

Unexplored Elasticity of Planning and Good Governance in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The state of the city of Harare in terms of its present general outlook and critical analysis of its carrying capacity as a colonial city tends to perpetuate an ingrained myth among urban planners and the common people alike that planning has failed the former so called sunshine-city. Yet such a view treats with amnesia the wealth in the elasticity of planning as an instrument for change as well as a strategic force to command and direct the trajectory of cities. It is in this context that this paper discusses the elasticity of planning of Harare as anchored on a complex but well-knit constellation of the factors of good urban governance and political will. These can allow for urban reform and smart transformation. A close look at the city after 1980 shows that the city of Harare has been subjected to much bickering, contestations and intergovernmental impositions of policy hence it exemplifies policy from above as opposed to policy from below. This is largely explained by the central government's hard and fast wrenching control in directing the affairs of the city hence negating the role of the residents' needs and wants. Recently the city has been facing several challenges, more than ever before, and the more critical challenge now is the adopted culture of colonial blaming rather than solving the deep seated problems of poor management approaches. The present study is skewed towards assessing the historical and contemporary socio-economic and political dynamics as far as they have inspired, championed, ignored, and arm-twisted planning. This has largely been to the detriment of the city. Thus, a vortex and maelstrom over the relevance of planning has been created which now requires planning to exonerate itself by proving its worthiness to the citizens and investors whose creeds and needs it has betrayed over the years.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cities of the developing world are succumbing to the effects of rapid urbanization that are resulting in an unfolding urban composition, metamorphosing its classifications, urban forms and their inherent limitations thereby revealing a seemingly limitless expansion of the urban area ([Ijagbemi, 2003](#); [Viana, 2009](#); [UNHABITAT, 2009](#)). With the agenda of planning from a colonial town to a megacity, the process escapes any simplistic notion of territoriality, where the town expands to its seams thereby captivating continuously the peri-urban interface, creating and modifying urban typologies, which are fragmented and interconnected in a problematic manner. Thus [Viana \(2009\)](#) notes that growing cities, like any

other African city, consider various experiences as well as complex social layers that do not fall into sectarian urban proposals. As the huge influx of population migrate from the rural areas as well as natural population increases, more space to settle is demanded and planning becomes a key tool, which always faces mammoth challenges in practice.

There is a need for clear institutional forms to foster a sense of community, stability and faith in the future or else the city runs on a treadmill ([Simone, 2002](#)). As well, corruption deepens poverty by distorting political, economic and social life ([Eigen, 2005](#)). Corruption in urban governance means that decisions are done more for private benefit than public interest. Lack of participation in urban governance by citizens meant that the poor did not have a choice in determining their own development needs and priorities. Indeed, bureaucratic, complex and non-transparent municipal administrative practices often lead to lower revenues, which result in less spending on social programmes to benefit the poor ([Mhlahlo, 2007](#)). Non-transparent land allocation practices push the poor to the urban periphery and hazardous areas, depriving them of secure access to major productive urban assets ([Rondenelli, 1990](#)). In this scenario, governance is the panacea. The governance platform is based on the idea of the “social contract”, as expressed by [Munzwa and Jonga \(2010\)](#). In this arrangement, the government and the local authorities make a social contract with its people on service delivery and the contract implies that the governed agree to be ruled in good faith of their authorities towards the protection of their properties, rights and happiness.

To become better cities, urban governance structures are needed to ensure that the urban environment they create and maintain for their citizens is socially just, ecologically sustainable, politically participatory, economically productive and culturally vibrant ([Magnusson, 2006](#)). While the Eastern model professes that democratization is the product of development, the western model sees democratization as its basis. It is in African cities that the unresolved issue between democratization and development is being fought out. The two models of development and the conflicts between them reflect on urban governance ([Knebel and Kolhatkar, 2009](#)).

Most local governments in Africa are cash-strapped, generating little or no local resources and never getting enough to deliver on the millennium programmes. Two fundamental shifts are needed if the Millennium Development Goals are to be delivered by 2015. The first one is that local governments must be properly resourced both financially and technically. Secondly, they need to be truly local by being fully accountable and transparent to the people they serve ([Chirisa, 2012](#)).

Harare, like other African countries, as put by [Viana \(2009\)](#) is in a current condition of transition that is fragmented and uncoordinated in social and spatial terms, and makes clear the conflict for and against difference and plurality. The extensive growth and the expansion of the city’s administrative boundaries reflect changes in the form and lifestyle of the citizens, which occur often, leading to change in its present urban condition of *urban chameleonism* (ibid.). Thus, the linear urban syntax, sequential and structured that expressed many of the urban narratives of colonial origin, became a hypertext ([Viana, 2009](#)) marked by unpredictability, difference, uncertainty, ideological and financial problems, despotism, liberalisation of markets, alignment of interests and the crisis of values in the community within the context of expanding cities, thereby putting planning in the limelight as a failing approach. As the city grows from a colonial system,

several urban challenges emerge, which calls for robust planning intervention. Hence, it requires an analytical understanding of the city's history to determine the way forward.

This paper, therefore, assesses the historical and contemporary socio-economic and political dynamics as far as they have inspired, championed, ignored, and side-lined or arm-twisted planning largely to the detriment of Harare. It argues that a quagmire and flurry over the relevance of planning has been created which now requires planning to vindicate itself by proving its worthiness to the citizens and investors whose creeds and needs it has betrayed over the years.

2. THE CONTEXT OF HARARE'S EXISTENCE

For one to fully understand and delineate contemporary urbanism and conventional urbanization processes of the city of Harare, it is inevitable to cite the existence of pre-colonial Zimbabwe's urbanity and consequential trends. [Munzwa and Jonga \(2010\)](#) have stated categorically that Harare's urban development history is rooted in colonialism. Be that as it may, one cannot discuss urbanization without referring to colonization and its impacts as colonization witnessed a new socio-political and economic dispensation ([Wekwete, 1994](#)).

The settler occupation era in Zimbabwe was characterized by a high rural population and Salisbury (now Harare) emerged when the settlers' hope for minerals went below expectation. Consolidating the colonization process, the economic activities of the settlers established supportive infrastructure such as roads, railway lines and telegram lines, a sign of establishing permanent settlement ([Rakodi, 1995](#)). [Wekwete \(1994\)](#) also notes that construction of various infrastructures was a sign of permanence as the water and sewer reticulation infrastructure developed was non-transferable, thereby establishing Fort Salisbury. Categorically, the era which spans between 1890 and 1939, was the establishment phase of colonial domination where the settlers speculated about the investment opportunities around Salisbury, now Harare. [Rakodi \(1995\)](#) explicates that with higher mineral expectations, the settlers were frustrated by the scarce minerals found and therefore developed a permanent settlement directed towards manufacturing. The second phase noted by [Wekwete \(1994\)](#), between 1940 and 1952, was an era of Salisbury expansion and intensification. During the post-1945 epoch, Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) witnessed the development of its manufacturing industry and the government became supportive of the initiative. Hence, the manufacturing industry lured high urban expansion just as during the British industrial revolution experience. This led to the establishment of settler populated suburbs such as Malbereign based on the Radburn garden city concept and [Davison \(2002\)](#) also explains the expansion of accommodation into the subdivision of Mount Pleasant farms in order to accommodate the settlers.

The Federation epoch was another critical urban development era in Zimbabwe. It covered the period from 1953 to 1965 ([Munzwa and Jonga, 2010](#)). [Rakodi \(1995\)](#) notes that during the 1950s and early 1960s, there were government efforts to spread the benefits of the federation to Southern Rhodesia where encouraged the mining capital's diversification into manufacturing, foreign investment and large scale borrowing towards investing into the urban infrastructure. As the manufacturing sector

expanded, industry and finance sectors concentrated in Salisbury witnessed an increase in construction activity and the changing form of the central business district. There was a restricted market size for manufactured commodities and limited expansion of production. Federalism witnessed the channelling of financial resources into property development for commercial and financial institutions. This led to high property prices in the central business district, outstripping and outlasting those for residential and industrial land and buildings ([Rakodi, 1995](#)). In the now Harare, the end of the speculative boom was followed by the breakup of the federation.

The ushering in of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Ian Smith (Former Prime Minister of Rhodesia, 1965-1979) saw the country facing international trade sanctions. Such developments ensued in a crisis of confidence, and led to the first collapse in land prices and a virtual halt to new private construction ([Rakodi, 1995](#)). This resulted in a turnaround in the construction of private infrastructure which was halted during the expansion of the urban centre. With a growing labour force to cater for the expanding manufacturing sector, and where industrialists faced increased costs of accommodating the indigenous workforce, there was a relaxation of the prohibition of home ownership and government encouragement to building societies to lend to the indigenous population ([Rakodi, 1995](#)). Thus, in terms of private housing during the federation era, the promulgation of the Building Societies Act in 1951 saw this period reaping gains as the demand for housing grew with the growing population in urban centres. It also witnessed the construction of several service delivery infrastructures such as the University of Zimbabwe, Harare and Mpilo Hospital among others. However, the urban development being discussed here refers to the settlers only, as indigenous people were not accommodated at this time in the non-African towns and were being absorbed only in partiality of labour force need ([Munzwa and Jonga, 2010](#)).

It must be stressed that during the UDI period, economic planning was based on an import substitution strategy and there were a lot of inward looking and introspective approaches to the overall development of Harare. [Wekwete \(1994\)](#) notes the legacy of controls, which attributes Zimbabwe today to this phase of economic development. He notes that Harare experienced the highest rate of increased housing stock due to vigorous stand development between 1965 and 1971. This witnessed the housing of indigenous people in what they called African townships around Harare and led to the outward expansion of Harare. Such remarkable urban expansion called for adequate urban service provision to keep pace with the increasing populations, for example, clean water provision, power, garbage collection and disposal, public transportation and other social services ([Chirisa, 2007; Munzwa, and Jonga, 2010](#)).

Making a legislative adjustment, the land apportionment act was replaced by the land tenure act and this had several implications whereby indigenous peoples' housing areas were designated in what were considered to be European urban areas and attempts were made to concentrate indigenous people in these districts. [Rakodi \(1995\)](#) even highlights that after the 1969 census the number of indigenous urbanites exceeded those of settlers in the highlands area which led to the development of Mabvuku and Tafara to re-house the indigenous population and municipal regulations were passed forbidding employers to house non-employees. The mid 1970s witnessed an escalation of a struggle for independence, which led to an influx of refugees into the capital from the rural areas. Realizing this there was the enactment of a municipal transit camp at Musika near Mbare and thus Harare became

consolidated with both European and indigenous populations in an expansionary way as an urban hub with several employment opportunities.

The post-independence epoch (1980 to date) witnessed a vigorous de-racialization of the urban system as well as a huge influx of rural population into the city ([Munzwa and Jonga 2010](#); [Tibajjuka, 2005](#)). There was a move to de-racialize the urban system as well as facilitating free movement of the indigenous majority into the city hence pushing the notion of a one city concept. Realizing the lifting of urban movement control, there was a remarkable flow of rural population into the urban centres in search for better lives. [Wekwete \(1994\)](#) has noted that urban areas were very attractive as a result of a better social life and employment opportunities in comparison to rural life. This era witnessed the indigenous majority manipulating the urban space where residential development expanded to accommodate the rural migrants. Administratively, there was a replacement by the indigenous authorities of colonial local authorities, where in practice of their colonial correction era they overstayed their honeymoon ([Dube and Chirisa, 2012](#); [Chirisa, 2009](#)). Like other African cities, Harare became a city of people of all occupations calling for expanded infrastructure provision.

While the local authorities were celebrating independence, at the same time overstaying their honeymoon, Harare was catching fire over the failure of planning to cope with immigration. Little changes were embarked on as far as spatial planning is concerned thereby the population stressed the infrastructure which had been designed for a small population. Regardless of being unchained from colonial yokes, colonial legislation still governs the city's planning system. Hence the planning system failed to move to a people oriented planning approach and continued a draconic way of governing the city which initiates policies from above as opposed to policies from below. To adjust from the colonial system to a more rational system, the government of Zimbabwe overcompensated to the extent of getting into a situation of adjusting to fail and it imposed intense damages on city development.

Since there was an inheritance of a dualist economy, to address the colonial imbalances the government embarked on a socialist approach by adopting policies such as Growth with Equity of 1981, Transitional Development Plans and the First Five Year National Development Plans ([Dube and Chirisa, 2012](#)). This led to budget deficits of the Harare local authority, a situation which led to the council losing its borrowing capacity, failing to pay its own expenses thereby failing to adjust. To date, the city has been facing quite a number of challenges, more than ever before, and the critical challenge now is the culture adopted of pointing fingers at colonization and the much popularized economic sanctions rather than solving the deep seated problems of poor management approaches. This provokes the question of why government, when governance is the way to go? With difficulties in answering that it leads to a journey of endless problems that unveils the urban management system where there are doubts on whether to give planning another chance for trust building or not. Much blame has been given to the city management system as well as its planning instruments as noted in Box 1, but why the failure to adjustment? The results of the failure to adjust, which all literally led to adjusting to fail, has led to the loss of the city's treasures it had during its early years, which in turn has led to it being labelled a nostalgic sunshine city.

Most of the residents now live without hope of city regeneration from the shambles it has fallen into, where infrastructure has fallen apart in its

attempts to serve the massive urban population. This has led to insecurities in tenure; issues surrounding livelihood and even personal safety have caused residents to become reluctant to invest in participatory city planning as the management systems are non-accommodative to residents' participation.

Box 1: Harare city's management failure

- There is an imploration of Harare City Council to refine their management style in order to address the critical water supply situation.
- New approaches are required to meet the demands of the capital's growing population.
- The infrastructure of the city was designed to cater for one million people only; the city now houses over three million people.
- Poor management and planning by the City of Harare are largely to blame.
- By 1993, the service provision capacity of Harare was outstripped in the face of a growing population.
- Proper planning and finance are required.
- Prioritisation of service delivery and value for money to ratepayers are critical.
- The council is owed a lot of money by Government, other local authorities and ratepayers.

Source: [\(The Sunday Mail, 2013\)](#)

The period after independence witnessed a common abundance of urban challenges, which irked loudly for elastic intervention. Harare has become a quandary of environmental challenges, including pollution, degradation of resources and urban informality that has been termed ruralization of the urban ([Munzwa and Jonga, 2010](#)). Due to the huge influx of migrants into the city, Harare has been loosely accommodating the population sprawling into the seams of its boundaries ([Chirisa, 2008](#); [Munzwa and Jonga, 2010](#)). This has led to a situation similar to the American mistake of promoting suburbia, a concept that created cities that never worked with sustainability. Uncontrolled movement of the rural population to the urban areas witnessed the exacerbation of urban poverty where the residents, in search of survival, have lost stewardship of the city thereby leading to the degradation of the urban environments and abuse of urban infrastructure in an unchecked system. These hardships justify the increased rate in urban crime, the resorting of the "urbanites" to the ventures of the informal sector, and, in the case of housing, the manifestations of alternatives like multi-habitation, squatter camps and informal land subdivisions. In addition, there has been the remarkable challenge of ruralisation of the city because of poor service delivery ([Munzwa and Jonga, 2010](#)). This has led to the situation of urban residents becoming escapees to the urban periphery, which also creates another challenge of urban sprawl. In the process of ruralization, the urban residents have become multi-actors in their life being peasants or entrepreneurs, in a situation that has turned the urban syntax informal. [Shanoon, Kleniewski et al. \(2002\)](#) repose that urban poverty has not persisted but it has increased.

[Wekwete \(1992\)](#) points out that a poor management system of urban local authorities has left urban dwellers living in offensive conditions that are demeaning, demoralizing and debilitating. The city municipalities themselves carry a host of challenges from lack of transparency, corruption, general mismanagement, financial bankruptcy and an inability to develop and maintain existing infrastructure, as well as a failure to attract investment opportunities. The city is now experiencing challenges that aggravate both the rich and the poor, where a massive housing backlog persists and has led to several housing challenges, including from squatter expansion, to rampant traffic congestion which has been calling loud for planning intervention.

[Munzwa and Jonga \(2010\)](#) note how Harare is facing rapid population growth accompanied by de-industrialization, a combination of which forms an informal calamity. Trialling management system approaches, urban councils have been the leading figures demeaning governance. It is further stated that the serious shortage of finances has an impact on any reforms that may be adopted. The resuscitation of infrastructure and the provision of clean water and adequate housing largely depend on the availability of funds. The City Council is mandated to reform its financial systems in order to create more revenue and eradicate corruption and general financial mismanagement. The introduction of new forms of budgeting, like performance budgeting and participatory budgeting, may be of benefit to the communities and other stakeholders. Recently the involvement of the stakeholders and communities has been a good principle of good governance because the intended beneficiaries have become part of the decision-making ([Munzwa and Jonga, 2010](#)). In summary, Harare has become a hub of all sorts of problems that an urban centre can carry and the little efforts by the authorities to address them have been an exacerbating factor, pointing to the failings of the governance system.

3. PLANNING: THE PROMISE, THE BETRAYAL AND THE MISSING LINK IN HARARE

Overstaying their independence, the planning authorities caused an accumulation of urban problems over time. While local planning authorities took heed of planning for the people, they had lost the voice of their people and thereby neglected participatory planning approaches. While the independence afterward sought for colonial corrective measures of equality, they lost out due to a situation culminating in indigenous dualism, a failing planning system, centrism management approaches lacking residents' participation, and the consequence of planning being labelled a failure. Realizing the technocratic characteristic of planning as well as the political nature of urbanism, planning has become a facilitating arm of political practice.

In Harare, there has been no proper upholding of rights, liberty and equality within the planning system, hence the breach of the promise and social contract which calls for planning reform. It is therefore important to question, 'are the urban problems in Harare so extreme that the cities and towns need to change their rulers?' Then, 'would the new rulers do a better job in service delivery?' These questions are difficult to get specific answers to. What can be portrayed here is only the opinion that the politics, governance and institutional behaviours had terribly deteriorated in Harare.

On the same note, the economic meltdown of Zimbabwe rendered most of the councils un-creditworthy to both local and international financial institutions and this led to a fall in the borrowing power of urban councils in the hands of central government, jeopardizing service delivery and rational decision-making ([Jonga and Chirisa, 2009](#)).

3.1 Building confidence: giving planning another chance

Overall, urban finance, investment attraction, urban good governance and the political will to allow for urban reform and smart transformation are essential. Good governance is characterized as being "... participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and following the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making ([Keiner, Koll-Schretzenmayr, et al. 2006](#)). Its focus is "sustainability" where the present and future needs of society are treated as sine qua non ([Munzwa and Jonga, 2010](#)). One of the crucial elements of good governance is the collection, accountability and transparent management of public funds (municipality funds). Currently, because of political deterioration and the economic meltdown, almost every city is suffering from budget deficits or inadequate financial resources for development, general administration and infrastructure maintenance. For the city, to borrow from the city administrations, it has to be creditworthy. Creditworthiness is an attribute that is attained through the development of good financial management, like proper budgeting, control of funds, periodic accurate reporting, and properly written books of accounts, additionally urban councils as political institutions must tolerate diverse opinions. If these diverse political opinions and freedoms are suppressed, news beliefs and behaviours are hindered and it means the valves releasing pressure caused by change will tighten to the disadvantage of development agents in the urban communities. This has stifled visions for future developments ([Munzwa and Jonga, 2010](#)).

3.2 Learning from others as panacea

There have been rebuttals on whether to adopt the Western (European) models of urban development or the Eastern (Asian) models of urban development where the western models regard democratization as the basis of development whilst the eastern models regard democratization as a by-product of development. A comparative exploration gives an insight on the paths to follow towards gaining back planning lustre. For instance, in 2001 the Indonesian government introduced laws on decentralization and regional autonomy that led to a shift in service delivery. Changes in municipal management such as modifying planning, programming, budgeting and financial management procedures have helped local government become more responsive, participative, transparent and accountable to citizen's needs. This process has been supported by the UNDP's Breakthrough Urban Initiatives for Local Development (BUILD) programme. Ten core guiding principles for good local governance were established (participation, rule of law, transparency, equality, vision, accountability, supervision, efficiency and professionalism) which were later adopted by the Association of Municipalities at their annual meeting. During the meeting, participants

agreed that “the welfare of the people constitutes the most important objective for achieving sustainable development, to bring relief to those in poverty, who are disempowered, and who are dispossessed socially” ([UNHABITAT, 2009:17](#)).

4. THE WAY FORWARD

It is clear that for Harare to remain financially solvent and bring back its glamour, there is the need to change its development patterns and the way the city is being governed. As we near the expiry of the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs)¹ in 2015, the verity that poverty and financial crisis in Harare need to be arrested cannot be overlooked. Calls for finding new ways of spatial urban planning in a sustainable form remain the only option. The city of Harare needs to take a leading role making Harare one of the best cities in the region and the world at large. The city needs to sustain the pressure stemming from the current global financial crisis, which has paralyzed market solutions to many urban problems around the world. Harare has to acclimatize more still with the reality of urbanization and its physical manifestations which are often complex and require collaborative and participatory approaches.

The challenges of practicing good governance remain a huge task in Harare. As such, there is a need of spatial policies that can curtail the wrath of the city through a comprehensive and collaborative approach to planning. There is need for a paradigm shift on the part of the Local Authority that is in the way that they operate their day-to-day activities. With the influx of modern day technology, the local authority needs to have an up-to-date database that monitors the day-to-day activities of the city. This will go a long way in monitoring new players in the city that are free riding when in fact the city is not free.

As supported by, [Dube and Chirisa \(2012\)](#) in order to improve service delivery in the city, there is a need to espouse the following suggestions:

- the enhancement of community participation in decision making at all stages, encouraging a sense of ownership,
- public awareness in the process of urban management,
- coordination between national plans and local plans,
- integration of urban and economic planning, enshrining Agenda 21 in Urban Planning and Management

As put succinctly by [Brown \(2006\)](#), good governance is a source from which all rivers flow; good governance needs to combine economic policies that support city prosperity with good social policies. It is time for those who can make an authentic difference, that is, government, international financial institutions, the donor community, development activists and the millions who are all annoyed by the state of the city but silent, to step up to meet this challenge and to execute the progress of the city.

In addition, development planning, whether national or international has traditionally been gender neutral or even gender blind. As a result, there has been a tendency to marginalize women: development planners have often seen them only as passive beneficiaries of social and health services. However, planners must realize that development goals will only be reached by securing active involvement of women and by bringing women into the mainstream of economic development so that gender plays its own important role in the process. Gender divisions are not fixed biologically, but constitute an aspect of wider social division of labour and this, in turn, is rooted in the

conditions of production and reproduction and reinforced by the cultural, religious and ideological systems prevailing in a society. Action orientation and reorientation in gender analysis is required in many developing countries as they are sometimes culturally and religiously embedded in anti-gender balance theses.

5. CONCLUSION

The preceding paragraphs have highlighted the challenges and possible ways the city of Harare has to take in order to create a sustainable city. The historical and contemporary state of the city in question has formed the backbone of the paper. A close look at the city after 1980 shows that the city of Harare has been subjected to much bickering, contestations and intergovernmental impositions of policy, hence policy from above as opposed to policy from below has been imposed. This is largely explained by the central government's hard and fast wrenching control in directing the affairs of the city hence negating the role of the residents' needs and wants. As the levels of poverty in Harare continues, coupled with unemployment and poor service delivery, the country cannot afford to turn its back on the poor and the vulnerable. There is a need to strengthen cooperation and solidarity at a city level and redoubling stakeholders' efforts to reach poverty free Harare and advance the broader development agenda. The viability of the city is at stake and national policymakers and all stakeholders should take heed the message of this valuable and timely analogue in development planning. The structural transformation of Harare's functions, with a view to ensure efficient and cost effective delivery is all the city can do now. There is also a need for various stakeholders involved in the revitalization of the city to have a shared vision, commitment at all levels, regular monitoring and evaluation, a customer-oriented culture and all backed by the provision of adequate and appropriate resources and the right leadership.

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