

HARARE: CITY SCOPING STUDY

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Harare lies in the north-east of Zimbabwe tucked at the watershed plateau of two major rivers; Zambezi on the north and Limpopo on the south.¹ The area has prime agricultural soils offering Harare opportunities for agricultural activities in addition to the dominant manufacturing sector. It was previously known as Salisbury, and between 1953 and 1963 it was the capital of the Federation constituted by Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). It was positioned at the core of the political and economic processes of the colonial establishment and witnessed an unprecedented growth in construction as a result.²

HARARE'S DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Harare was formerly known as Salisbury, which was declared a municipality in 1897. By 1935 its population had grown to nearly 20,000 and it was officially declared a city.³ At the time of Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Harare's population was 616,000. Its current population is estimated to be 1.4 million while the entire metropolitan area raises this figure to 2.1 million.⁴ The lifting of institutional apartheid controls that restricted movement prior to independence is responsible for the city's population doubling in this time.⁵

Figure 1. Map showing location of Harare



Source: OCHA (2018)

¹ Government of Zimbabwe (2011).

² International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) (1958).

³ Muronda (2008).

⁴ Government of Zimbabwe (2012).

⁵ Munzwa and Wellington (2010); and Potts (2011).

GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL EXPANSION OF THE CITY

Harare Province is constituted by the City of Harare, Chitungwiza Municipality and Epworth Local Board. It has a sub-tropical climate and annually receives rains of between 470mm and 1350mm.⁶ Due to its position on the highveld plateau, Harare's average temperature hovers around 18°C, which is unusually low for the tropics. These climatic conditions support natural vegetation with musasa and jacaranda trees forming colourful canopies between October and November every year.⁷ The city expanded after 1980 towards its peripheries in the south and south-west with the establishment of residential developments. Urban sprawl and informal land occupations can be explained by the unmet demand for affordable housing.

THE CITY'S ECONOMY AND ITS RELATION TO OTHER CITIES IN THE COUNTRY

As the capital, Harare is where most of the country's political and economic processes are concentrated. Estimates suggest that one in three Zimbabweans live in Harare, with the city's economy contributing 40% of the national gross domestic product.⁸ However Harare's formal and informal economies have not been integrated and socio-spatial disparities remain deeply entrenched.⁹

The city acts as a major hub for the country's road, rail and air transport networks, and is positioned strategically for trade and tourism. After independence in 1980, Harare inherited a robust manufacturing sector that was anchored by mining and agricultural activities.¹⁰ However, starting in 1982, the country experienced recurrent episodes of disruptive weather patterns alongside ill-conceived macro-socio-economic policy decisions by the post-colonial government. In 1999, the entry of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) on the political scene presented complex political realities which further compounded the challenges in Harare and other urban centres.

Whilst Harare benefitted from significant infrastructure investments compared to other cities during the colonial and post-colonial periods, since 2000 there has been a decline in both physical and social amenities.¹¹ In addition to limited or absence of infrastructure and services in some areas, authorities have also failed to maintain existing infrastructure.

NATIONAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

Since gaining independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has been under the political leadership of the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), led for most of these years by Robert Mugabe until he was deposed in November 2017.¹² Currently, the party and the country is led by Emmerson Munangagwa. ZANU-PF's political foundation is rooted in Marxist thinking although many have questioned the extent to which its rule has consistently reflected Marxist ideology.¹³ Elections have been held as per constitutional provisions but they have unfailingly been contested with opposition alleging massive rigging and the systematic use of violence as a political weapon. These accusations have led some to conclude that ZANU-PF's bigger plan has always been inclined towards instituting a one-party state.¹⁴

HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN CITY AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Harare's politics has remained hotly contested for nearly three decades, since the formation of the country's biggest opposition party.¹⁵ Land and tribal issues have generally been at the heart of the country's

⁶ Marondedze and Schütt (2019).

⁷ Government of Zimbabwe (2011).

⁸ Government of Zimbabwe (2012).

⁹ Chikowore (1993).

¹⁰ Cheetham. (2011); and Stoneman (1990).

¹¹ DFID (2017).

¹² Moore (2018).

¹³ Shaw (1986); and Stoneman (1990).

¹⁴ Shaw (1986).

¹⁵ McGregor and Chatiza (2020).

populist politics and have dictated the redistribution agenda.¹⁶ Urban councils are largely dominated by the opposition while the ruling party's power is rooted in the countryside. Land allocations across both the rural-urban divide have thus been politicised with the opposition accused of favouring its urban constituency.¹⁷ To counter this, the ruling party has established its own loyalists within the city, allowing them to illegally occupy council or state land without the requisite town planning approvals and basic services. The net effect of this political configuration has been that the national and local governments perpetually function at cross-purposes.¹⁸ Nowhere have these contestations been more evident than in cities, hence Harare has become an inconvenient symbol of the threat to ZANU-PF's hegemony.

CURRENT SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CITY TO THE COUNTRY

Zimbabwe is currently governed under a 2013 National Constitution, whose promulgation was a compromise produced through fierce bargaining between the two major political parties, ZANU-PF and MDC.¹⁹ Zimbabwe embarked on a programme of decentralisation after independence, and the 2013 constitution provided a legal framework and hence the impetus for realising this objective. For instance, a devolution agenda has found a new resurgence within Mnangagwa's administration although some have questioned the capacity, motivation and intent for this political trajectory.²⁰ The Commonwealth Local Government Forum observes that in addition to the lack of political will, there is restricted fiscal space for local government structures to deliver on the national aspirations of the devolution agenda.²¹

THE CITY AND THE SPATIAL CHALLENGES

Consistent with trends in cities in the global South, Harare is witnessing rapid urbanisation triggering manifold socio-economic and political challenges, straining the built environment. The built-up areas in Harare increased from 279.5km² in 1984 to 445km² in 2018, with most of these land-use and land cover changes towards the south-west where vast areas of high-density and often informal residential developments have emerged.²² Yet, weakened and corrupt land administration systems have undermined the municipal government's ability to fully derive value from the city's growth. There has been a rapid increase in informal settlements in Zimbabwe's urban settings and in 2018 the World Bank estimated that 33.5% of the urban population reside in informal areas (see Figure 2). Meanwhile, citywide slum settlement profiles conducted under the Harare 'slum upgrading project' have also classified 63 neighbourhoods as 'slums'.²³

Shack densities in Harare's informal settlements are lower than other cities in the region, highlighting the potential for in-situ upgrading. Predictably, the growth in informal housing has prompted other forms of informalities downstream, highlighting strong interdependencies between different urban systems in the city. For example, informal areas are typically excluded from the formal services grid due to exclusionary planning frameworks that are grounded in the country's colonial history, and hence residents resort to informal practices to access amenities such as water, sanitation, education and even health services. Shallow wells and pit latrines substitute for water and sanitation services. Meanwhile, existing planned suburbs have not escaped infrastructure challenges, and old water and sanitation systems in places such as Mbare (the central market area) have collapsed due to over-crowding.²⁴ The city's waste-water treatment plants have a design capacity of 208,000 m³/d compared to inflows of 300,000 m³/d, in turn, illustrating potential water quality issues.²⁵

¹⁶ Chirisa, Bandauro, and Mutsindikwa (2015; and Muchadenyika (2015).

¹⁷ Muchadenyika (2015).

¹⁸ Muchadenyika and Williams (2020).

¹⁹ Mushamba et al. (2014).

²⁰ Chikwawawa (2019); Chigwata (2019); and Zinyama and Chimankire (2019).

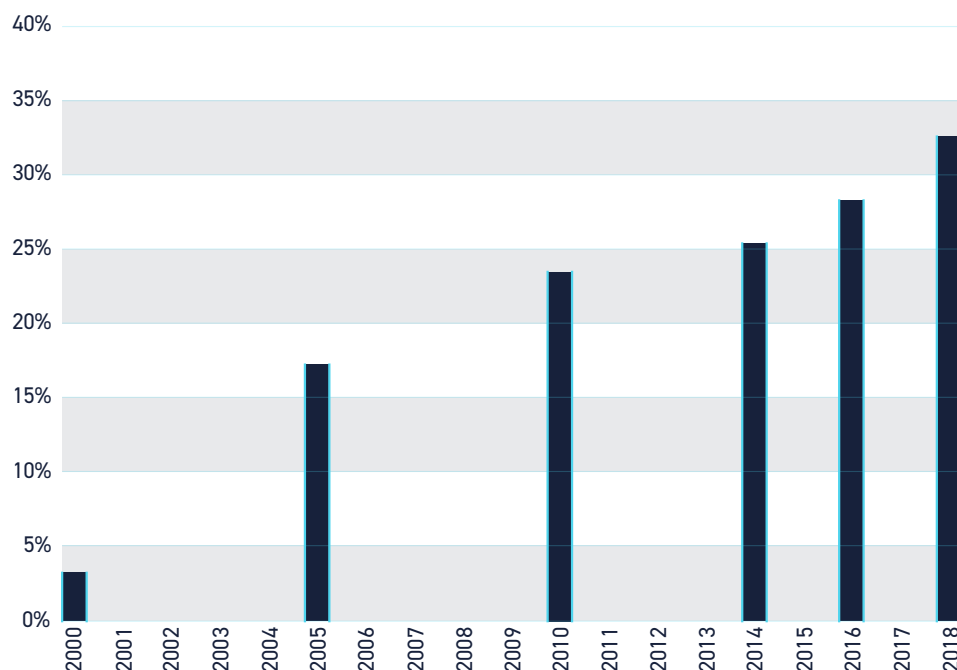
²¹ Commonwealth Local Government Forum (2016).

²² Marondedze and Schütt (2019).

²³ City of Harare (2016); and Dialogue on Shelter (2020).

²⁴ Manase, Mulenga, and Fawcett (2001).

²⁵ Nhapi (2009).

Figure 2. Urban population living in “slums” in Zimbabwe (%)

Source: World Bank (2021)

REDEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES: CONTESTED VISIONS, DISPLACEMENT AND EVICTIONS

Harare's response to the levels of growing urban informality has relied on evictions and demolitions as the default solution as demonstrated by the government-led campaign Operation Murambatsvina (“Drive-Out-Filth”) in 2005 and more recently Covid-19 lockdown-induced displacements.²⁶ The same exclusionary practices have also befallen the informal economy in the capital of Harare. A study commissioned by the World Bank confirmed that vending activities are viewed as a nuisance and criminalised, rather than seen as productive processes contributing to the urban economy.²⁷ While the country's pre-colonial urban history accounts for segregationist planning responses, there has also been ill-informed political imperative within post-independence city authorities making them gravitate towards modernist planning ideals that are often not aligned with the prevailing socio-economic circumstances.²⁸ Idealistic city visioning processes that set impractical minimum housing and infrastructure standards are classic examples.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES: POVERTY, INFORMAL ECONOMY AND LACK OF ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

Urban poverty has become entrenched and an urban livelihoods assessment established that out of ten provinces, Harare had the highest proportion of households that consumed poor diets.²⁹ The Covid-19 pandemic has further compounded the urban socio-economic challenges.³⁰ Harare health facilities were over-stretched by the pandemic, and physical distancing also proved to be impractical in Harare with residents queuing for water at boreholes, especially in low-income neighborhoods.³¹ Despite these deteriorating conditions, Harare continues with visioning processes that imagine ‘a world class city by 2025’.³² Harare's urban challenges have also sparked attendant environmental problems, further plunging the city into wide-ranging crises. The ecological footprint of urban growth has been very evident in the city.³³

²⁶ Dialogue on Shelter (2020); and Tibaijuka (2005).

²⁷ Mitullah (2003).

²⁸ Chiris and Dumba (2012); Kamete (2013); Watson (2009); and Zeiderman et al. (2017).

²⁹ Government of Zimbabwe (2019).

³⁰ Chirisa et al. (2020); and Hunter et al. (2020).

³¹ Chirisa et al. (2020).

³² City of Harare (2016); and City of Harare (2017).

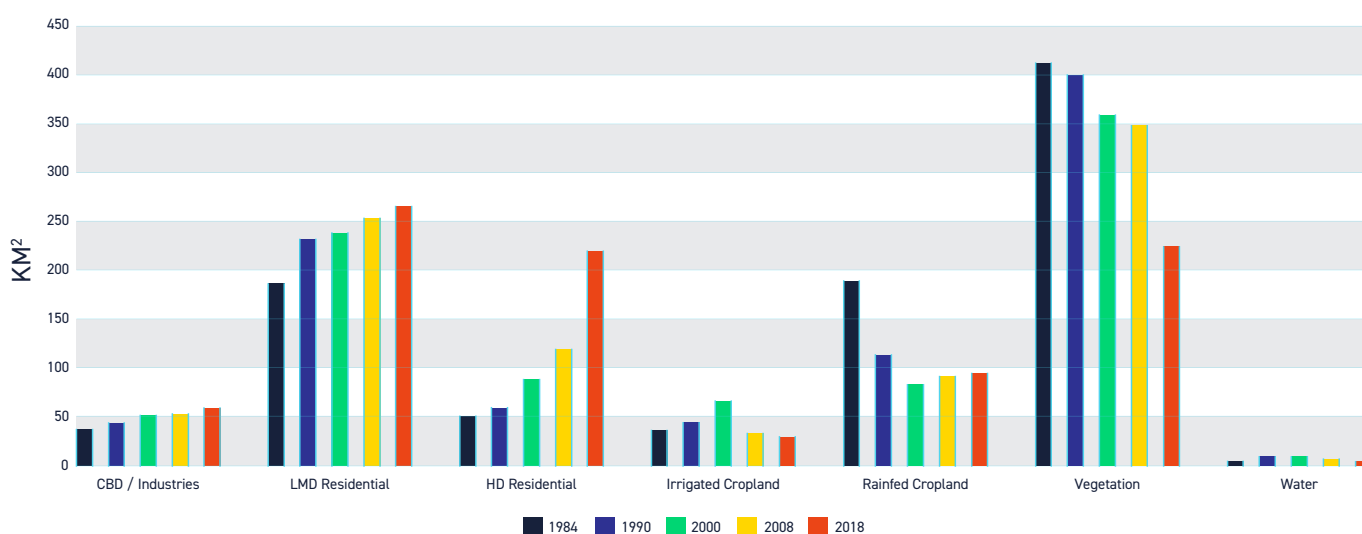
³³ Matamanda and Chirisa (2014).

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN HARARE

In 1984 vegetation covered approximately half of the Harare total province's area, but by 2018 this had been reduced by almost 50%.³⁴ Persistent power cuts have also contributed to the changes in vegetation cover due to excessive felling of trees for wood fuel. As most of the land use activities are being taken up by residential developments, Harare has also failed to cope with managing increased waste generation, resulting in land, air and water pollution. The city has been accused by the Environmental Management Agency of discharging raw effluent into Lake Chivero - the capital's main water supply reservoir, with disastrous downstream implications on the water body's flora and fauna.³⁵

Climate change has also had serious consequences on Harare with recurrent droughts adversely affecting both water supply and urban agriculture activities. The Urban Livelihoods Assessment revealed that households practising urban agriculture in Harare accounted for 31.8% of the total urban households in 2016 but in 2019 this figure had declined to 17.1% and this was largely attributable to poor rainy seasons.³⁶ In 2020 a similar assessment revealed that Harare accounted for 50% of the national population that was food insecure, further reinforcing the urban dimensions of climate change-induced adverse rainfall pattern variations in the country.³⁷ Poor drainage in the capital of Harare has also failed to contain heavy downpours with the 2021 season's rains, destroying housing and displacing affected residents in one of the high-density (low-income) suburbs in the city.³⁸ These interconnected challenges underscore the centrality of multiple nexuses and actors within the city's sub-systems which the African Cities Research Consortium is focused on with its political settlement and city of systems analysis approaches.

Figure 3. Area sizes showing changes in land use cover for Harare



Source: Marondedze and Schütt (2019)³⁹

³⁴ Marondedze. and Schütt (2019).

³⁵ Brown and Chasokela. (2019).

³⁶ Government of Zimbabwe (2019).

³⁷ Government of Zimbabwe (2020).

³⁸ Gwaze (2021); and Mhlanga (2021).

³⁹ Marondedze and Schütt (2019).

NATIONAL-LOCAL POLITICAL CONTESTATIONS IN HARARE

Zimbabwe's political landscape remains predominantly dualised with ZANU-PF controlling rural areas while the MDC enjoys comfortable support in cities and the attendant struggles manifest in urban governance processes.⁴⁰ Central-local contestations have significantly altered administration of urban centres in Zimbabwe.⁴¹ The ruling party, ZANU-PF has been accused of using national level institutions, especially the Ministry of Local Government to influence local authorities and in some cases even invoking questionable ministerial powers to arbitrarily depose elected urban councils.⁴²

Whimsical debt cancellations by the Ministry of Local Government which cost Harare two years' revenue is an example of centre-led interventionist politics that plunged service delivery into chaos in 2013.⁴³ A poor institutional framework has contributed to poor service delivery.⁴⁴ The intended political objective of these manoeuvres has been to win back the urban vote, but the status of the electoral space has not fundamentally changed since the entry of MDC in 1999 on the political scene. The net effect of these centre-local tensions has been the continued deterioration of urban services which has resulted in frequent water cuts, sewage blockages and dilapidated road infrastructure. The 2008 cholera outbreak in Harare, which resulted in nearly 5000 deaths nationwide, can be attributed to the city's urban crises and issues within the social services function managed by urban councils.

POLITICAL CONTESTATIONS AND THE IMPLICATIONS ON EXCLUSION

Elections in urban centres have also been rendered inconsequential as elected officials are frequently frustrated, suspended or in some instances expelled for political reasons.⁴⁵ This intentional disruption of urban governance processes has, in turn, generated multiple informalities. Informal power structures that are either officially or unofficially controlled by ZANU-PF have emerged, setting the scene for parallel arrangements for urban services provision. In addition, self-provisioning of urban services by residents frustrated by the incapacitated urban councils has also led to the emergence of informal settlements. Old housing facilities built during pre-colonial times in suburbs like Mbare have, for instance, seen the collapse of aging water and sanitation systems.⁴⁶ At the end of July 2008, the country's inflation rate hit a record high of 231 million percent.⁴⁷ In 2016 a citywide slum profiling and participatory mapping exercise had produced an updated list of 63 informal settlements within the capital.⁴⁸ Yet, this was ten years after the 2005 nationwide Operation Murambatsvina ("Drive-Out-Filth") which evicted and displaced 700,000 people in informal housing in urban centres.⁴⁹ More recently, in 2019 Harare was ranked amongst the three provinces with the lowest average household income out of the country's ten provinces, with an average of US\$55.31/month against an average total consumption poverty line of US\$101.06.⁵⁰ These trends are expected to continue and worsen as a result of Covid-19.⁵¹

40 Marumahoko et al. (2020); and Mushamba (2010).

41 Muchadenyika and Williams (2020)

42 McGregor (2013).

43 Marumahoko et al. (2020).

44 Nhapi. (2009).

45 McGregor (2013).

46 Dialogue on Shelter Trust, Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and City of Harare (2014). Harare Slum Profile Report, Harare Slum Upgrading Project.

47 Multi Donor Trust Fund – MDTF (2008). Zimbabwe Emergency Recovery Program, Draft 2, September, Harare.

48 Dialogue on Shelter Trust, Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and City of Harare (2014). Harare Slum Profile Report, Harare Slum Upgrading Project

49 Tibaijuka, A. K. (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. New York: United Nations.

50 Government of Zimbabwe (2019). Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) 2019 Urban Livelihoods Assessment.

51 World Bank (2020).

AFRICAN CITIES RESEARCH CONSORTIUM: POTENTIAL ADDED VALUE IN HARARE

The contested nature of Zimbabwean politics has contributed to intractable service delivery challenges in cities, including Harare. While social and physical infrastructure have been adversely affected in Harare, land access has been the most politicised. These challenges necessitate serious policy and practice-related shifts that are buttressed by tested research. The African Cities Research Consortium's action research initiative anchored on the two theoretical frameworks – city of systems and political settlement analysis – has been crafted to respond to these complex urban challenges. Political settlement analysis, for instance, and its key notions of coalitions, capacity and context has potential to help extend understandings of Harare's challenges beyond the immediacy of particular political contestations.⁵²

Similarly, the city of systems approach which views the city as a series of inter-related systems, (for example water, transportation, education) draws attention to the interconnected nature of the complex problems bedeviling cities. In Harare, this can include how informalised and politicised land access practices are crucially influencing the city's materiality. The introduction of the concept of domains representing arenas of power, policy, practice and knowledge production will illuminate the contested framings and strategic alliances animating urbanisation in Harare. These domains are occupied by different actors with varied interests and ideas, and will include land-use, housing and informal settlements.



Source: Pixabay/toubibe

⁵² Chigwata (2019); Muchadenyika, and Williams (2020).

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