'...you find that people thought the ruling party [ZANU-PF] is the one allocating land to its cronies, then if we are not members of the party in control of the Council, we will never get land. It's corruption. They are saying we are being locked out, the Councilor allocates land to his [political] kith and kin...so then the invasions started...the Councilor can be sympathetic to the coops from his party. The coops were being politicised. It's supposed to be a political vehicle, but now it's become political, the party using it as a campaigning strategy. The Councilor...he will push for that party [coop] to be assisted, saying to officials, can you assist this coop, we know them, they are very genuine...but that's not put in writing...certain coops will get land like that' (Interview with Acting Director of Housing and Community Services, Harare, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017).

Urban land corruption thus developed from constrained access and those seeking to overcome supply challenges, mobilised politics as a currency. Understanding the resultant challenges as exclusively about political party control is good as explanatory theory. This however makes for difficult choices in terms of resolving settlement dysfunctionality where local authorities are saying:

'...we can't take them [settlements] in because they have not met our requirements for development that is to put in services that enable us to build them water and give them proper bins to collect refuse because the roads are not there. So the government is saying these are City of Harare [or other local



authority] because we have done the plan, we have handed them over (Interview Deputy Director, City Planning, Harare, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017).

The mobilisation of politics, leading to vote harvests for political parties did not remove the lack of resources to emplace relevant infrastructure in the settlements that now have the twin challenge of vague land rights and incomplete development. This is not necessarily party politics. It is a politics that is inevitably about *jambanja* or disorderliness mobilised after the fact by political parties that are unable to undo its damage. This ‘failure’ is seen in the stress associated with on-gridding unserved settlements.

### ***‘ON-GRIDDING’ IN EMERGENT URBAN SETTLEMENTS***

The ‘classic’ land delivery model (Figure 2) can be considered a ‘grid’. Following it with the regulatory support of land authorities (national and local) leads to certification of planned development and issuance of appropriate rights. By inserting additional sub-functions while allowing flexible sequencing of the functions and inviting alternative actors, the Government of Zimbabwe ended up supporting ‘off-grid settlement development’. This has resulted in ‘self-gridding’ for several settlements following different pathways and with equally variable local authority involvement. That ‘off-grid’ status is also seen in the reality of disconnection from or the actual absence of formal water, sewer, road, and energy grids. Additionally, it is about governance ‘off-grid’ status where a settlement is not recognized, not just in terms of specific infrastructure grids, but land access and thus tenure (Chatiza and Gotora, 2021). It is the governance off-grid dimension that the article engages with. This is to reflect how specific infrastructure grids are, at best, delayed and in some cases undoable.

Different state agencies, based on formal policies and legislation, perform the core land delivery functions. Over the last 25 years, state capacity has been regressing, resulting in different actors being ‘grafted in’ to provide some of the core functions individually and in various forms of state and non-state partnerships. These have included joint ventures where the state provided land, deferred payments for urban state land for beneficiaries to provide services, and actual barter trade where land was exchanged for cars (City of Harare, 2010). Additionally, new sub-functions have been added. These include environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for all housing projects as part of ensuring that ecologically sensitive areas are protected. Additionally, strategic gaps became apparent, particularly in terms of the absence of National and Regional Spatial/Physical Plans.

Reforms focused on infrastructure and superstructure standards, construction materials, and land development processes were not followed through completely. For instance, allocating and selling urban land before approving physical plans, infrastructure, and emplacement of common services including social facilities like schools has resulted in some of the post-2000 settlements being classified as dysfunctional and on undesignated land.

In the absence of investment in major infrastructure (road, sewer, water, electricity, and solid waste management) the emergent settlements do not only lack local services, they are also going to wait for an indeterminate period to be connected to core city-wide services not only in the Harare Region but in Masvingo, Bulawayo, Gweru, and Kadoma (Chatiza, 2019). Besides infrastructure, land tenure documents are generally a long way off in most emergent settlements even though government announced in December 2021 that title deeds would be issued in 2022 (*The Herald*, 2021<sup>7</sup>). While national government, in political-speak blames opposition party-controlled urban local authorities for the irregularities leading to the dysfunctional settlements, it is important to note that most of these settlements are on urban state land. In some instances, the farms settled have since been transferred to the relevant local authority. However, contestation over regularization models and the inability of local governments to exert their authority affect land development and related processes.

On titling, one key informant (June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Harare) observed that this would require verifying all strategic steps in the land delivery process from authentication of land access by the developer of a settlement. An FGD session with national government officials (July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Harare) highlighted cases where similar functions were executed differently in different settlements. Another national government key informant (July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022) acknowledged that land transfers to local authorities were incomplete and that databases on farmland transfers were not digitized. City of Harare officials (FGD session June 21<sup>st</sup> 2022) highlighted lacking a 'land bank' with a retired government official also observing that the Urban State Land Management Manual of 2002 now provided insufficient guidance (July 14<sup>th</sup> 2022). The gaps in the completeness of land records at

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.herald.co.zw/president-gifts-title-deeds-to-urban-dwellers/> statement made at the ZANU PF Politburo Meeting of December 21<sup>st</sup> 2021 and reported on 22 December 2021 (downloaded 30.8.2022)

local and national level, despite Audits, Task Forces, Committees and Commissions (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019) shows the need for a comprehensive process of remedying records and digitizing them.

Experiences from Epworth Ward 7 suggest the considerable need for local community mobilization to 're-order' and secure both land records and actual rights. It took 12 years (1995 to 2007), from initial informal occupation to begin the regularization journey. The formal physical planning processes were concluded eight years later in 2015, with allocations of numbered stands starting only in 2017 and still underway. The non-state agencies that supported the planning processes invested considerably in social mobilization, exposing the local authority officials to other jurisdictions (Kenya mainly) and providing technical support from socio-economic surveys to preparation of the physical plans.

The transitioning of the settlement from indiscriminate gardens and pastures to a planned settlement, from free for all (*gada* or self-settling) to numbered stands and files, from party members (genuine and faked) to settlement co-governors and rights-holding households has involved non-state investment (civil society mainly). The current Councilor observed (May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022<sup>8</sup>) that:

'...politicians need to be understood and settlement leaders need training...engage politicians so that they are part of the project...if they feel like they are outcasts they will undermine your work'.

While directed at the contacts seeking his guidance for initiating their regularization processes the insights reflect the importance of simultaneously disciplining while integrating political actors. This is critical, given that most emergent settlements were principally created under competitive patronage systems with ZANU-PF dominance, considering that they were mainly on urban state land controlled by a ruling party minister. Self-settling, allocation eschewing local authorities, and gaps in funding land development in emergent settlements, are critical processes. In many ways, this has also affected the property taxation system in most urban areas with valuation rolls mainly out of date. This explains (not justify) the national government's imposition of a condition regarding the application of a portion of the 2022 'Devolution Funds' for

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<sup>8</sup> At a meeting organised for the Inclusive Urban Infrastructure settlement contacts to meet leaders of Epworth Ward 7 to learn on their upgrading experiences

the updating or initial preparation of Valuation Rolls by most Councils. For Epworth, enough residents were made to carry the self-allocation burden or 'guilt' with their leaders invoking it for purposes of mobilizing funding to pay a land surveyor (Fieldwork April 2017 and visit of May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022). Additional to the guilt the 'threat of temporary eviction' so that services are emplaced is deployed strategically with an additional twist that re-allocation is not guaranteed (ibid.)

Within settlements, shades of informality also exist. These stress settlement levels and city authority. Additionally, localized power struggles interfere with social mobilization and contact with external stakeholders. Gatekeepers' interests, their institutional security, and the alignment of their interests, horizontally and vertically, also dictate sustainable and predictable land management. Where these misalign, the changes reverberate beyond an individual settlement. Gatekeepers particularly appreciate and manipulate both difference and consensus, engineered and actual. These asymmetries also arise from the socioeconomic characteristics of residents, including length of stay and previous connections, e.g. kinship links, economic associations, or where residents used to stay in the same neighbourhoods. Resident mix extends to both political orientation and socio-economic capacity with implications for contributing to common services. In a context of individualized and partisan control (McGregor and Chatiza, 2019) insertion of land management processes led by local governments is not easy to facilitate.

Additionally, raising and mobilizing to see ideas through is seen as seeking power or crudely disposing of those seen as having it. This is because successful ideas are attributed to their proponents and the reward is allegiance resulting in dislodging those in place before the idea. In some instances, ideas are seen as a way of raising money not only for services but to fund political interests. In Hopley for instance, a Council employee active in an ongoing donor-Council funded water project is being seen as seeking to become a Councillor in 2023 (Key Informant Interview 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022). Their team's proposal that residents contribute USD10 for preparing pipes for individual water meter connections was being seen as a way of raising funding for their campaign. At the settlement level, this perception was affecting project roll-out including payment of connection fees at the Council. Yet the proposal appeared technically reasonable as the donor supplied 6m pipes that need to be cut and threaded for the meter

connections. The team was having to do this using their equipment and on their time.

National government's confidence in local governments is generally stressed. This is despite acknowledged national urban state land management gaps as exposed by the Uchena Commission Report (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019) and earlier audits (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). As such, cooperative governance or strategic convergence patches are few. They are intermittently disrupted by variously resisted policy and administrative directives. This polarization has created administrative cracks taken advantage of by land developers, cooperatives, housing trusts, and other land and housing actors. Such taking advantage has decidedly constrained consolidation of relevant good practices, let alone effective regulation of post-2000 urban land governance.

This stresses the development and application of a whole-of-government urban land management framework. Findings of national government-instituted urban land audits, task forces, committees, and the 2019 Commission, are rarely published. Where commissioned at Ministry level they are for the Minister's use and the President at national level. The Minister uses findings in dialoguing with Councilors and senior executives. They are, therefore, potentially a political bargaining tool with implications for broader urban land management. Rising land-related corruption suggests that the findings may not be used to plug systemic gaps in urban land management.

## **CONCLUSION: RE-IMAGINING URBAN LAND MANAGEMENT IN ZIMBABWE**

Zimbabwe's stressed economy, its society, and public institutions could not perform their formal functions for over a quarter century (Chatiza *et al.*, 2013<sup>9</sup>). The country has been struggling to address critical socio-political mistrust at intergovernmental, local government and community levels. A lot has been noted regarding the governance strain attributed to rural land redistribution. There has not been enough articulation of the impact of the urban land management trajectory over a quarter of a century on urban development. The article has attempted to contribute to this debate

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<sup>9</sup> 1995 is the year that the 2013 local government capacity assessment established as when local governance collapse started (in a sense the period up to that time most sector systems were considered to have been working well)

referring to emerging settlements, some of which have a history spanning 25 years that saw Zimbabwe's regressing in economic terms, availability or accessibility of affordable urban land, and the quality and performance of land authorities (local and national).

An assignment of urban land management functions within the framework of devolved governance will be consistent with the National Human Settlements Policy of 2020. Part of this could focus on enhancing the regulatory and urban development authority of local governments. Implications are that local governments become fully responsible for all land within their area of jurisdiction for purposes of regulating urban development consistent with their development plans. Relatedly, local governments cease to over focus on acquiring undeveloped land but manage its development with a key instrument being appropriate taxation. Another is framing a renegotiation of local, provincial, and local government competencies in performing their functions. The obtaining situation, where the land resource is used for political patronage, explains why there has been overlapping jurisdiction in urban areas with all three tiers of government have neither adequately cooperated nor effectively served society.

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