

Harare: City report

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Abstract

This report pulls together research outputs produced by the African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) team in Harare. The report draws insights from domain studies conducted in the capital, namely: land and connectivity; neighbourhood and district economic development; structural transformation; and informal settlement domains. The study presents political settlement and systems lenses as key analytical tools for understanding how domains operate and hence how cities at large function. The report's key objectives are to synthesise key findings from specific reports on political settlements, city systems and domains; provide an overarching analysis of the political economy of development in Harare; and identify the priorities for future action research and interventions in Harare. The report contends that the City of Harare finds itself in a national context within which the political settlement could be characterised as “narrow concentrated”. Notwithstanding opposition dominance, the report argues that the capital constitutes a complex political terrain inundated with manifold unofficial powerbrokers. The report proceeds to show how this not only produces development challenges but also helps imagine potential pathways towards unlocking transformative progress in the City of Harare. The systems study findings shared in this report have illuminated the contested and contingent nature of urban systems. The report advances that urban systems are arenas for contestation, as parties fight to extract economic and political advantage. A case of the contentious central government-led Pomona Waste Management deal is presented to illustrate this. The example highlights how parallel power structures counter formal city governance arrangements in the pursuit of rents. The report concludes by noting that further inquiry could spotlight specific conditions that catalyse and sustain elite commitment, so as to establish and set the City of Harare on enduring transformative urban pathways.

Keywords: Political settlement, urban systems, reform coalitions, informal settlements, elite commitment, domains

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Acronyms

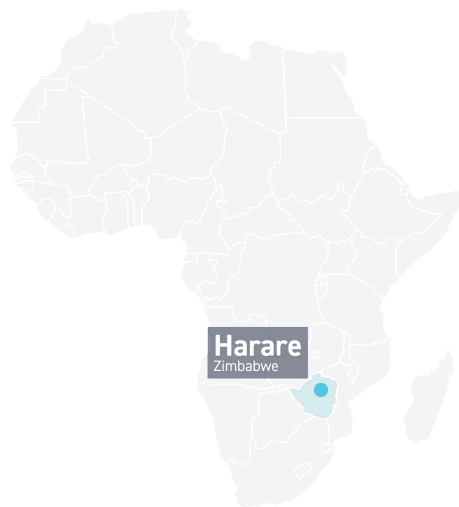
ACRC	African Cities Research Consortium
CCC	Citizens Coalition for Change
COWs	Consolidating opposition wards
FGDs	Focus group discussions
GDO	Gross domestic product
HMEs	Household microenterprises
HSUFF	Harare Slum Upgrading Finance Facility
IS	Informal settlements domain
LC	Land and connectivity domain
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-Alliance	Movement for Democratic Change Alliance
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai
MSMEs	Micro, small and medium enterprises
NDED	Neighbourhood and district economic development domain
NDS1	National Development Strategy 1
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NLB	Native Land Board
NOB	National Opposition Block
OPC	Office of the President and Cabinet
PCP	Priority complex problems
SDI Zimbabwe	Slum Dwellers International Zimbabwe
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
ST	Structural transformation domain
UDCORP	Urban Development Corporation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VISET	Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

ZINARA	Zimbabwe National Road Authority
ZINWA	Zimbabwe National Water Authority
ZNHSP	Zimbabwe National Human Settlements Policy
ZUPCO	Zimbabwe United Passenger Company

1. Introduction and overview

Globally, cities continue to witness growing urbanisation. In African cities, urban growth has typically unfolded amidst serious infrastructure systems gaps and decay, producing varied modes of informality. On the land tenure front, informal land occupations in contexts of inadequate formal housing and tenure options have resulted in informal settlements. Meanwhile, on the economic front, similar processes – compounded by

Figure 1: Map showing the geographic location of Harare

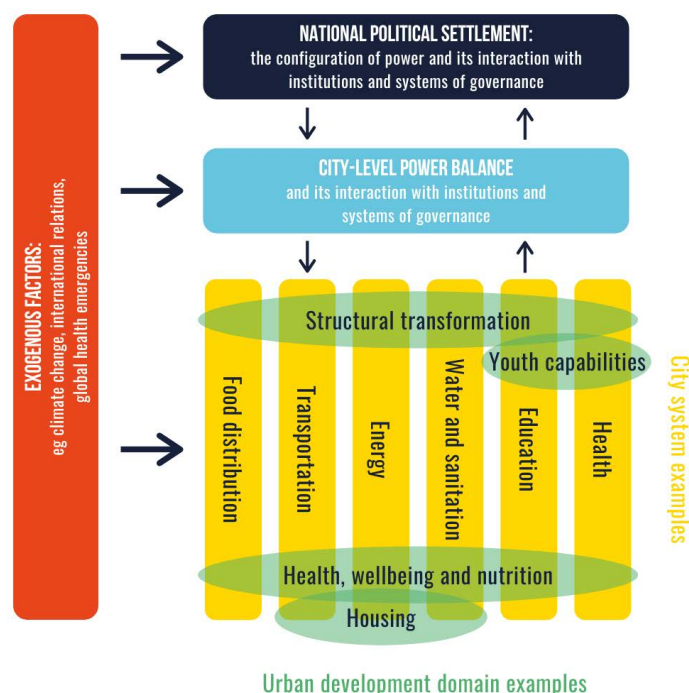


the absence of overarching urban transformation programmes – have seen the proliferation of informal household microenterprises (HMEs). In Harare, these urban realities have been further worsened by a context of contested urban politics, a gaping need for inclusive urban reforms, and deepening macroeconomic challenges.

This study – commissioned by the African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) – explores the structural challenges blocking urban transformation in Harare. It draws on the ACRC's holistic framework for analysing urban development in Africa, which has three integrated

components – **politics, systems** and **development domains**. The politics component uses “political settlements” theory to model how power is configured at the national and city levels, and then analyses how these configurations of power shape (and are shaped by) urban development processes in the given city. The systems component analyses the functioning of the key systems (composed of physical infrastructure and people organised in various ways) that sustain and/or improve urban life in the city. The domains component looks at some of the distinct fields of discourse, policy and practice that have formed around complex, intersystemic development challenges in the city, and analyses how the actors (political, bureaucratic, professional, and popular) engaged in these fields collaborate and/or compete for authority. Figure 2 below gives an indication of how these three components come together.

Figure 2: ACRC's conceptual framework



The study applies this framework by, firstly, examining Harare's place within the national "narrow concentrated" political settlement (Section 2), and the balance of power at city level (Section 3). It then moves on to the political economy of Harare's urban systems (Section 4), explaining how and why they experience multiple constraints: formal channels have become overwhelmed, failing to deliver at a scale that matches demand, paving the way for informal self-provisioning models. Often, the latter have either been resented or criminalised. Politics has also permeated urban systems provisioning by pitting Harare council against the central government; for example, there have been fierce political contestations around waste management and water systems. Urban councils in Zimbabwe are predominantly held by opposition parties and this holds true for Harare – a situation that has often been untenable for the ruling party. Politics has, therefore, consistently been employed to disrupt opposition control of local government and reconfigure the power balance. Yet at the same time, politicians across the political divide – who espouse different policy positions in public – often privately collude to accumulate rents.

In Section 5, the study investigates four domains:

- Informal settlements (IS);
- Land and connectivity (LC);
- Neighbourhood and district economic development (NDED); and
- Structural transformation (ST).

Domains in Harare, as with urban systems, have also exhibited structural challenges. For virtually all four domains, informality was cited as a binding constraint, hence the recommendations made in this study for council-led integration, regulation and institutionalisation of informal practices. Crucially, this study has also demonstrated that a politically nuanced stance is key when approaching priority complex problems in Harare. Land, for instance, constitutes a political resource, making it imperative to analyse the main actors involved in this domain as well as the power they wield and how this is deployed for political ends. Understanding urban politics and how power dynamics play out in Harare through a political settlements lens helps to cast light on how certain urban reform agendas are likely to be supported, while others may be resisted. This holistic understanding is summed up in Section 6, and implications for future research are elaborated in Section 7.

This ACRC study employed a range of methods, including focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews, and workshops. In a clear departure from traditional academic research, it adopted a community-knowledge approach, in which the researched groups of low-income urban residents were meaningfully involved throughout the research process: they helped to formulate the research agenda, design the research tools, collect data and critically engage with findings. The research in Harare coincided with the March 2022 by-elections and preparations for the 2023 harmonised elections, presenting significant access challenges for most study sites, such as the Crowborough Paddocks and Churu Farm informal settlements. To navigate this methodological hurdle, some of the FGDs and key informant interviews took place virtually, or were hosted outside the targeted neighbourhood.

2. Harare's position in Zimbabwe's political settlement and governance structure

To understand urban development and prospects for developmental reform in Harare, we need to understand who wields power and how they use it. City-level power dynamics do not exist in a vacuum; they are typically influenced by what we call the country's "political settlement". A political settlement is a common understanding among a society's most powerful groups about the basic rules (or institutions) of the political and economic game. Those rules create opportunities or benefits for "insider" groups, often to the exclusion of "outsiders".

Political settlements can be analysed in a variety of ways, but we focus on two main dimensions: *power configuration* and *social foundation*.

The power configuration describes the relative strength of groups loyal to the leader (collectively referred to as the "leader's bloc") vis-a-vis groups that oppose the leader or are only contingently loyal. Crudely, where the leader's bloc is strong, we say that power is "concentrated". Where, by contrast, the leader's bloc is weak, we say that power is "dispersed". Power concentration, interacting with other variables, shapes the ability of the government to make and implement decisive, consistent urban development policy.

The social foundation describes the breadth and depth of groups that are “insiders” to the settlement.¹ Where a relatively large proportion of the population are insiders, we describe the settlement as “broad”. Where, conversely, only a relatively small proportion of the population are “insiders”, we describe the settlement as “narrow”. The social foundation, interacting with other variables, will shape the degree to which governing elites are committed to ‘inclusive’ urban development policy.²

The current political settlement of Zimbabwe can be characterised as “narrow concentrated”. Much political analysis to date has had a focus on the national rather than the sub-national scale. In this section, we analyse how this political settlement has historically shaped urban development in Harare, and currently shapes the city’s prospects for reform.

Since independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has experienced multiple and often contradictory transitions, including its political transition from colonial/minority rule to post-colonial/majority rule, and a slide back from democratic to autocratic rule. It has also experienced a socioeconomic transition, going from providing limited socioeconomic franchise as a welfare state for the white minority, to a more comprehensive and inclusive socioeconomic institutional framework that caters for the previously neglected majority black population (Mkandawire, 2011). As a post-colonial state in formation, Zimbabwe was characterised by intense contestations at national and local levels, politically and developmentally. These contestations have had a tremendous impact on the nature and practice of governance and the distributional effects of politics, due to the mediation of access to political and socioeconomic opportunities, power and political development at national and local levels.

In November 2017, Zimbabwe experienced a seismic political transition. The 2017 events highlighted fissures and contests within the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party, and showed that while contests for political power and national governance are overtly civilian affairs, the military in Zimbabwe has played a decisive role in determining who governs. The 2017 political developments led to a different transitional epoch in Zimbabwe, characterised by a ruling party in flux and the emergence of a (re)new(ed) political settlement anchored on a military–nationalist–business alliance consisting of the military command, senior political leaders in the ZANU-PF party, and businesspeople allied to the new ruling elites. Given the uncertainty that comes with transitional periods, Zimbabwe’s political settlement since the shift has vacillated between transitional and semi-settled.

1 To be an “insider”, a group has to satisfy two criteria: 1) it is potentially powerful enough, acting alone or with others, to make significant trouble for the leadership and/or significantly affect struggles between political blocs; and 2) the leadership chooses to manage this potential threat predominantly by “co-opting” the group, and thereby incorporating it into the settlement, by channelling benefits of some description to it. Groups that either lack the power to affect struggles in this way, or that are predominantly repressed by the leadership, are “outsiders” to the settlement.

2 For further details see Kelsall et al. (2021).

2.1. Key relationships between the ruling coalition and Harare

The relationship between City of Harare and the national government is dominated by tensions between elected officials and appointed officials (the provincial secretary and sometimes employed officials) who usually operate as appendages of the national government. There are also direct contestations between central government ministers and elected city councillors.

The arrest, suspension and re-arrests of the mayor of Harare characterise the relationship between the city and the national government.³ There is a constant fight to control tender processes. The city is an important symbol of power to the political elite, who view it as a source of rents and patronage for their foot-soldiers and aligned businesspeople. During a mapping workshop with civil society in Harare, participants intimated that political parties had no local governance agenda, leading to the election of unaccountable and poorly performing councillors. In the face of electoral defeat, ZANU-PF has used vigilante groups to control prices of basic foodstuffs and the allocation of vending bays, and to control car parks, land and space throughout Harare. These ZANU-PF structures informally control vending spaces allocations and revenue collection, which they do not remit to the council. Council officials are unable to enforce byelaws when dealing with these powerful people. Elite influence is critical in the city – elites from the then Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC-Alliance)⁴ control their councillors and the policies they formulate, while the Ministry of Local Government and ZANU-PF rule through coercive power and bureaucracy.

The City of Harare has a massive stock of commercial and lucrative residential land, which provides rents to the ruling elites. Both ZANU-PF party officials and the opposition MDC-Alliance have also been accused of the illegal sale of council land.⁵ One example is the sale of part of Harare Gardens measuring 2.2 hectares at US\$80.00 per square metre to the hospitality group, Africa Sun, in 2016. According to McGregor and Chatiza (2020), party structures and youth vigilante groups are also monitoring new peri-urban settlements: ZANU-PF interests are not only political; financial revenue streams from land sales and rents are being diverted from the city and into party coffers and politicians' pockets. Without the cooperation of local authority officials, it may not be possible to divert resources intended for City of Harare to individuals. The extent of ZANU-PF elite accumulation based on urban land within city

3 Harare Mayor, Jacob Mafume, has been arrested several times, including on account of allegations of criminal abuse of office.

4 The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (1999-2005) was a Zimbabwean political party organised under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai as an opposition party to ZANU-PF. In 2005, the party split into two factions: the Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and the Movement for Democratic Change – Ncube (MDC-N). In 2018, the two factions rejoined as part of the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance, an electoral coalition of seven political parties formed to contest Zimbabwe's 2018 general election. Post-2018 elections, further infighting, which others have attributed to ZANU-PF, resulted in bonafide leaders of the MDC Alliance being hunted out and ended up forming the Citizens Coalition for Change, led by Nelson Chamisa in 2022.

5 See, for example, Harare Open Council (2011).

borders became clear during post-2000, thanks to a land audit conducted by the MDC-T council. The audit documented illegal deals and directly blamed the minister responsible for local government, Ignatius Chombo, and a network of ZANU-PF-connected businesspeople and companies during the period when the city was run by a commission.⁶

The city has tenders and other lucrative business opportunities that can be accessed by the ruling elite. These run into the millions of US dollars. For example, the City of Harare purchases water chemicals in excess of US\$2.5 million each month, as well as stationary, vehicle spares and refuse collection trucks, among other products. In addition to the rents generated through the City of Harare procurement processes, tenders are also awarded to private businesses and individuals linked to ZANU-PF elites, giving them access to huge contracts on council projects. These corporate entities can be allocated contracts either by the OPC, the minister or council at the instruction from the presidium.⁷

The City of Harare also has subsidiary businesses such as Rufaro Marketing, Harare Quarry, City Parking and Sunshine Holdings – all of which generate huge opportunities for rent. In 2019, for instance, corruption and inefficiency were reported to have cost City of Harare US\$30 million. These opportunities have fuelled corruption which has persisted openly through business cartels, nepotistic government contracts awarding, and specific “troughs” of state funds, such as agricultural inputs in Command Agriculture⁸ or contracts for Covid-19 responses. Kudakwashe Tagwirei, a business tycoon closely linked to the ruling party, has been a major recipient of tenders in Zimbabwe through his various subsidiary companies. The City of Harare issued a tender to FAW Zimbabwe – a subsidiary of Massbreed Investments linked to Kudakwashe Tagwirei – to supply refuse collection trucks. The company failed to supply the trucks, despite being paid in full and, in the process, the council lost over US\$1,800,000 (Business Daily, 2019). Apart from this deal, in 2022, Tagwirei’s Sakunda Holdings was awarded a tender under a Build, Operate and Transfer Arrangement over the Rufaro City Stadium. The transaction was later reversed by the opposition CCC-led council, which considered the deal less favourable for the local authority. The stadium is owned by City of Harare and was condemned by the Zimbabwe International Football Association board in 2020 (Madzokere, 2022).⁹

6 City of Harare (2010). Special investigations committee’s report on City of Harare’s land sale, leases and exchanges from the period 2004 to December 2009. Presented by Councillor W Dumba of the Special Committee.

7 Harare Metropolitan Civic Society Mapping Workshop, 9 March 2022.

8 Command Agriculture is a national programme that funds both the private and public sector.

9 The Rufaro Stadium Upgrading deal was between City of Harare and Sakunda Holdings – a private entity which has links with ZANU-PF. Under the deal, a “Build Operate and Transfer” model was proposed through which plastic buckets seats would be installed in the stadium, while in return Sakunda Holdings would then operate the stadium, getting revenue for the next 30 years.

National–local contestations in Harare have typically manifested in, but are not limited to, the following areas:

1. **Blurred roles between various local government structures:** The lack of clarity on the roles of elected leaders (councillors), employed leaders (bureaucrats) and the appointed officials (from the Office of the Minister of Provincial Affairs and Devolution) remains a constant source of conflict between central government and city elites.
2. **Dual reporting structures for town clerks:** While town clerks are expected to report to policymakers/councillors and operate through council resolutions, there is an emerging trend where town clerks unprocedurally receive directives from the minister for implementation.
3. **Approval of local authority decisions:** The budget approval process remains a strong source of conflict between central government and local elites. Central government has previously used the approval of budgets as leverage through which the minister deploys Section 314 of the Urban Councils Act to challenge or rescind council decisions.
4. **Procurement and tender processes:** Tender processes remain a huge arena for conflict, precisely because both local elites and central government want to control the process. The introduction of the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA) into the scheme also ensures that central government has a say, especially in public–private partnerships (PPPs), procurement and tender-awarding processes.
5. **Employment of senior council staff:** While local authorities (through councillors) interview and shortlist senior council employees, final appointments are made by central government through the local government minister. On several occasions, central government has either ignored recommendations from councillors or ordered that recruitment processes be restarted.¹⁰ A classic example is when the Minister of Local Government blocked the appointment of the town clerk in 2016, on account of flouting what were termed “normal procedures”.
6. **Clearance of non-state collaborations:** Even though City of Harare constitutes an autonomous local authority, it still requires clearance from OPC to engage or collaborate with non-state actors, such as non-governmental organisations.

2.2. City-level power concentration and social foundation

Electoral politics in Harare has been dominated by the opposition since the turn of the century. The ruling party, using its control of central government, has responded by using a litany of strategies to maintain control of the city. This has included suspending elected mayors, introducing commissions and abolishing the post of executive mayor.

Opposition dominance and resultant party alignment have in fact changed in quality and extent over time, but the opposition continues to dominate electoral politics in Harare: MDC in 2000, MDC-T in 2008 and 2013, MDC-Alliance in 2018, and the

¹⁰ In 2003, for instance, Mayor of Harare, Engineer Elias Mudzuri, was unceremoniously dismissed on grounds of “dereliction of duty” by the Minister of Local Government, Ignatius Chombo.

Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) in 2022. Over the last three major local authority elections in Harare, the opposition has dominated the ruling party, ZANU-PF. This dominance increased markedly from 2013 to 2018. In 2013, the opposition controlled 55 (71%) of wards in Harare Met Province and 39 (85%) in City of Harare; in 2018, it controlled 71 (91%) in Harare Met and 45 (98%) in City of Harare (see Table 1).

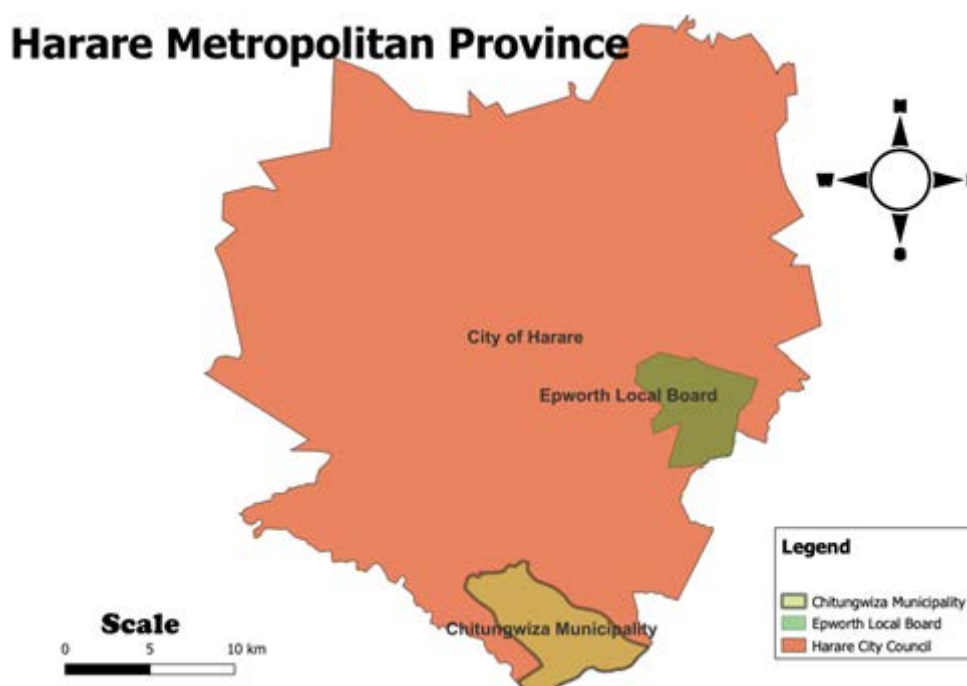
Table 1: Party political alignment in Harare (2013 and 2018 elections)

Election	Party alignment over two elections			
	Opposition		Ruling party	
	No. of wards	Percentage	No. of wards	Percentage
2013 Council seats Harare Met	55	71%	23	29%
2013 Council seats City of Harare	39	85%	7	15%
2018 Council seats Harare Met	71	91%	7	9%
2018 Council seats City of Harare	45	98%	1	2%

Source: Lewanika (2022).

The situation on the ground is more complex in terms of partisan alignment across wards. Despite its dominance, at a provincial level in 2013, the opposition only had six strongholds out of 78 wards (see Table 2). However, it increased its strongholds in 2018 from six to 12 wards. Most wards in Harare Metropolitan Province and City of Harare in 2013 and 2018 were consolidating opposition wards (COWs) (where the opposition was winning with margins of 30–49%). In 2013, these wards constituted 41%, increasing to 60.2% in 2018.

Figure 3: Map showing Harare Metropolitan Province



Source: Dialogue on Shelter Trust (2023), adapted from Google Maps.

Table 2: Electoral constituency type, Harare Metropolitan Province (2013 and 2018 elections)¹¹

	2013		2018	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Opposition stronghold	6	7.7%	12	15.3%
Consolidating opposition wards (COWs)	32	41%	47	60.2%
Marginal opposition wards (MOWs)	0	0	0	0
Battleground	33	42.3%	17	21.7%
ZANU-PF stronghold	1	1.3%	0	0
Consolidating ZANU-PF wards (CZW)	6	7.7%	2	2.6%
Marginal ZANU-PF wards (MZW)	0	0	0	0

Source: Lewanika (2022).

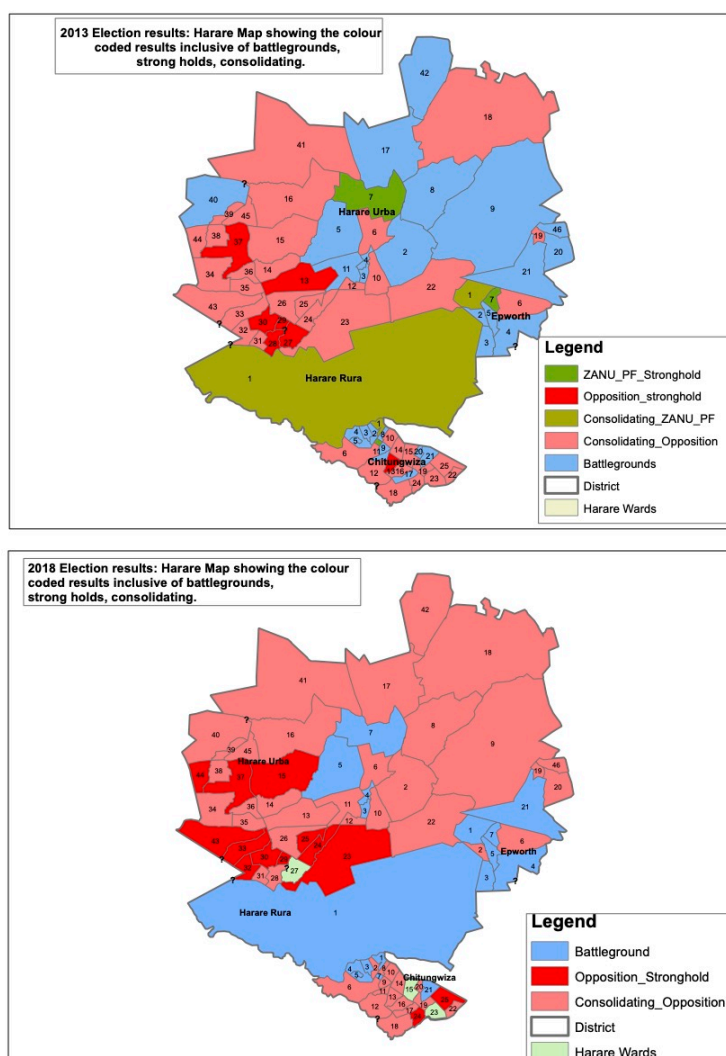
At the City of Harare level, COWs constituted 54% in 2013, reaching 61% in 2018. Strongholds at this level remained at six (the same as the provincial level), going up to 12 out of 46 in 2018. ZANU-PF electoral support at this level is lower than at the

¹¹ Strongholds refer to electoral outcomes where the margin of victory is over 50%; consolidating opposition wards have a margin of victory between 25% and 49%; and marginal opposition wards/battleground have a margin of victory of 24% or below.

provincial level, retaining one stronghold in 2013, losing it in 2018, and also going down from one consolidating ward in 2013 to none in 2018. The absence of any ZANU-PF ward-type dominance in 2018 at the city level, and only 2.6% at the provincial level, would suggest total opposition dominance in Harare across levels (see Figure 3 for map of Harare Metropolitan Province).

However, this is not necessarily the case. Outside COWs, Harare's second-largest ward constituency type at both city and provincial levels is the "battleground" ward, where neither winning party earned more than 20% of the vote. In 2013, battleground wards accounted for 42% and 28.2% of all wards at the provincial and city levels, respectively, and 21.7% and 13% in 2018. This means that Harare is not a tale of two extremes, where the opposition support is all-encompassing and ZANU-PFs non-existent. According to the 2018 election results, at least 13% of Harare is heavily contested, increasing to over a fifth at the provincial level. This contestation is depicted in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Harare election results, 2013 and 2018



Source: Lewanika (2022). Harare's role within the country's development strategy.

Cities constitute a formidable catalytic force with the potential for driving economic development and growth (UN-Habitat, 2012), despite concentrations of poverty. In November 2020, Zimbabwe adopted an economic blueprint, the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1). NDS1 is consistent with a collective agenda to achieve an empowered and prosperous upper-middle-income society by 2030 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). While Harare is not specifically mentioned within NDS1, as the country's sociopolitical and economic capital, its contribution towards the strategy is uncontested.

For instance, the strategy cites urban local authorities as strategic partners with the capacity to contribute towards infrastructure and utilities development. Reinforcing the centrality of councils and hence Harare in the economic roadmap, Chitumba (2021) acknowledges that local authorities have a critical function in attaining provincial gross domestic product (GDP) targets and socioeconomic aspirations under NDS1. However, this expectation creates challenges, especially given central government's failure to remit statutory budgetary allocations to enable councils such as Harare to deliver on their infrastructure mandate.

Two examples help to illustrate the contradiction of urban councils' "unfunded mandates" in relation to national development frameworks. Firstly, Harare, for instance, has received inadequate or zero disbursements from Zimbabwe National Roads Authority (ZINARA) for road infrastructure investments. In 2021, City of Harare reported that it received only 17.5% of the total budget required to finance planned roadworks. Secondly, despite the provision for allocating 5% of the national budget to councils as part of devolution funds, central government has characteristically delayed or diverted these allocations at the expense of council infrastructure priorities. In 2022, City of Harare threatened to approach courts over the delays in devolution disbursements, as the allocations end up being eroded by inflation. However, the Zimbabwean government has publicly stated that the success of NDS1 is underpinned by the capacity of decentralised local government to meet its infrastructural targets (Marumahoko and Nhede, 2021).

2.3. Centre–local politics and implications for development processes in Harare

Development and politics are interwoven in Harare. While the opposition controls local government in Harare, ZANU-PF dominates the central state in the country. As the capital city, Harare draws an array of divergent political and economic interests, setting the stage for intense contestations around development programmes.

Over the years, a multiplicity of actors representing these varied agendas has emerged in Harare. Besides City of Harare and the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, state-owned enterprises, private-sector entities, politically connected elites and vigilante youth groups have all become powerbrokers mediating development trajectories in Harare. Essentially, this means that even though armed with an electoral mandate, the opposition-dominated council of Harare has had to contend with other

powerful and yet unofficial groups when executing decisions relating to development processes. Invariably, even though these unofficial groups may present a development facade, they have their own political and extractive agendas that run counter to Harare's governance authority over development programmes (see Box 1).

Box 1: Parallel powerbrokers in Harare

- **Government ministries:** The central state has repeatedly maximised the role of the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works as the parent ministry for local authorities to interfere or frustrate Harare's development processes. This includes suspensions of elected opposition leaders, delays or outright refusal to approve Harare's annual budgets.
- **State-owned enterprises:** Local government development functions have been transferred to quasi-government entities, also known as parastatals. A classic example is the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA). ZINWA took over water management functions from Harare between 2006 and 2009. The collection of vehicle tariffs by ZINARA has been designed to realise the same objective.
- **Public-private partnerships:** Under this arrangement, private bodies with veiled connections to ruling party elites have been imposed on Harare under the pretext of advancing a public-private partnership agenda. These partnerships have been touted as rescue-like interventions to improve service delivery to Harare's residents. The Pomona waste-management deal fronted by private company Geogenix BV is one example.¹²
- **Vigilante youth groups:** Politically connected and extrajudicial youth groups have been used systematically to disrupt "opposition-led" development programmes in Harare. These youth groups have transformed into pseudo revenue-collection structures, in some instances allocating and taking levies for council market stalls and rental housing. Chipangano is one such militant politically linked youth group that has terrorised Mbare suburb in Harare,¹³ stopping a council-led multi-million-dollar slum-upgrading project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- **Appointed commissions:** Historically, whenever the minister of local government and public works has suspended Harare's elected council, this has been followed by the establishment of a commission to run the city. All commissioners appointed have either had political connections with ZANU-PF or are malleable. For example, the Sekesai Makwavarara-led commission was established in 2003, following the suspension of an elected council led by Mayor Engineer Mudzuri in the same year. These commissions have predictably promoted a ZANU-PF agenda while implementing development programmes.
- **Pliant opposition politicians:** The ruling party has also occasionally used or relied on pliant opposition councillors, who have switched allegiances to either disrupt or interfere with development processes in Harare. In certain instances, this has entailed adopting resolutions conflicting with the council's and its residents' development agenda (such as the controversial Geogenix BV waste management deal signed off by pro-ruling party opposition councillors in line with the central government's position to endorse joint venture projects).

The dynamics outlined in Box 1 illustrate how contested development governance is in Harare. Furthermore, the contestations reinforce the position of Harare as an arena for rents and political capital. Implementing development programmes in Harare has been

¹² See, for example, ZIMCDD (2022).

¹³ See, for example, www.pindula.co.zw/Chipangano

marked by huge uncertainties and resistance from the central state, which is, in effect, the locus of real power, as demonstrated by different successful manoeuvres employed to dictate the course of development in Harare.

This seemingly paints a picture of the City of Harare as an inconsequential and anaemic institution. But it still wields considerable power to regulate and define development pathways for its approximately 4 million residents. Outside of an intrusive central state, Harare has had some latitude to decide on substantial development projects, which have subsequently been implemented by the local authority. The 2012 Budiro Housing Project in partnership with the Central African Building Society that built 3,000 homes is a prime example of how the local authority could meet the needs of its population, albeit the project has been criticised of failure to meet needs of low-income urban residents, with a two-roomed housing unit costing an average US\$25,000.00.

The City of Harare has been able to secure technical and financial support for water and sanitation programmes through collaborations with agencies such as the Dutch-based Vitens Evides International (VEI) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Another partnership project is the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-funded Harare Slum Upgrading Project, amounting to US\$5 million in 2012. These projects emphasise the institutional agency of Harare, despite central state restrictions. The local authority still has a fair measure of autonomy to chart its own trajectory towards more positive urban development outcomes.

3. City-level power balance and governance

This section discusses how power is distributed between diverse actors across scales within the political settlement in Zimbabwe and the City of Harare, the form that sub-city and everyday politics play in shaping development challenges and solutions, and the broader implications for governing city development.

3.1. Decentralisation and the devolution of power

Decentralisation is a broad concept, which the World Bank (2013) defines as the transfer of “authority and responsibility of major government functions from central to sub-national governments – including local governments, civil society, and the private sector”. Devolution is a particularly strong kind of decentralisation. Whereas decentralisation can simply mean relocating some administrative functions from central to local government, devolution implies a substantive transfer of power from central to local levels. The central government has shown a reluctance to commit to proper devolution.¹⁴

Post-colonial decentralisation in Zimbabwe has resulted in de-racialisation but not democratisation. Local government institutions have little autonomy, with excessive central government interference. Often the decentralisation drive has not been

¹⁴ Zimbabwe's Devolution and Decentralisation Policy – August 2020.

matched with sufficient capacity strengthening at local government level. Decentralisation has also failed to facilitate effective citizen participation in local governance; it has strengthened upward accountability of local authorities to the executive and central state, instead of downward accountability from local authorities to citizens.

In 2009-2013, the Government of National Unity (GNU) period, devolution of power was presented as the answer to socioeconomic and political horizontal-cum-ethno-regional disparities. The fight for devolution was notionally won through its inclusion in the constitution. Section 264(1) envisages three tiers of government (national, metro and provincial councils, and local authorities) as part of Constitutional Amendment 20 of 2013. However, the ruling party's notion of devolution is essentially delegation with a preference towards using the broad concept of decentralisation, rather than devolution. The government has done little to implement the constitutional provisions on devolution and stands accused of prevarication (Khumalo and Moyo, 2020).

The debate on the efficacy of devolution and decentralisation is ongoing. Despite popular traction and constitutional requirements, there are considerable centre–local tensions arising from continued central government interference in the affairs of the City of Harare, with central government accused of introducing provincial affairs ministers as a way to bring back the centralised structures that had been rejected by Zimbabweans. While the framing in Chapter 14 of the Constitution clearly refers to devolution, the National Devolution and Decentralisation (NDD) policy launched on 21 July 2020 also refers to other terms, including decentralisation, reconcentration and delegation.

Thus, in Harare, devolution is not realised in practice. Instead, accountability flows from the City of Harare upward towards the central state through its appointed delegates or contracted entities. Whilst in theory there are arrangements for downward accountability, as implied by the commitment to devolution, there is a lack of requisite legislation to operationalise devolution structures such as provincial councils. Meanwhile, at the local authority level, governance structures to help support the devolution agenda are weak.

3.2. Centre–local understandings of devolution and decentralisation

Devolution in Zimbabwe remains contested in terms of the nomenclature, principles, nature and implementation. While many sections of the Urban Councils Act are now unconstitutional, central government has for nine years refused to reform it. For instance, in a judgement delivered on 11 January 2023, the High Court ruled that Section 314 of the Urban Councils Act is unconstitutional. Section 314 gives the Minister of Local Government powers to direct councils to rescind their decisions, providing latitude for central state meddling in the affairs of opposition-run councils. Through Constitutional Amendment Bill Number 1, Zimbabwe abolished the role of mayors in both Harare and Bulawayo metropolitan provinces in 2017. Harare

Metropolitan Council would have been chaired by the mayor in terms of Section 269(1)(b) of the Constitution.

In a mapping workshop with residents' associations in Harare, one participant argued that the changes to the leadership composition of provincial councils through amendments to the Constitution have strengthened the influence of the Office of the Minister for Provincial Affairs and Devolution in Harare and the designation of the former provincial affairs coordinator to secretary of provincial affairs and devolution in Harare Metropolitan Province.¹⁵ Various local government stakeholders doubt the genuineness of devolution in Zimbabwe. One respondent said,

The major problem is that the party that pushed for devolution in the Constitution did not get the opportunity to implement it. The people that won the election were anti-devolution and are doing everything to ensure that it is as diluted as possible.

Some City of Harare councillors allege that central government is creating structures to undermine the operations of provincial councils such as the Harare Metropolitan Council. The provincial secretary is a political post appointed by the national president, answering to the chief secretary in the OPC. The terms of reference for this post are ambiguous and the provincial secretary is found meddling in every structure in the province, such as councils, and he/she works with development partners such as NGOs. The provincial secretary can also bypass and override council resolutions, especially if they are perceived to be in favour of opposition and against the interests of the ruling party, ZANU-PF. A classic example is when the provincial secretary issued a directive ordering the demolition of vending stalls and informal-sector structures in the City of Harare. The provincial affairs minister and the provincial affairs secretary are presidential appointees. They have replaced the functions of provincial councils and report directly to the president. The abolition of provincial councils has seen a recentralisation of power from local authorities to central government.

Residents' associations also believe that central government's failure to allocate adequate funds and timely disbursements also mean that City of Harare ends up failing to fulfil its development mandates. These views are not well received by the central government. It believes that residents' associations are opposition allies. This reluctance to receive civic inputs and critical feedback on the part of the central government is attributable to notions of their perceived opposition founding.

The rise and the influence of civil society in urban areas is largely attributed to the state's failure to deliver on its mandate. NGO influence has grown, and an urban cooperative movement has flourished to fill the ever-growing gaps in state housing and service provision (Chitekwe-Biti and Mitlin, 2001; Chitekwe-Biti, 2009). More importantly, the rise of NGOs against the backdrop of declining fortunes of state institutions amidst deepening socioeconomic challenges has led to perceptions within the national elite that the former are adversarial. McGregor and Chatiza (2020) argue that throughout the 1990s, the ruling party lost its hegemony over the city's broader

¹⁵ Harare Metropolitan Province councillors mapping workshop, 17 February 2022.

sociopolitical movements: trade unions, students and war veterans emerged as vocal critics of neoliberalism, the ruling party's authoritarian tendencies, corruption and a lack of accountability.

ZANU-PF youth league has been key in mobilising youth in Harare using the anti-sanctions mantra and has organised marches in the city centre. Increasingly, youths have become a decisive group in the country's electoral processes, hence they are considered a serious political resource. (This pattern is not unique to ZANU-PF though, as it is also evident across the political divide.) ZANU-PF continues to brand opposition parties as imperialist organisations and appendages of global power forces and capital that seek to destabilise Zimbabwe, and encourages citizens to view all suffering in Harare within this frame. Only ZANU-PF members are allowed into certain vending and informal-sector spaces in Harare, encouraging residents to join the party. Given that the informal sector in Zimbabwe employs over 90% of the population, there is significant political power to be gained from controlling opportunities for those running enterprises in the informal sector.

3.3. External influences

When explaining foreign influence in Harare, it is important to re-emphasise that Harare is several things:

- A local authority covering the city boundaries administered by the City of Harare;
- A metropolitan province covering satellite towns with their own boards and municipalities,¹⁶ such as Epworth and Chitungwiza, which are administered by a provincial set-up run by central government; and
- The capital city of Zimbabwe, where invariably all national political, social and economic interests are centred, governed and run from.

All three manifestations of Harare are important in different ways with respect to foreign influence and the extent of internal and external threats. Generally, foreign interests and influence in Harare are greater than in other urban areas. But it is also a metropolitan province that extends beyond the city borders, which invariably increases interest in productive sectors, such as mining, manufacturing and agriculture.

When looking at City of Harare as a local authority, foreign influence appears limited. However, there have been some central government attempts to militarise the local authority by deploying former and serving military personnel in various council departments. Nonetheless, these military incursions are neither overt nor salient in comparison to the influence of business-led cartels. The city government receives some foreign financial and technical support (for example, from numerous global twin-city arrangements), which is helpful but not central to maintaining the balance of power in Harare.

¹⁶ Harare Metropolitan Province consists of three local authorities, namely: City of Harare, Epworth Local Board and Chitungwiza Municipality

3.4. Geography of electoral support across opposition-ruling party lines in Harare

Most resistance to opposition governance in the city is located at the periphery of Harare, where ZANU-PF has significant support, in part due to the allocation of farmland to would-be homeowners through ZANU-PF-affiliated housing cooperatives. This is also a result of gerrymandering during delimitation processes, which led to the introduction of some peri-urban and rural areas within the City of Harare. Resettlement schemes have also taken place in this area, although this has resulted in insecure tenure. Although the central government has allowed these people to settle with little disturbance, it has also occasionally demolished some settlements in areas such as Epworth and Harare South.

The central government backing of some new settlements has also led to limited slum upgrading and provision of services by the City of Harare, which sees some of these areas as either illegal or outside its jurisdiction.

Some central Harare wards are seriously contested, including arguably the poorest and oldest suburb in Harare, Mbare. Wards 3 and 4 of Mbare have swung between the ruling party (which won both wards in 2013) and the opposition (which reclaimed Ward 3 in 2018, with ZANU-PF winning Ward 4).

Like the wards at the periphery of the city, the battleground wards in Mbare are characterised by informality, in terms of both tenure status and economic activity. Mbare is the centre of informal trade in Harare, with economic opportunities such as access to vending stalls and transport hubs heavily politicised. After suffering heavy electoral defeats at the hands of the MDC, ZANU-PF attempted to centralise power by establishing parallel structures and using the militia to control urban markets, a move which has seen ZANU-PF gain some control of markets and electoral support (McGregor 2013).

3.5. Everyday politics

The City of Harare is clearly a site for the contestation and expression of power by various city and national elites. It has massive opportunities for rents, access to million-dollar city contracts, residential and industrial land, and business space for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) such as vendors, and large commercial conglomerates. It can direct policy – expressing the vision of what a city should be like – and it has a huge concentration of voters.

The national political settlement, although contested, determines who has access to city contracts and tenders and does business with the city. This is a negotiated role with opposition but ultimately the leader's bloc typically prevails. But while the minister of local government and public works has power over councils, he or she still needs at least their nominal consent. The minister has been known to whip councillors to push for decisions and developments, despite lacking a council resolution or consultation. In realising this objective, the national cabinet is weaponised to push the minister's

agendas, which often represent ruling party interests. For instance, the cabinet approved the Pomona waste-management deal between the City of Harare and Geoenix BV, worth €304 million in 2022.

Neighbourhood politics is also important for shaping the agenda of the City. It is concerned with the delivery of quality social services, public causes such as influencing budgeting, infrastructure, citizen participation, and social and public accountability. Residents' associations and other civil society groups are key to neighbourhood politics – they can act as important powerbrokers, and can expose corruption, but their influence is quite often limited. Elected councillors also at times rely on residents' associations for technical input and capacity strengthening. In return, some policy papers are pushed by councillors for adoption by City of Harare. During a key informant interview in April 2022, a leader of a residents' association in Harare argued that:

Ward Development Committees may appear as being less powerful – but they contribute towards revenue collection and setting development priorities. They are empowered to administer the 25% retained to the ward through the 25% ward retention policy, which states that 25% of revenue collected in a ward should be retained to the ward to spearhead local development.

However, due to the Urban Councils Act, national elites have access to the vast powers invested in the minister of local government. They may also use persuasion with local actors, who are fully aware of what a request or directive from the top means. Local power relations are also controlled through coercion, such as arrests or suspensions. There are instances where the full council has been arrested just before a major decision is to be taken by council, such as the arrest of Chitungwiza councillors on 3 December 2020 after they dismissed the acting clerk.¹⁷ This is how national elites exert political dominance. They may appoint or influence the appointment of local actors who are aligned to their agendas – including their rent-seeking and/or ideological agendas.

4. City of systems approach: An overview

In the previous section, we examined how the distribution of power in Zimbabwe influences development and the prospects for developmental reform in Harare; in this section, we add a more material dimension, analysing the systems by which various actors and agencies attempt to sustain and/or improve urban life. All of these “urban systems” depend on both physical infrastructure and human actors (but in more “social” systems, such as healthcare and education, humans play a more pivotal role in system functioning).

The partial dependence of all urban systems on physical infrastructure creates powerful constraints and path dependencies, and produces unintended (negative) externalities. We analyse how the externalities of systems (compounded by

¹⁷ Harare civil society mapping workshop held in Harare, 9 March 2022.

intersystem interaction¹⁸) and the scale of system failures/fragmentations add to the challenges that residents and enterprises face.

Since systems are also governed and resourced by numerous human actors (formal or informal, public or private actors – but usually a combination of these), their functioning is impacted by the political settlement described above, as well as by ideas deriving from developmental paradigms like modernism and neoliberalism. This means that systems unevenly allocate goods and services, and may be used to extract benefits and secure political advantage.

The main systems operating in Harare are:

- water
- energy
- waste management
- sanitation
- education
- healthcare
- food distribution
- transportation
- finance
- law and order

We examine how they function, how they support or hinder urban development, and how they may be improved.

4.1. History: Tracing infrastructure challenges and contestations in Harare

Over the last two decades, Harare has seen a collapse of the city's infrastructure systems, largely linked to macro-socioeconomic and political developments in Zimbabwe at the national level. For example, between 2000 and 2008, the country saw a sustained decline of virtually all economic indicators, owing to what has been considered to be financial mismanagement, poor governance, capital flight, ill-advised policies and international isolation (AFDG, 2019).

The country's GDP also contracted by 50%. In 2009, an estimated US\$10 billion was required for Zimbabwe's infrastructure reconstruction, with most needed by Harare (Mwalubunju and Otitodun, 2011). Yet Harare has not secured significant funding locally or internationally relative to its infrastructure needs, due to Zimbabwe's political isolation or failure to settle arrears. Where such partnerships have been experimented with, very little has been invested in translating the innovations into mainstream infrastructure options. In addition, hyperinflation and the inability of organisations to

¹⁸ Complex problems in African cities often involve multiple city systems that interact with each other; we will capture their interrelated nature with our third concept of "urban development domains".

hold money in more stable foreign currencies, such as the United States dollar, because of treasury rules has exacerbated the problem. Revenues collected in the local currency erode before they can be invested in infrastructure improvements.

Another important dimension in Harare relates to the legal and regulatory environment. Key legislative instruments governing infrastructure provisioning in Harare are the Urban Councils Act and the Regional Town Country Planning Act. Critics have posited that the regulatory frameworks governing urban development in Zimbabwe remain exclusionary, because of the high standards required, which frustrate efforts at infrastructural innovation or the testing out of alternative models. For instance, current legislation only applies to reticulated infrastructure (water and sanitation) connected to the main grid. However, bulk infrastructure systems are already overwhelmed by the city's growing population. Meanwhile, the challenges involved in integrating non-reticulated options, such as water pumps and decentralised sanitation systems, in Harare stem from legal hurdles caused by the current regulatory environment informing infrastructure provision. This means that effective but isolated pilots in infrastructure innovation have not been successfully scaled up to become officially accepted urban practice. This calls for two reform approaches: firstly, using pilots to boost elite commitment to urban legislative reform; secondly, encouraging non-state actors to strengthen reform coalitions to catalyse uptake processes around infrastructure pilots in Harare.

The systems study in Harare has demonstrated how certain infrastructure systems, notably water and waste management, have become an arena for fierce contestation, typically between opposition-run City of Harare and central government. For example, the minister of local government and public works facilitated the Pomona waste-management deal with Geogenix BV on behalf of Harare council – a deal that the local authority fiercely contested after Harare council refused to pay the contractor's monthly charges, estimated at US\$600,000 (see Box 2). Central government's interference in Harare's administration illustrates how formal structures use informal pathways to exert control over the city.

Box 2: Pomona Waste-to-Energy Deal: Case study

Pomona dumpsite is located about 15km north of the capital of Harare and was previously a gravel excavation site. The dumpsite was opened in 1998 but was shut down three months after being commissioned, following complaints from nearby Wingate Golf Club regarding rubbish that was spilling onto the golf course. Operations resumed in 2001, after an agreement was reached with the City of Harare to contain waste paper and plastics that were being thrown onto the greens. Pomona dumpsite receives an estimated 550 tonnes daily and is also a source of income for an estimated 500 wastepickers, who on average make U\$4 per day.

Deepening challenges in the macroeconomic environment have adversely affected efficient management of the dumpsite. Equipment such as bulldozers and front-end loaders are in short supply. Pomona dumpsite is also not engineered considering that

the disposal sites do not have any leachate or gas control systems to absorb liquid waste, resulting in underground pollution. Incidences of fire outbreaks at the dumpsite have also been rife. In light of these developments, the Environmental Management Agency has expressed concern, arguing, for example, that emissions from the incessant Pomona fire outbreaks exceed World Health Organization air pollution levels.

In 2022, the central government, through the minister of local government, recommended a waste-to-energy partnership deal to improve the management of the dumpsite. This resulted in the signing of the deal in February 2022, albeit at a time when the elected mayor for City of Harare had been suspended by the minister of local government. However, when the mayor was reinstated by the courts, Harare resolved to cancel the deal, pointing out that it would grossly disadvantage the city. For instance, under the 30-year deal, Harare would be paying daily US\$22,000, whether the city would have delivered waste at the dumpsite or not. In addition, the central government insisted, notwithstanding the resolution by council to rescind the deal, that they would proceed to use Harare's devolution funds to settle the US\$660,000 monthly bill to Geogenix BV. Consequently, the partnership project has triggered widespread criticism, which has culminated in court challenges – for example, one by Combined Harare Residents Association.

4.2. Ownership and governance: Understanding the institutional context

In City of Harare, a mix of ownership and governance arrangements preside over different infrastructure systems, with non-state actors entering urban services provision. But, due to the lack of relevant and supportive legislation, non-state infrastructure initiatives have not been fully embraced and so have largely failed to become part of mainstream infrastructure systems.

While Harare's role in some infrastructure provision has receded, the local authority still remains active in some form. For example, while there is no reticulated water infrastructure in some emerging settlements, the council has provided bush pumps because of public health concerns, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Transportation also has complex governance arrangements, including a role for the council. Multiple actors regulate the sector, including the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, Ministry of Transport and City of Harare, creating jurisdictional confusion for transport operators trying to navigate the regulatory processes.

State-owned parastatals (such as ZINARA and Zimbabwe United Passenger Company or ZUPCO) have become key institutions, as Harare council has been gradually pushed out of strategic infrastructure systems. While the argument is that these parastatals will improve service delivery, critics see their encroachment as a political agenda of the ruling party to usurp control of urban areas and promote opportunities for extracting illicit rents and corruption. The unilateral central government-led transfer of water functions and revenue collection from urban councils to ZINWA in 2005 is instructive here. The move has also turned out to be disastrous, with service delivery plummeting. For instance, in 2008, a cholera disaster engulfed the City of Harare and

other parts of the country, claiming 4,000 lives. Without the requisite technical, financial and material resources, parastatals are ill-positioned to effectively and sustainably collect revenue and provide infrastructural services. For example, the government banned non-ZUPCO urban transport vehicles, based on Statutory Instrument 200 of 2020 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020b), drastically reducing the number of public transport vehicles in Harare and causing chaos for commuters.

4.3. Coverage of formal infrastructure systems

Historically, the City of Harare has consistently stressed the requirement for all plots to have full coverage of formal infrastructure systems through urban development legislative frameworks. Furthermore, Harare's vision is to connect settlements with on-grid infrastructure systems. For example, the city aims for all residents of planned plots to be linked to the Morton Jeffrey Water Treatment Works as their main water supply. In terms of sanitation, the Crowborough and Firle Sewer Works provides bulk sewer treatment stations for Harare. In terms of social services, the council administers health centres and schools across the city.

The institutional logic around these city-led services assumes that these infrastructure systems are functional and have the capacity to serve the city's residents. Yet, complete and formalised infrastructure coverage remains an ideal for both planned and unplanned settlements. Morton Jeffrey Water Works has a design capacity of 614,000m³ against a daily demand of 1,200,000m³. Water rationing is used as a demand-management measure. Consequently, decentralised and informal water options have emerged in both planned and unplanned settlements, resulting in complex infrastructural overlaps. City of Harare has an estimated 28,000 registered boreholes, mostly in planned settlements with installed reticulated infrastructure. However, an estimated 80% of Harare's boreholes are contaminated, raising the potential risk of waterborne diseases; in the low-density suburbs, 95% of boreholes are contaminated (Chipunza, 2017).

This has had a knock-on effect on sanitation coverage in the City of Harare. Decentralised and informal sanitation systems have grown, disrupting the notion that every household has to connect to a main grid. Informal settlements such as Hopley, Stoneridge and Churu Farm have a range of improvised sanitation solutions, such as ecological sanitation toilets (Ecosan), pit latrines, and pour and flush systems, with limited success. For example, Ecosan toilets have been piloted in slum-upgrading projects but are yet to be taken to scale due to public health concerns, design challenges and prohibitive costs. As indicated by this, it is not realistic to expect urban residents to cover the costs of individualised provision nor is it safe for them to do so as residential densities increase. However, in the absence of publicly managed investment (which is generally the most cost-effective way to provide urban services), residents are forced to explore these options.

The transportation system in Harare also reveals similar coverage patterns. Harare has an estimated 5,500km of road network. Most roads were built over 30 years ago and

are in a poor state. The World Bank (2020) observes that less than 20% of the city's road network is paved and the challenge is severe, particularly in informal settlements, where dirt roads are commonplace, and central government has declared urban roads a "state of disaster" (Nyarota, 2021). Most roads in Harare are impassable, which presents challenges for a significant proportion of the city's population, as public transport finds it difficult to navigate the roads. It also increases the cost of travel. For example, residents in Harare often end up paying for higher-premium private taxis, which have also been linked to rampant cases of muggings by robbers masquerading as legitimate transport operators.

4.4. Access: Analysing progress towards inclusive infrastructure systems in Harare

The notion of citywide infrastructure access is a useful lens for illuminating subtle infrastructure dynamics in the capital. While, in principle, formally planned parts of the city are invariably linked to the conventional grids, such as water and sanitation, the infrastructure networks are often redundant, as council is unable to provide services on a consistent basis. Parts of Mabvuku, a low-income neighbourhood towards the east of the capital, have gone for a record 30 years without water, even though the area is considered serviced. Access implies the ability to connect to and use urban infrastructure systems; lack of access is considered a critical issue that requires policy interventions to address exclusion. While access and inclusion are imperative for most urban authorities, especially within the context of "leaving no-one behind", achieving these ideals remains elusive, as local authorities attempt to reconcile improved and universal access with principles of cost recovery in service delivery. Plans for introducing prepaid water meters in Harare, for instance, have stalled on the pretext that this would prevent access for the very vulnerable low-income urban residents. However, it does also appear that the City of Harare currently lacks the institutional and infrastructure frameworks for an expanded water meter rollout. Relatedly, and presumably in the interest of ensuring equity around access to urban services across the residents' diverse income groups, Harare's budget proposals have to be approved by the central government. In 2021, the minister of local government and public works, commenting on urban council budget submissions, stressed that:

Each local authority must prioritise the most vulnerable communities. Focus must, therefore, be on the following areas: education, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, electricity, roads and amenities, in order to reduce walking distances to these facilities. Urban local authorities need to focus on water, sanitation and hygiene to reduce the incidences of outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid.¹⁹

However, promoting equitable access to urban services has not been an easy balancing act in Harare, especially without a rethink of servicing models and options.

¹⁹ Tshili (2021).

Recent developments, though, around formulating a pro-poor water policy for City of Harare should be commended as a significant step towards universalising access.²⁰

4.5. Infrastructure quality and sustainability in Harare

Infrastructure quality remains one of the biggest barriers to sustainable urban settlements in Harare. Water, sanitation, transportation and healthcare provision continues to draw attention, for all the wrong reasons. For example, in 2010, 55% of Harare residents only had access to poor quality water (Spicer, 2017). This shows that the water quality crisis is not confined only to poor urban settlements, and requires a multistakeholder approach to address it. The cholera outbreak of 2008 that claimed 4,000 lives captures the poor state of sanitation in Harare. The outbreak was linked to dilapidated sewer infrastructure in parts of Harare, such as the Budiriro high-density (and low-income) suburb.

Social infrastructure, such as education and healthcare systems, has also deteriorated in Harare. Despite aspiring to world-class primary healthcare services by 2025, health centres continue to encounter serious challenges affecting quality access. For example, the city's infectious disease facility, Wilkins Infectious Diseases Hospital, was ill-equipped to handle Covid-19 patients. The Chinese Embassy came to Harare's rescue with a US\$100,000 grant for refurbishments.²¹ In addition, the healthcare sector has experienced a massive skills flight. The City Health Services Department annual report for 2020 notes that 447 posts remained vacant of the required 1,713.²² The nursing division was the worst affected, with 67.3% of posts vacant. This has been attributed to nurses emigrating to countries such as the USA, UK and Australia, in search of better incomes and working conditions. In education, hyperinflation and severe exchange-rate depreciation have eroded budget allocations and ultimately staff wages, compromising access to quality education as teachers have withdrawn from public education (GoZ and UNICEF, 2020). This highlights how fragile infrastructure systems are negatively affected by national economic problems and global labour markets.

4.6. Risks and vulnerabilities: Assessing internal institutional failures and beyond

This section analyses intersections between Harare's infrastructure systems and existing risk factors in Harare, and how multiple risks and vulnerabilities have exposed infrastructure systems to a range of shocks, frustrating urban transformation.

Harare's internal institutional failures have been worsened by natural disasters. For example, climate change impacts have compounded Harare's preexisting precarious water situation. Recurrent droughts, in particular, have affected water levels in Harare's inadequate reservoirs, leading to the use of unsustainable stopgap measures such as

20 Key informant interview with official from Harare Water Department, 17 September 2022.

21 City of Harare (2020). City Health Services Department Annual Report – 2020.

22 City of Harare. 2020. City Health Services Department Annual Report – 2020.

boreholes, which are typically contaminated. Furthermore, communal water points meant to augment water supply in the City of Harare have been identified as sites of gender-based violence, with disturbing reports of incidences of sex for water becoming widespread in the capital (Dialogue on Shelter and Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation, 2021). This highlights the complex nature of the multiple risks and vulnerabilities associated with the breakdown of such systems in Harare, which are likely to trigger additional shocks in other systems, demonstrating the fragile interconnections between urban services in Harare.

Internal failures, such as partisan politics, corruption and mismanagement of the country's economy, have also reduced the efficiency of urban services provision in Harare. Contested politics have had disastrous consequences for services delivery, while Zimbabwe's macroeconomic crisis presents significant risks for council operations. However, the City of Harare's internal capacity constraints also constitute a risk for infrastructure provision. An independent survey revealed that in 2016, Harare's billing efficiency for water connections was only 67%, illustrating massive revenue leakages (We Pay You Deliver Consortium, 2018). For instance, 2018 financials indicated that corrupt officials within City of Harare could have been illicitly overpaying suppliers for personal benefit, taking advantage of the existence of weak accounting systems. Inefficiencies linked to technical capacity in Harare constitute a risk to infrastructure systems and potentially block sustainable service delivery.

This section has dealt with key analytical issues centred around the urban systems within the City of Harare and how dimensions such as governance, coverage and access have been mediated by current approaches to urban development. Exclusionary urban approaches insisting on very idealistic planning and engineering standards appear to be standing in the way of urban transformation in Harare. Even though Harare is dealing with a huge citywide infrastructure crisis, not enough effort has been made to build and institutionalise collaborations with non-state actors. Besides internal institutional failures, climate change risks also reinforce the need for a holistic approach to dealing with infrastructure challenges in Harare.

5. Domain summaries

We have examined the political settlement and city systems; now, we analyse how these shape some of the development domains in Harare. A development domain is a distinct field of discourse, policy and practice that has formed around a complex, intersystemic development challenge in a city, in which various actors (political, bureaucratic, professional and popular) collaborate and/or compete for authority.

These development challenges usually fall under the remit of specific central and/or local government departments. In most cases, affected residents and civil society groups become involved in addressing them; experts (often constituting an "epistemic community") also get involved; and ruling elites may or may not get involved, depending on the opportunities that these domains offer for asset accumulation, rent

extraction and electoral success (through the representation of ideologies, demonstration of state capability, or manipulation of voters).

In each development domain, particular ideas, practices and systems interoperate in ways that either sustain or reshape the power configuration in the city and country. If we wish to change the way a domain's problems are framed and addressed, we need to understand its key actors and interoperating ideas, practices and systems. In this section, we generate such an understanding for the domains of informal settlements; land and connectivity; structural transformation; and neighbourhood and district economic development.

5.1. Informal settlements domain

The nexus between informal settlements and politics in Harare remains the subject of sustained scholarly debate (McGregor and Chatiza, 2020; Muchadenyika 2015). Land tenure insecurity in conditions of informality engenders a politics of patronage. Informal settlements are sites of political contestation in the quest to resolve land tenure issues and access to improved basic services (Muchadenyika and Waiswa, 2018). This highlights the significance of power as a currency for transacting access to urban assets in informal settlements. This is in sharp contrast to the planned and formal sections of the city, where planning regulations largely mediate urban services provision.

Harare presents a complex political mosaic, especially if the politics of the city is mapped onto the informal settlement domain. Over 60 informal settlements have been documented in recent years and different leadership structures have evolved (Dialogue on Shelter, Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and City of Harare (2014). On one level are official versus unofficial political leaders, while on the other, opposition versus ruling party-political configurations. Official political structures include elected councillors and members of parliament, whereas unofficial political leadership often entails shadow political formations (McGregor, 2013). The latter often include failed politicians who exercise some or more functions than those normally undertaken by elected officials. In Zimbabwe's political parlance, these are referred to as shadow structures. While political affiliations appear to set these different leadership structures apart, what they have in common is that they are often all male-dominated, betraying the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwe's political architecture.

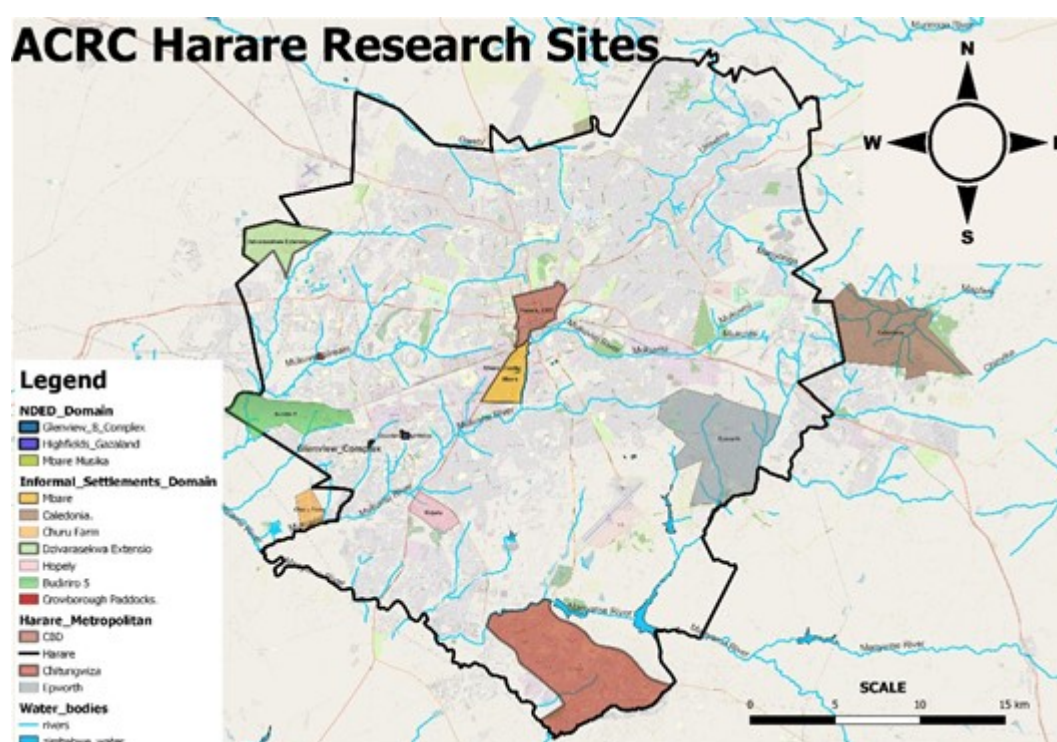
5.1.1. *Locating powerful groups in Harare's informal settlements*

City of Harare's elected political leadership is principally opposition, with CCC having won the majority of urban council seats in the last by-election in March 2022 (Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, 2022). At the time of the study, a few seats were held by the minor opposition splinter – Movement for Democratic Change-T (MDC-T). CCC now controls the majority of wards in Harare. In principle, this means that opposition leaders drive the development agenda in these wards. However, the reality is different. Parallel political structures appear to be more influential in informal

settlements, dictating service provision. They are often built around housing cooperatives or community leadership structures, as seen in study sites depicted in Figure 5 below, such as Stoneridge, Dzivarasekwa Extension and Churu Farm.²³

The legitimacy and authority of these local-level political structures are often derived from ruling party political leaders. With backing from the ruling party, local politicians may end up appropriating state or council land for personal gain: in some settlements, residents have observed that some high-profile politicians have benefited from illicit land sales or payments from desperate residents in informal settlements, in return for infrastructure investments, for example. However, these land development processes are conducted outside of council protocols and are not lodged with Harare City Council.

Figure 5: Map showing ACRC Harare research sites



Source: Dialogue on Shelter Trust (2023), adapted from Google Maps.

5.1.2. Intersections with formal authority in Harare

Despite strong ties with political elites, grassroots political structures are often not recognised at the different levels of government. This stems from their controversial political associations: most government officials are dismissive of political groups illegally occupying land or are reluctant to deal with politically linked groups, due to the unpredictable nature of Zimbabwe's political landscape. Residents from Dzivarasekwa

²³ Informal settlement domain focus group discussions in Stoneridge, Dzivarasekwa Extension and Churu Farm conducted in 2022.

Extension stated that they were aware of this reluctance when approaching government offices for slum upgrading or regularisation issues:

Once you enter into a government office you have to stop calling yourself “Comrade” and switch to “Mr So and So”.²⁴

Powerful and politically connected grassroots actors have mastered the art of navigating formal authorities in their struggle for land tenure security. They understand the extent and limitations of their power in certain geographies and hierarchies. This does appear to challenge the longstanding narrative concerning supremacy of politics over technical processes when engaging with urban informality. One focus group discussion, for instance, showed that residents had become technically astute to know how to navigate government offices in the quest to regularise their politicised land occupations. However, when the same government technocrats are offered opportunities for rents or financial inducements by informal settlement leaders for them to accede to their requests, the cautious approach shifts to accommodation. The study revealed illicit collaborations with state officials as well as dismissals of council professionals who have been accused of corrupt land regularisation deals (Chidakwa, 2020).

However, not all upgrading and regularisation processes have been led by politically aligned groups in informal settlements. Other sets of actors have also been involved. The Urban Development Corporation (UDCORP) is one such actor/entity that has been introduced by central government to regulate developments in informal settlements.²⁵ UDCORP was meant to sanitise irregularities created by politically embedded housing cooperatives and land barons (Ruwendé and Mukuwane, 2016). For example, there had been accusations of multiple allocations of individuals to single plots as well as embezzlements of financial contributions by housing cooperative members.

UDCORP adopted a radical stance, by discarding the housing cooperative leadership model and replacing it with a centralised approach with minimal mechanisms for consultations. However, in Caledonia (and possibly many other localities where UDCORP was introduced) the centralised model failed, largely due to the absence of community buy-in. For instance, the plan to regularise and extend infrastructure encountered enormous challenges, as residents resisted requests to make contributions, citing allegations of financial impropriety by UDCORP. Residents felt that decisions were made unilaterally and that proposed figures for repayments were exorbitant (Bobo and Kwangwama, 2021).

In contrast, in Dzivarasekwa Extension, a successful slum upgrading project was implemented as a partnership with the Dialogue on Shelter for the Homeless in Zimbabwe Trust, Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation and the City of Harare. It involved residents in collective decisionmaking throughout the project. For example,

²⁴ Focus group discussion, residents of Dzivarasekwa Extension, 15 June 2022.

²⁵ UDCORP (Urban Development Corporation) – a parastatal mandated to oversee regularisation of peri-urban informal settlements such as Caledonia.

informal design studios were conducted to encourage community inputs to both the physical layout and architectural plans (World Habitat Awards, nd). The downside to this participatory approach was that community members were so empowered that they were able to resist an architectural proposal to densify upwards. Cultural preferences are for households to have land to grow vegetables, which proved to be the primary consideration for many community members in the slum upgrading project. However, vertical expansion could have potentially further increased densities, while making the project relatively more affordable for the residents, as a result of more efficient layouts for infrastructure installation and small plots.

5.1.3. Adverse impacts of power contestations

While political elites make the most crucial choices in informal settlements, ordinary residents bear the brunt of these decisions. In Crowborough Paddocks, one of the study sites in Harare, City of Harare has secured a court order to evict thousands of families who have settled there and who have been illegally allocated land by housing cooperative land barons (Makopa, 2021). It is the low-income urban residents who purchased land on these illegally occupied sites who must deal with the everyday challenges of land tenure precarity, such as evictions and demolitions, while land barons stand to lose little or nothing. These residents must also deal with non-existent or inadequate basic services. Gaps in infrastructure systems such as water and sanitation affect women and girls more, as they spend more time fetching water, due to patriarchal values typical in Zimbabwean society.

Housing cooperatives also tend to unilaterally impose housing contribution fees that are exorbitant and prone to abuse (Chirisa et al., 2014). The most vulnerable members often fail to cope with making repayments, leading to plot repossession. The City of Harare is now experimenting with a new model, whereby it supports the governance processes of housing cooperatives under its recently adopted regularisation initiative (Deketeke, 2024).

However, not all housing cooperatives have such skewed internal governance. Collectives under the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation, for instance, strive to establish inclusive governance procedures that minimise top-down decision

making by a few elites. Setting up women-led savings collectives in informal settlements has been central to promoting democratic organisational structures that limit domineering leadership approaches.

The City of Harare is also prejudiced by illegal and politicised land access by corrupt powerful elites in the informal settlement domain, as typically the local authority does not collect revenue under such transactions. For example, the Combined Harare Residents Association (2017) observed that in the Monavale Wetland area in Harare, land barons forced unsuspecting residents to pay US\$7,000 deposits for illegally acquired council land. In many cases, these financial contributions are used for personal gain instead of being invested in infrastructure, as is often promised. Furthermore, City of Harare is disadvantaged by an urban taxation system that is

fundamentally designed to cover formal areas, meaning that informality and illegal land dealings result in revenue leakages (Chirisa, 2013). Unofficial transactions also promote the unauthorised use of formal urban services by illegal residents (whose corrupt cooperative leaders do not provide services), creating an additional “free-ridership” burden for the local authority (Chirisa, 2008). For example, during FGDs in Crowborough Paddocks, residents reported that they fetch water from Mufakose, an adjacent planned neighbourhood.²⁶

5.1.4. Challenges and the need for further research

From the collected data and review of available literature, the informal settlements domain faces a huge task in dealing with myriad problems. This section recaps problems noted throughout the research study, emphasising their relevance to future ACRC research objectives.

- **Lack of affordable housing delivery models will continue to exclude low-income urban residents and force them into insecure housing:** Both the City of Harare and central government have advocated for private sector housing models that are not affordable for low-income households, forcing them into informal settlements. World Bank (2021) estimates that 33.5% of Harare’s population resides in informal housing. While involving the private sector in low-cost housing is desirable, urgent action is needed to revisit the model, particularly the pricing regime, to ensure that low-income urban residents benefit from such initiatives. For example, two low-cost housing projects in Budiro and Dzivarasekwa Extension (National Building Society Housing Project) still have housing stock going idle due to poor uptake, despite the multitudes of homeless low-income residents on the council’s housing waiting list. Low-cost housing should be informed by updated data from informal settlements, highlighting the challenges and capacities in terms of potential role and contribution to housing delivery.
- **Weaponisation of urban land will likely worsen if the pressure for housing is not addressed:** In Harare’s peripheries, insecure tenure and the weak involvement of local authorities is being used by politicians to further their self-interested political agendas, both for illicit rents and favourable political outcomes (Muchadenyika and Williams, 2017; McGregor and Chatiza, 2020). Urban land legislation mandates local governments to act as the primary stewards of urban areas with assistance from the national government. However, in informal settlements, this role is often performed inconsistently or manipulated (mainly by political elites). Efforts to rectify politicised urban land administration issues have been inadequate. Evidence from the community FGDs suggests that the few arrests of land barons and other politicians have failed to increase confidence that the national government will depoliticise low-cost housing. In addition, state-led informal settlement regularisation currently provides no space for community participation or other stakeholders. There is a disconnect between the process and the residents of informal settlements, and an overemphasis on high planning standards is a potential threat to overcoming complex issues. Informality is also slowly being viewed as a potential revenue source by the local authority. FGDS and interviewees complained of exorbitant

²⁶ Crowborough Paddocks focus group discussion, 12 July 2022.

penalty fees for those willing to regularise their plots. This situation is compounding an already politically polarised system.

- **Informal settlement residents are criminalised by law and urban planning statutes, thus limiting engagement scope between settlers and authorities:** Development priorities and response actions are largely driven by legal logic. Local authorities are unwilling to invest in informal settlements or to upgrade them without intense negotiations, despite several progressive policies that recognise informal settlement upgrading as key to providing sustainable low-cost housing. National and local decisionmakers remain hostile to inclusive proposals that include community participation, focusing instead on the spatial and built aspects of informal settlements, with little regard for the social issues prevailing in these settlements. If informal settlements continue to be seen only as physical spaces, the proposals will fail to benefit from the social capital and capacities of residents. Participatory planning is needed.
- **There is limited consensus on approaches to tackling informality in Harare:** Partly, this lack of consensus is driven by the sectoral focus of, and ideological difference between, the many actors in this domain. From discussions with key technical officials in the city and provincial structures of local governance and policymakers, one of the key drivers of these conflicting views is the lack of information about urban informality. Any responses to informality have stalled at the pilot phase and face challenges in scaling up. Civil society organisations and residents' associations spoke of how this lack of consensus is limiting the effectiveness of responses. Meanwhile, environmental activists (influenced by international climate change debates and the rising water scarcity in Harare) tend to favour a more radical approach, clearing informal settlements from environmentally sensitive areas without providing alternative housing solutions. Community-led data is a potential process that can trigger discussions around consensus building. Without data, actors will continue to prescribe solutions from their limited perspectives that risk being inadequate. For broad-based solutions, a collective and inclusive vision will be very important.
- **Lack of informal settlement upgrading requires urgent action:** In Harare, close to 80% of informal settlements is on land owned either by the state or by the City of Harare. However, even settlements that were encouraged by state agencies skipped several critical technical processes that should have guided development and land administration. For example, Caledonia, Stoneridge, Hopley, Hatcliffe and White Cliffe were all initiated by the state. But the state's lack of capacity to develop and monitor daily activities in such settlements has created a gap that has been exploited by land barons and corrupt housing cooperatives. These anomalies should be addressed in a forward-looking plan for upgrading. Such a plan might in part be financed by community contributions. Previously, the default mode for slum upgrading was demolitions and evictions – neither of which have succeeded in controlling informality. State-led responses involving relocation have similarly failed to deliver, but can be credited for the rapid allocation of land for new housing across the city. And while Zimbabwe has apparently embraced the notion of slum upgrading, there is a limited understanding of how to effectively transform it into reality. As a result, slum upgrading projects carried out by the state, civil society organisations and communities have met with varying levels of success. But there has been a universal failure to tackle the issue of scale. Going forward and building on stakeholder consensus, there is a need to develop a framework

that clearly defines what informal settlement upgrading is all about and how actors can relate and agree on competing views, including key political figures and decisionmakers. Identifying the domain actors and their potential roles is key to determining areas of potential conflict. Meeting elite expectations will likely be a key ingredient of any political settlement. The political stasis characterising the entire city's systems is making this call even more urgent and louder. This is supported by the key informant interviews with city officials, who cited the invisible hand of politics as stifling the city's development trajectory. It is thus imperative to consider formal and informal power configurations when designing solutions.

5.2. Land and connectivity domain

Using secondary and primary data, the study of Harare's land and connectivity domain mapped the city's recent challenges. A literature review included national policy and legislative documents, council minutes, relevant high court judgements and physical plans. National urban state land data and records on titled land, and City of Harare's estate management section had no digitised records. City and national government land data for City of Harare specifically and other urban centres generally therefore remain mainly in analogue form. Emerging state responses suggest that the digitising of the land records is underway.

5.2.1. *Challenges of urban land administration*

Over the last 20 years, areas of high-density housing (mainly for/by low-income residents) on city land have grown the most, whilst areas of open space and farmland have shrunk considerably. These changes have variously involved national and city government, and roles played have not always been complementary. Non-state partisan or politicised actors have also become involved post-2000. Basic institutional capacity gaps, intergovernmental conflict and a generally polarised environment have undermined effective urban land management.

City units, national government and non-state actors (including housing cooperatives) have become increasingly critical in urban land policy and management. From 2005, the post-Operation Murambatsvina period saw a surge in housing land allocations by the national government to cooperatives, private land developers and other entities, with the minimal involvement of City of Harare.²⁷ This led to strategic shifts in land management functions and agency relations, alongside changes in land and housing development approaches.

Following the collapse of the Zimbabwean formal sector in 2000, thousands of households across a broad spectrum of society adopted what became known as

²⁷ In 2005, Operation Murambatsvina ("Clear the Filth"), also officially known as Operation Restore Order, was a government campaign to forcibly clear urban slums throughout the country. Tens of thousands of properties around the country were destroyed, resulting in mass evictions and the closure of informal sector businesses. According to the United Nations, 700,000 people (nearly 6% of the population) were left without homes or jobs (The Guardian, 2005).

kukiya-kiya housing and livelihood strategies.²⁸ Under *kukiya-kiya*, unofficial land administration surpassed formal functions relating to land allocation, physical planning, infrastructure and the provision of basic services, either completely or partially. This created gaps in infrastructure development, tenure security and overall local governance of and in Harare. Despite this, community-based organisations (CBOs) such as housing cooperatives did to some extent enhance access to land for low-income urban residents.

Municipal land was also sold or allocated without services by the City of Harare to housing cooperatives. Land was also used as equity in some joint ventures, exchanged for goods and services, and used to fund recurrent budgets. Meanwhile, some land barons with proven or faked political connections to Zimbabwe's main political parties, ZANU-PF and the then MDC, took possession of urban land for themselves, mainly on the City of Harare peripheries. Over the last seven years, the city has sought 148 court orders against self-allocators.

Consequently, nearly half of the city's peri-urban areas is in a state of "unresolved" land administration, with a fast-growing population, land conflicts occurring at different levels, and many areas largely disconnected from city systems. Harare's development control system is constrained by court processes that are slow to conclude; capacity gaps at council, provincial and national government levels; and macroeconomic stresses where land has become highly valuable.

The city's residents are concerned with land availability, land management authorities and the socioeconomic situation. These factors have impacted how land is accessed, planned, developed, serviced and allocated and how tenure is secured. Partisan political control is a major "currency" deployed in a governance environment characterised by unsupportive national–provincial government administrative processes. At the same time, land-related corruption has considerably eroded the city's internal processes and is negatively affecting fiscal frameworks, basic service delivery, land access, physical planning, environmental management, property taxation, registration, titling and transfer systems. City of Harare is also experiencing capacity constraints in water equity programming and environmental regulation. These are critical to resilience-building in the context of climate change risks such as drought-related water stress, flooding, storms and epidemics such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid.

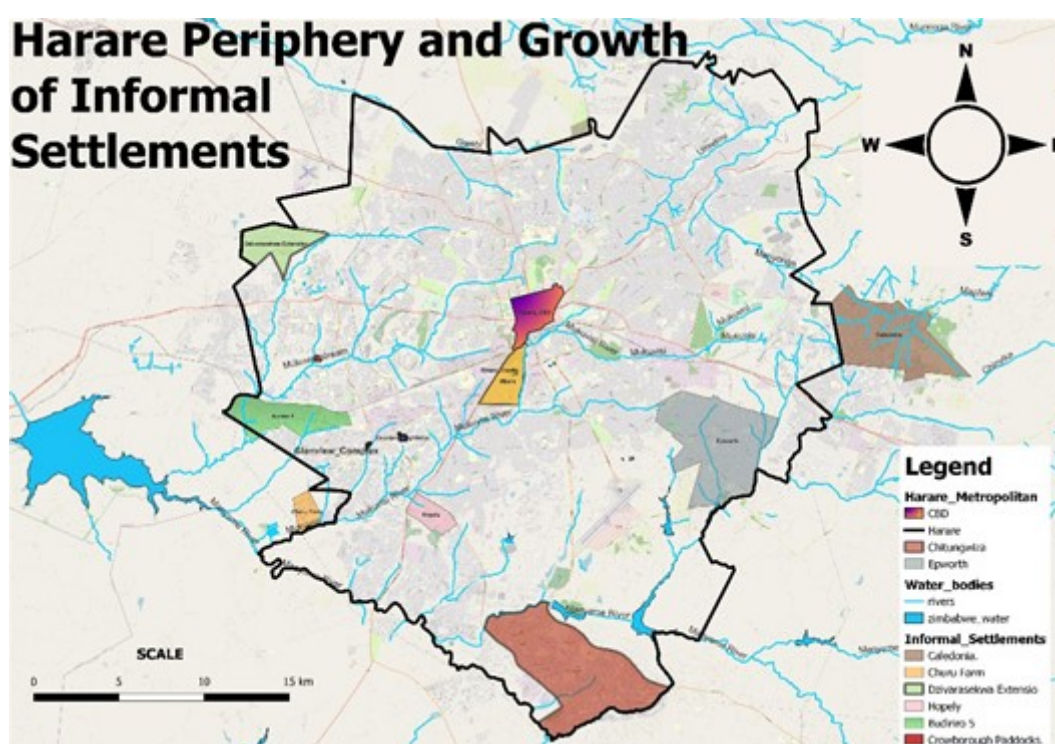
Shocks experienced by the city relating to poor city–national government relations, macroeconomic instability, disease outbreaks, and strained and inadequate infrastructure and basic services have nearly collapsed City of Harare's institutional reputation. Accessing peri-urban land is mainly on an informal basis and the advent of "*misha* for projects" within 100km of the city has affected land values as evidenced by the increase in peri-urban informal growth in Figure 6.²⁹ Straddling of rural and urban

²⁸ In local parlance, *kukiya-kiya* refers to multiple forms of "making do".

²⁹ *Misha* means "rural homes" in the Shona language.

land alongside urban squatting has been a part of life in Harare since the 1920s, straining city systems. The absence of any updated urban master plan has added to challenges for peri-urban land administration. Central government (in particular, the Ministry of Local Government) has also played an active part in these complexities, due to unprocedural land allocations. At the same time, several wetlands, sources of water and other natural resources are being stressed by human activity. Most remain undeveloped because the lack of appropriate technology has made infrastructure and superstructure construction expensive. However, urban farming, housing development, car sales, waste disposal and commercial water drilling are putting pressure on wetlands, especially those on public land.

Figure 6: Map showing Harare periphery and growth of informal settlements



Source: Dialogue on Shelter Trust (2023), adapted from Google Maps.

5.2.2. Managing conflict to improve land administration

Stresses and shocks notwithstanding, there have been reforms contributing to some urban land administration improvements. The “ease of doing business” reforms, emergency road rehabilitation (phases 1 and 2), the National Development Strategy 1, and the Zimbabwe National Human Settlements Policy have added some impetus to urban land management reforms. Urban land in Harare is a key resource that anchors urban and broader economic development. This is as a fixed asset, a means of exchange, a guarantee for credit and a store of wealth. Harare’s most recent valuation roll³⁰ in 2023 was estimated to include up to 500,000 properties, a fivefold increase

³⁰ Valuation rolls are lists of properties compiled for the purposes of billing and taxation.

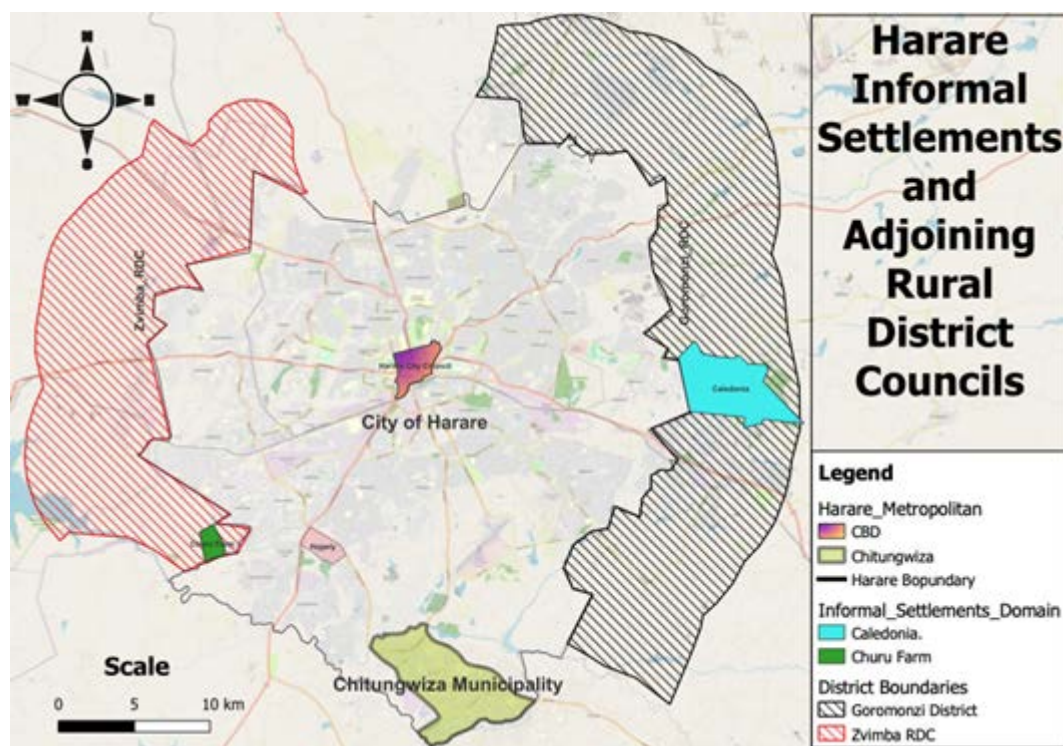
from 2008.³¹ This suggests a significant boom in real estate developments, despite the economic downturn. The land/property market is, however, informal, cash-based and dominated by foreign currency cash transactions. This reduces support to local and national public finance systems in terms of sales and property taxes. Furthermore, the reality that some land rights are vague explains why some transactions have not been formally registered, making capital gains taxes (a national tax on land/property transactions) difficult to collect.

Harare's complex land governance means that the relationship between national government and the local authority is often unclear. Non-municipal land authorities include state-owned entities with either a remit to administer land or a responsibility to deliver specific services on land they own. The provincial/metropolitan tier of government also has an influence on land and overall development management. The city has a politically dynamic relationship on peri-urban land management with four rural district councils in the three Mashonaland provinces with which Harare Metropolitan Province and City of Harare share boundaries (see Figure 7, depicting informal settlements on the border with rural councils). The intensity of acrimony and scale of land conflicts between multiple land authorities, which increased after 2000, has limited intergovernmental cooperative governance. The manifestations of the competitiveness of land authorities include:

- Conversion of peri-urban land to urban development land, which was allocated to housing cooperatives and other groups without on- and off-site infrastructure.
- Cooperative and individual household beneficiaries accessing land through inadequately coordinated and administered mechanisms, resulting in ad hoc land sales collections, use and accounting of beneficiary financial contributions, with losses (misappropriation) commonplace.
- Absence of supervision of infrastructure developed in emergent settlements.
- Residents undermining different authorities because of party politics, resulting in the collapse of infrastructure financing models, multiple land allocations and new settlers flooding into areas being regularised.
- Constrained legal and political standing of land authorities with even national government ministries being sued by cooperatives for displacing them and subverting the Cooperative Societies Act.
- Weak to no scope for private capital participation, formal economic or common services development.

³¹ Focus group discussion with City of Harare's City Valuation and Estates Management Unit, 21 June 2022.

Figure 7: Harare informal settlements and adjoining rural district councils



Source: Dialogue on Shelter Trust (2023), adapted from Google Maps

The study has concluded that the land and connectivity domain in Harare is characterised by competitive land authorities, stressed physical planning systems, strategic infrastructure gaps and urban land-management fragility (see Figure 6). This context has created and simultaneously drives the city's failure to optimise land for development and a struggle with policy and administrative structures, both internally and regarding liaison with the other two tiers of government (national and provincial/metropolitan). These tensions are not unique to Harare, but the political dominance of national government on its own is inadequate to explain why the city is not resolving these challenges.

Internal struggles with land-related corruption and party political conflicts suggest that there is a pressing need to resolve strategic land conflicts and to regularise settlements that are legally within Harare's current jurisdiction, through joint action between the city council and national government. These actions have the potential to open pathways to secure tenure and formal administration of urban land in Harare. A recognition and reassertion of Harare's status as a fiscal, land and planning authority is critical to the city's competent performance of key urban land management functions. However, a nuanced analysis from a political settlement perspective has also revealed that the opposing major parties in the City of Harare uncharacteristically collaborate around land deals that present illicit rent opportunities. This highlights the contextual complexities that have potential for blocking progress towards resolving land-related conflicts within the City of Harare.

These strategies appear feasible from the analysis conducted. Regularising and structurally transforming informal settlements and neighbourhood economies provide strategic entry points. Insights from the three domains (informal settlement; land and connectivity; and neighbourhood and district economic development) have the potential to reveal new actors or agents and dynamics relevant to the settledness of Harare's political system (political settlement). Strategies for resolving the city's land and connectivity challenges can be projectised for implementation, supported by ongoing research. One example, under the NDED, suggests that supporting a specific intervention focusing on informal markets upgrading presents significant scope for resolving the structural challenges blocking sustained progress within the domain.

5.3. Structural transformation domain

Unlike some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe has not experienced growth-enhancing positive structural change. The country saw a massive GDP loss between 1999 and 2008, which led to significant structural degeneration characterised by deindustrialisation and informalisation (Kanyenze et al., 2017).

This situation has been worsened by economic disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic that led to massive job and income losses. The informal economy is now the major employer, with its share of employment over 76% (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2019). Foreign currency shortages as well as hyperinflation have eroded the value of the local currency, which has led to many industry closures.

This national picture has had an impact on the economy of the City of Harare in its bid to grow, and suggests negative structural change at the local level (Gambe 2019). In contrast with other sub-Saharan cities, such as Nairobi in Kenya and Accra in Ghana, where the trend for structural transformation has "leapfrogged" manufacturing into services such as banking and information and communication technologies (ICTs), in Harare the process is in reverse.

The city has witnessed rapid urbanisation, which usually accompanies structural transformation. But in this case, it has been without growth. Data shows that Harare is counter-urbanising, with populations from urban Harare slowly moving to rural and peri-urban parts of Harare. This study reveals that the Greater Harare region, like the whole country, has experienced reverse structural transformation as employment has increased in agriculture, decreased in manufacturing, and has grown only slightly in the services sector. For example, between 2002 and 2012, agro-industry experienced 99.7% growth, whereas the services industry witnessed a paltry growth of 6.27% within the formal employment sector.

5.3.1. Key dynamics

The political economy of the city is dominated by the ruling ZANU-PF party, which has been a binding constraint on structural change. Constant interference by political elites in ZANU-PF as well as the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works has hindered city systems from operating effectively. In addition, central government has a

penchant for forgiving debts owed to the city by domestic users (Mlilo, 2022). The city is currently owed billions of Zimbabwe dollars by both private businesses and domestic consumers. Constant infighting between opposition groups like the CCC and the MDC-Alliance means that effective policymaking and planning are also complicated.

A thriving but largely subsistence-based informal sector is a key economic constituency in Harare. Thousands of foreign currency traders can be seen milling around the streets, which suggests money is moving in the informal rather than the banking sector. Vital city systems and infrastructure service provision required by enterprises are in serious distress. The city receives about 400 megalitres of water against a daily demand of over 1,200 megalitres (Gwarisa, 2021). Water shortages are worsened by decayed water pipes which burst daily, leading to over 60% loss of treated water each day. Serious power shortages mean that industries rely on generators for power, which increases transactional costs. Meanwhile, the City of Harare estimates that close to 50% of its road network requires urgent attention. These challenges are exacerbated by illicit rents and these have been noted to bring about calamitous implications for service delivery (Mupandanyama and Mahlangu, 2023).

These issues are all exacerbated by unclear and cumbersome regulatory frameworks. Dawson and Kelsall (2011) have studied rents that emanate from the inefficiency and uncompetitive markets in Harare and conclude that they are anti-developmental, noting that, “the country has come to exhibit a pattern of rent utilisation which is centralised but oriented to the short term, with disastrous results”.

5.3.2. Governance and challenges of structural transformation

Zimbabwe has a narrow concentrated political settlement, in which political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of the ruling ZANU-PF party (Pritchett et al., 2017). This scenario determines and shapes the types, roles and power of players within the structural transformation domain.

ZANU-PF elites are the dominant political actors and determine entry as well as influencing economic policy and distribution of resources. They are also clientelist and extractive, which explains the current economic challenges facing the City of Harare. The ruling party in Zimbabwe has significant economic interests dating back to 1980, when it made significant investments in several holding companies. In a study of economic rents in Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF, the military, the joint operations command, state-owned enterprises, party companies, and capitalists (businesspeople linked to ZANU-PF) were identified as key actors in both Zimbabwe’s and Harare’s economy (Dawson and Kelsall, 2011). As a result, ZANU-PF and its associated institutions are a key feature of virtually every economic activity in the City of Harare, connected through complicated relationships/alliances. These alliances and networks have consolidated and shifted since the November 2017 military intervention, placing the military as a major block to policy redirection.

This section borrows from Resnick’s (2014) concept of vertically divided authority, arguing that the governance dynamics in Harare are influenced by the relationship

whereby the central government controls national policy while the opposition controls the city. While the national constitution envisages the devolution of governmental powers to lower tiers of government, including provinces and local cities, this is yet to be codified in acts of parliament. The governance system remains locked in old legislation that promotes upward accountability and centralised forms of governance. As a result, the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works retains extensive control over local authorities in Harare. The ministry also determines the appointment of senior staff members, including the town clerk, through the local government board. The minister can give policy directives or replace policy decisions made by the city. Because of this control, the ministry can also direct who has access to city business, as all major procurement in the city is centrally directed through the national procurement process.

Additionally, central government introduced a provincial development coordinator in 2020, now known as the provincial secretary. The minister of local government and public works also issued a directive in 2021 allowing development coordinators to be part of council meetings and to receive reports from the mayor and town clerk on the work of the council. These roles conflict and duplicate the work already being done by town councils, acting as another layer of governance that seeks to undermine the influence and impact of urban local authorities controlled by the opposition. Their influence on the economy of Harare thus cannot be overstated.

Land is a key determinant and input in the structural transformation domain. However, management and access to urban land are unclear, due to intersections between state and urban land. There are many instances where the state has taken over city land through proclamations, thus determining who can occupy it. This means that the state also determines who conducts economic activities. For example, the thriving Mbare Musika and Siyaso informal markets, Glen View informal markets, and many others are controlled through the ruling party structures. This interference and control of the informal sector through formal and informal means has had a seriously destabilising effect on urban management. Most of these actors do not pay rent or electricity and thus have a parasitic relationship with the city. In an interview with Jacob Mafume, the mayor of Harare, he noted that the entire Siyaso informal market now illegally connects to city power lines and thus pays no electricity bills.³²

Research shows that the ruling party is connected to the informal sector workers and that benefits from these activities trickle into the Harare provincial structures of the party. The relationship is unclear and informal, but all rental collections for space are not paid to the city and instead allegedly filter into party structures. During discussions with the City of Harare finance department, it became clear that several leakages occur. The city cannot collect rates in any of the informal spaces, particularly in the Mbare suburb, where there are thriving businesses. Consequently, there is an uneasy coexistence of informal and formal rules. The gaps in the law make it possible for the central government to continue to rely on outdated and unconstitutional legislation to

³² Interview with Mayor of Harare, Jacob Mafume, 22 April 2022.

control and direct the affairs of the city and therefore the structural transformation domain.

5.3.3. *Current and potential reforms or interventions*

While the situation looks bleak, there are many opportunities to recapture development and for the City of Harare to push for structural change. There is already sufficient consensus that collaboration with external players such as ACRC could be a catalyst for change. Harare's current and outdated city masterplan was developed nearly 30 years ago, in 1993. But by working closely with city authorities and national government, there is scope for taking advantage of "low-hanging fruit", including in planning and setting a new vision for the city by developing a new spatial transformation programme to guide urban development. However, the city will require support to develop an overarching vision.

There are already ongoing discussions about developing a combined vision document for both City of Harare and Harare Metropolitan Province, bringing together the cities of Harare, Chitungwiza and Norton, and including the local government areas of Epworth and Ruwa. This would be a step in the right direction, considering that Chapter 14 of the new Zimbabwe constitution adopted in 2013 establishes that Harare Metropolitan Council, led by the mayor of the City of Harare, is responsible for planning and policymaking.

In addition to this vision statement, a new innovative financing strategy is required for Harare. Evidence from city budgets over the last ten years shows an overreliance on domestic taxation (service user fees) to finance the provision of services and infrastructure development. Harare is in a precarious financial situation, because of national macroeconomic challenges and the fact that central government has ceased to make fiscal transfers to lower tiers of government in a consistent manner over the last 20 years. New avenues to finance social services and critical infrastructure are urgently needed to drive an economic agenda that also drives growth-enhancing structural transformation.

This proposal for a combined vision statement and innovative financing plan is well supported by city authorities and could be enhanced by ensuring donor and international finance readiness and to attract and transparently manage international finance. Currently, there is a precedent in the Harare Slum Upgrading Finance Facility (HSUFF), pioneered under the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-supported Harare Slum Upgrading Programme, which helped to bankroll incremental slum improvements across the capital.³³ Whilst experimentation with HSUFF has encountered its own fair share of challenges due to a very difficult economic operating environment,

33 Harare Slum Upgrading Finance Facility is a co-created financing arrangement jointly established by the alliance of Dialogue on Shelter, Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and City of Harare under a US\$5 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support citywide slum upgrading interventions. As part of its contribution, City of Harare contributed US\$120,000.00, while the alliance invested US\$80,000.00.

nonetheless, it offers useful experiences on innovative co-resourced and co-managed financing tools.

There needs to be a benchmark study on the informal sector. While the informal sector is a structural constraint in Zimbabwe, its real impact on the economy of the City of Harare remains unknown. There is evidence from Southeast Asia that an informal sector can be harnessed to promote economic growth that supports structural change. A benchmark study is thus critical to quantify the informal sector and the interventions necessary to support enterprise growth. It can also be used to consider the formalisation of the informal sector, including rethinking connections with local and regional value chains to enhance growth.

In addition to policy initiatives, there is an urgent need to directly support private sector growth through training and support for youth sector enterprise creation. Targeted training programmes in partnership with the City of Harare are needed to enhance the transition of SMEs, provide small and targeted grants and create incubator programmes. Given the pervasive nature of the informal sector in Harare and how little is known about this phenomenon, the aforementioned benchmark study on the informal sector is required. The next section looks in more detail at neighbourhood and district economies to enhance understanding, focusing in particular on household microenterprises (HMEs) in the City of Harare.

5.4. Neighbourhood and district economic development

Harare is Zimbabwe's primary economic and commercial hub, absorbing residents from several surrounding local authorities who contribute to an informal sector estimated at 58% of employment in Harare. Zimbabwe's informal economy plays a significant role in poverty reduction, job creation, income, livelihoods and food security enhancement. Approximately 71% of the population (37% in urban areas) lives below the total consumption poverty line of US\$70 per person per month (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2017).

As in other cities, HMEs in Harare suffer similar challenges. But there is little research outlining the specifics of these problems. This section on neighbourhood and district economic development draws from research on HMEs in three neighbourhoods in Harare (Mbare, Glen View and Highfield). It examines the context of HME value chains to better understand their operations in the markets, the economic and political barriers they face, and how their productivity and profitability can be enhanced for financial and environmental sustainability.

5.4.1. Key domain actors

City of Harare, like central government, is unclear on the exact scale, nature, character and magnitude of the informal sector. This affects the development of effective and evidence-based institutional and strategic guidelines to support and/or manage HMEs and Harare's burgeoning informal economy.

The council acknowledges and supports the informal sector with its (albeit skeletal) Informal Business Sector (SMEs) Policy Framework, launched in 2023, and the SMEs Sector Committee, mandated to organise the sector's registration, relocation and revenue generation. This includes setting aside 20% of revenue generated by the informal sector for infrastructure development and public service provision at designated vending sites. There is no evidence that this has been consistently implemented – but it points to the city supporting urban informality.

City of Harare's practice in relation to urban informality is informed by punitive legal and regulatory frameworks, backed by the Urban Councils Act, Food Hygiene byelaws of 1975, the Hawkers and Street Vendors byelaws and Chapter 4 of the Regulation (EC) 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs (Bhila and Chiwenga, 2022). These laws perceive urban informality as an undesirable scourge, inconsistent with the city's ideals and vision of being a world class city by 2025. Citing non-compliance with urban planning regulations and public health, and often instructed by ZANU-PF, over the years City of Harare has instituted massive housing demolitions and illegal vendor displacements, often without sufficient warning, compensation or provisions to rehouse those affected. Recent evictions include those that were conducted in the Mbare informal markets under the guise of Covid-19 containment measures (Mwonzora, 2022). Evictions and demolitions are thus very political.

With the emergence of the opposition MDC in 2000, central government has increasingly used the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works to control and interfere with council operations, particularly in Harare (Kamete, 2006; McGregor, 2013). Empowered by the Urban Councils Act, the ministry vetoes appointments of, and dismisses, MDC/CCC senior council staff, and via directives to the town clerk, operationalises the demolition of vendor stalls and/or evictions of HMEs from marketplaces.

In addition, local authorities are also now mandated to report and take instruction from secretaries for provincial affairs, further emasculating opposition-led councils. In 2021, the new provincial secretary ordered the demolition of "illegal" houses, HME infrastructure and vending sites in Harare and Chitungwiza (Chibamu, 2021). This illustrates the intention to pursue aesthetically "good" urbanism, to the detriment of urban informality. That is, informal developments, be they economic or residential, are viewed as a public eyesore and, in the case of the pandemic, as responsible for fuelling the spread of the health crisis.

National political parties also hold significant sway over municipal elections and the political organisation of the city council. With Harare as its main voting bloc, the opposition party uses rising urban informality and poverty as evidence of ZANU-PF's misgovernance and failure, using policy and practice to champion actions that are supportive of HMEs. One example is publicly pledging allegiance to informal sector associations, such as the Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET) and other residents' associations. For instance, the launch of the Informal Business Sector (SMEs) Policy in 2023 (discussed elsewhere in this report)

demonstrates some level of recognition of economic informality within the City of Harare. Yet, despite this official embrace extended to informal enterprises by the city authorities through policy instruments, there have not been corresponding practical steps towards putting in place the requisite supporting infrastructure to grow the sector.

Following subsequent losses to the MDC/CCC in Harare, ZANU-PF's approach to HMEs has involved both acceptance and repression. Prior to elections, the ruling party has turned a blind eye to HMEs and immediately after voting processes, arbitrary evictions and demolitions are unleashed on informal traders. ZANU-PF has thus instituted massive demolitions of vending stalls and disrupted HME activities after electoral losses, citing vending and hawking laws and the Urban Councils Act. More recently, in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, enforcement of public health regulations was cited as the reason for disrupting HME activities in Harare's central business district.

The Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MWASMED), which is controlled by ZANU PF, also engages directly with informal sector workers and structures. Despite being severely underfunded, the ministry has been instrumental in constructing basic infrastructure, and organising marketing opportunities and capacity development training for HMEs. However, allegations abound that occupational space is often allocated on partisan grounds, with ZANU-PF senior members benefiting by subdividing and then releasing space to HMEs (Gukurume and Oosterom, 2022).

In support of the informal sector, central government's National Financial Inclusion Strategy (2016-2020) channels funds through financial institutions such as the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Corporation (SMEDCO) and the Women's Development Fund (WDF), offering lending and capacity-building opportunities (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2016). While they have successfully provided infrastructure and business services support, they have also been plagued by insufficient resources, disbursement issues, lack of transparency and accountability challenges.

On the other hand, non-traditional banks, such as Steward Bank, have developed innovative financial services available on street pavements that link bank accounts to mobile money platforms at the city scale. In response, under a Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) directive, established banks have set up micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) support desks. However, banks still continue to request collateral security for loans, making their financing mechanisms inaccessible to HMEs.

Voluntary member associations, such as the Small and Medium Enterprises Association of Zimbabwe (SMEAZ) and VISET, also offer support services and provide unified platforms for HMEs, start-ups and other MSMEs to network and generate market linkages for their goods and services and strengthen their advocacy for mainstreaming the informal sector into the economy. Across the country, VISET, for

example, has a membership of 68,000 networked informal traders that share and learn amongst each other.

Finally, HME activities are often impeded by informal powerholders such as the vigilante group, Chipangano, which uses threats of violence to claim and manage urban space in areas like Mbare and other newly established informal trading sites (Maringira and Gukurume, 2021). New area- and sector-specific informal powerholders are now running protection rackets, demanding money from HMEs in exchange for agreeing not to displace them, often with the backing of ZANU-PF.

5.4.2. Governance of the domain

Colonial continuities and discontinuities dominate Zimbabwe and Harare's informal governance through a cocktail of archaic acts and byelaws, including the Regional Town and Planning Act (1976), the Urban Councils Act (1973/1976), the Vagrancy Act (1960) and the Vendors and Hawkers By-Laws (1973) (Moyo, 2018). Central government is also known to gazette statutory instruments to curtail urban informality, such as the Public Health Covid-19 Prevention and Containment Regulations (SI 77/2020), which directed local authorities to close and/or demolish informal infrastructure deemed necessary for Covid-19 containment (Gukurume and Oosterom, 2020).

The Urban Councils Act Section 199 allows local authorities to demolish unhealthy and "illegal" temporary or permanent structures erected without permission. However, it also provides leeway for residents to remove their infrastructure before council demolitions. Statutory Instrument 216 of 1994 proved a turning point for urban informality by legalising non-residential activities, such as hairdressing, carpentry and welding, in residential areas.

5.4.3. Significance to city and national political elites

Harare is a major site for political contestation between the ruling ZANU-PF and the main opposition party, CCC (formerly, the main opposition was MDC). Using patronage politics to control urban spaces and undermine opposition-dominated city councils in areas such as Mbare, ZANU-PF has actively engaged and supported land barons to mobilise party support and extract rents through parallel structures of authority and taxation (Oosterom and Gukurume, 2021; McGregor, 2013).

Political parties view HME-sector players as a source of income and as important voters. In many communal trading spaces in low-income areas, allegiance to or feigned support for ZANU-PF is necessary to operate and protect businesses, as well as to access goods and services only available through ZANU-PF's patronage politics.

5.4.4. Key systems and systemic issues

The failure of city systems provides business opportunities for HMEs in public service delivery. Water services in Harare have been at best erratic, at worst non-existent. This has given way to informal water vending, with residents paying a nominal fee at water

points and privately owned deep wells. This has fuelled the rise of water barons and the politicisation of water access at communal water points. For HMEs that rely on water, such as hair salons and food vendors, the erratic water supply and high cost of accessing clean water from alternative service providers can negatively affect business.

The council is also failing on consistent and safe waste collection and disposal, leaving residents to resort to burning and dumping waste on open sites around the city or into rivers and streams that feed into Lake Chivero, Harare's main water supply, in turn raising the costs of water treatment. Simultaneously, recycling at city level is neither encouraged nor enforced and is carried out mainly by informal wastepickers. The recent controversial Pomona waste-management deal has seen the central government pushing the city to enter a waste-to-energy agreement which would seriously hamper activities for an estimated 500 wastepickers who operate at Pomona dumpsite. Meanwhile, government has promised relocation sites as well as employment opportunities under the waste-to-energy venture.

Serious power outages of up to ten hours a day or more in Harare are also affecting residents and businesses. With higher costs, businesses have turned to alternative energy sources to supplement supply. New HMEs have ventured into firewood and natural gas vending, while existing businesses have shifted to follow electricity availability. For example, welders now work at night, when electricity supply is better, because of the incessant load shedding instituted during the day by the Zimbabwe Electrical Supply Authority (ZESA).

The unreliable and inefficient transportation network in Harare means that gaps are filled by unofficial commuter omnibuses, unlicensed privately owned *mushikashika* taxis, lorries, pickup trucks and dilapidated buses.³⁴ Wheelbarrows and carts are also a frequent feature on Harare roads, carrying heavy luggage for short distances or for displaying wares. These operate after municipal workers finish work to avoid confiscation of carts and wares.

5.4.5. Key development challenges

Reliable information on the scale, magnitude, character and spatial distribution of the informal economy is limited by a fragmented and uncoordinated approach across government ministries, public bodies and local authorities. For instance, the recently pronounced City of Harare's Informal Sector Policy of 2023 by the opposition-led council largely references formal operating spaces as the basis for producing key statistics for economic informality, yet a significant population of informal traders conduct businesses from unofficial sites. HMEs also face challenges relating to the lack of effective and/or adequate labour protection and social security provisions for informal workers, as well as weak collective bargaining and representation of rights.

³⁴ *Mushikashika* are illegal or unregistered transport operators who typically ply urban centres such as Harare.

Furthermore, precarious working conditions and poor workspaces and infrastructure services create market access issues, particularly where formal and informal powerholders erect and maintain physical and/or regulatory barriers to entry and/or trade on urban spaces. The informal economy in Harare is characterised by political patronage and/or politicisation of access to workspaces and vending sites, further reducing the already low contribution made by the informal economy to national and local tax revenues.

5.4.6. *Current and potential reforms or interventions*

- The recent launch of the Informal Sector Policy (SME) in 2023 provides critical openings for reforming the sector through such high-level commitment. For instance, under the strategic pillars, the policy identifies critical areas, such as entrepreneurship development, social protection and addressing the regulatory environment. Having such strategic issues captured in the policy instrument presents some scope for advocacy, especially for organised informal traders' groupings, such as VISET and SMEAZ. However, it is important to note that, notwithstanding the existence of a supportive framework, the policy lacks clear and specific monitoring mechanisms to guide implementation.
- Over the years, the informal sector in Harare has developed both in terms of numbers and level of organisation, as reflected by the informal traders affiliated to such associations as VISET and SMEAZ. It is estimated that, for example, VISET has a membership reaching 68,000, the majority of whom are in the City of Harare. The presence of these institutional structures that are mobilised and capacitated to engage different stakeholders – particularly the state – offers opportunities for reshaping the sector in ways that make it more inclusive and economically profitable for the majority of informal traders in Harare.
- The deepening economic crisis in Zimbabwe is invariably viewed as a national challenge, blocking progress in various sectors of the economy. Whilst this holds in many instances, the resultant dynamics also present unique opportunities for the domain. The attendant growth in the informal sector, for example, has potential for catalysing and reorienting state and non-state institutional structures in ways that mirror such informal trajectories. The recent establishment of the Informal Business Sector Committee for City of Harare's council processes could be read as a crucial shift that not only demonstrates recognition but also aligns the city's institutional architecture with the demands of the sector.
- The growth in grassroots collective savings as an instrument for providing alternative finance for informal traders has potential for creating sustainable funding arrangements that are customised to the needs of informal traders. The savings and lending experience from the SDI-affiliated alliance of Dialogue on Shelter Trust and the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation has potential for providing reform-uploading insights. Related to this, some elements from state-led, sector-specific financial institutions and co-created and co-governed city-level funds (such as the Harare Slum Upgrading Finance Facility) could also contribute valuable lessons to the sector's reform agenda.
- Central government is considering a presumptive tax for different categories of the informal sector, similar to the presumptive tax for transport operators, hairdressers and informal traders introduced in 2005, and another in 2021

targeting business premises and landlords (for properties owned by local authorities and privately). However, failure to pay will result in penalties, regardless of whether any income has been earned.

6. ACRC study in Harare: An overarching analysis

This report has shown how national and city-level politics, urban systems, and particular configurations of actors, agencies, ideas and practices have shaped development in the domains of informal settlements; land and connectivity; structural transformation; and neighbourhood and district economic development in Harare. It has also shown that developmental problems persist, affecting the wellbeing and life prospects of urban dwellers – particularly marginalised groups – and damaging the environment. The holistic analysis presented in this report enables us to identify the most pressing developmental problems in Harare, and the challenges that will likely be encountered in efforts to solve them in an equitable and (environmentally and fiscally) sustainable way. In this concluding section, we sum up the main developmental problems, and propose suitable ways of addressing them, in light of the described challenges.

6.1. Findings and relevance for the political economy of development in the city

In terms of the “city of systems”, this ACRC study in Harare has revealed how varied and complex political and economic processes centred around infrastructure systems produce a multiplicity of dynamics that mediate how urban services are either enabled or denied. The study has amply demonstrated that urban systems within the domains examined in Harare act as arenas for rents extraction. Urban systems are also typified by fierce contestations, which are occasionally interrupted by unexpected moments of collaboration across the political divide. Invariably, it is the central state that has been primarily responsible for the constant tensions within Harare. Power is a potent tool that can either exclude or include particular groups or institutions in terms of governance of, and access to, urban resources.

Earlier sections in this report have reflected on centre–local contestations as a defining feature in the governance of Harare’s urban systems. For example, central government uses state-owned enterprises to usurp urban functions that ordinarily fall within the ambit of Harare. In the same vein, Harare represents more than just a local authority jurisdiction. It also serves as a symbol of power which elevates the stakes. Opposition control of urban councils in the capital city, therefore, introduces discomfiting political dissonance, resulting in the ruling party improvising unorthodox tactics to assert its dominance.

This highlights the significance and centrality of politics in shaping urban spaces. In Harare, and conceivably other urban councils in Zimbabwe, development processes are never really divorced from politics. To confront urban problems, politically nuanced approaches are urgently needed that are sensitive to the limits and complexities of development governance in contested spaces such as Harare. This calls for

exceptionalising each political context and embracing capacity to think and work politically.

The urban infrastructure systems analysis in Harare deployed a city of systems framework to reveal not only the contingent nature of the systems but also how power and politics permeate their operation. Harare's infrastructure systems have faced huge challenges, potentially blocking urban transformation. While an array of informal innovative urban systems has been improvised and experimented with in Harare, these are yet to be officially mainstreamed into infrastructure options. For example, decentralised infrastructure options for water and sanitation, such as boreholes and off-grid sanitation, are gradually becoming more commonplace, but they operate *alongside* – rather than being part of – formal services.

Similarly, informal public transport arrangements have emerged in Harare, yet integration has been slow. Admittedly, some informal infrastructure solutions can still be refined to address such issues as scale, affordability, risks and environmental considerations. In the public transportation sector, for example, safety and security concerns within *mushikashika* taxis reinforce the need for grassroots institutions in the form of commuter operators' associations that have self-regulation mechanisms for policing members. Therefore, while an "informal turn from below" appears to be gaining traction, there is still the need to address official discomfort with informally extended urban infrastructure systems. A potential entry point for catalysing urban change could be through forging collaborations with urban councils that allow for patient learning from the emerging informal infrastructure processes.

Meanwhile, the domain studies have also generated useful political economy insights critical for understanding development processes in Harare. In particular, understanding priority complex problems (PCPs) has helped shed light on structural dynamics impeding progress in the capital. The same PCP process has also contributed towards concrete solutions, highlighting real prospects for unlocking urban transformation.

Findings in the informal settlement domain, for instance, demonstrate the need for an inclusive and comprehensive slum upgrading framework in Harare as an enabling institutional mechanism for guiding progressive responses to the challenge of slums (Nyamangara, et al., 2022). Harare's current regularisation programme focuses mainly on the legal dimension (that is, new laws and regulations) and this has not produced the desired results, either in terms of scale or sustainability. While this timely demonstration of political will in Harare is noteworthy, the approach employed so far exposes the limits of relying on technical fixes at the expense of drawing lessons from informal social practices (McCloughlin, 2014). Here, the proposal for an inclusive and comprehensive approach to slum upgrading also resonates with what Menocal (2014) refers to as getting the "how" right. In the case of Harare's informal settlement domain in particular, and urban development processes in general, an inclusive approach helps to engage relevant stakeholders and decide appropriate solutions.

Emerging results from the land and connectivity domain are also instructive for Harare from a political economy perspective. Chatiza et al. (2022) argue that Harare's disarrayed land management system is due to internal institutional weaknesses and gaps in intergovernmental cooperation. This has resulted in an increase in informal land developments, including on environmentally fragile sites, such as wetlands. Additionally, informal land developments have meant that Harare has missed huge opportunities to deploy land value capture instruments. Extrajudicial land allocations demonstrate a mismatch between real demand and the pace of land delivery. Furthermore, they open the possibility for land-related corruption in Harare. Institutional weaknesses related to land administration systems in Harare have created room for illicit rents extraction benefiting political elites and corrupt officials. However, notwithstanding these seemingly intractable challenges, City of Harare exhibits a high-level commitment to fundamentally address its chaotic land management system (such as digitising land records and regularisation), offering scope for incremental urban reforms.

6.2. Prospects for resolving domain-level development problems

This ACRC study has outlined political contestations across different scales that have impeded the extension of urban systems. State-owned enterprises deployed by central government in opposition-led Harare to take over infrastructure functions demonstrate the magnitude of political contestations and reflect how urban services provision is deeply embedded in politics. Furthermore, domains act as the loci of politics in Harare. The study of the land and connectivity domain, for instance, shows how land invariably becomes a political resource in the City of Harare.

But, while this highlights the contiguous complexities associated with Harare's development landscape, there remain many possibilities for charting inclusive and transformative pathways for urban development in the city. The following sections cite specific opportunities relevant for both urban domains and urban systems that have the potential to tackle Harare's complex problems and to pursue an inclusive urban reform agenda, while illustrating how these align with ACRC's theory of change.

6.3. Harare's reform opportunities for urban development

City of Harare presents huge scope for building multiparty platforms with potential for advancing reform agendas that can unlock transformative urban change. Table 3 outlines the potential entry points for catalysing urban reform processes and pathways for resolving Harare's structural problems. However, a politically nuanced approach is needed when confronting the complex problems in each domain. For instance, the digitisation of land records affords enormous opportunities for improvements in Harare's land and connectivity domain. But the order and predictability that it promises may eliminate or minimise chances for illicit rent extraction. Under such circumstances, an awareness of the manifold interests involved and the constraining nature of power will be of utmost importance.

However, for some of the opportunities outlined in Table 3, the scope for urban reform and addressing PCPs is fairly straightforward and evident, such as Harare's Ease of Doing Business Programme, NDS- 1, Harare's Informal Sector Policy and the Urban Informality Forum. These opportunities constitute potential "low-hanging fruits" for the domains of informal settlements, land and connectivity, neighbourhood and district economic development, and structural transformation.

Table 3: Potential entry points for catalysing urban reform in Harare

Urban development domain	Potential catalytic opportunities	Relevance for ACRC and implications for PCPs and urban reform processes
Land and connectivity	Current drive within City of Harare on the digitisation of land records.	This has scope for steering regulated urban developments that maximise the city's capacity to derive full value from its land resources.
	Implementation of the National Human Settlement Policy 2020.	This clearly recognises the need for a national regularisation protocol (Section 61).
	Support for an increase in green urbanism in Harare.	This presents massive opportunities for mainstreaming crosscutting issues relating to climate change.
	Reintroduction of mass transport systems.	While this helps to address transportation systems challenges, it also contributes towards the climate change mitigation agenda.
	Deregulation of public transportation system.	This has the potential to address affordability concerns through widening public transportation options.
	Existence of the recently introduced Emergency Road Rehabilitation Programme.	Besides enabling the improvement of infrastructure, this contributes towards testing out infrastructure financing mechanisms.
Informal settlements	Existence of citywide informal settlement data.	This constitutes robust evidence confirming the challenges of informality and opportunities for resolving domain problems.
	Presence of varied urban upgrading/regularisation experiences.	Harare's urban space is filled with experiences from state and non-state actors. UDCORP and Slum Dwellers International (SDI) Zimbabwe are perfect examples.
	Implementation of City of Harare Slum Upgrading Strategy 2012.	Apart from demonstrating political commitment, the challenges encountered with the earlier strategy provide pointers to the "missing links".
	Creation and continuation of activities within the Urban Informality Forum.	This reflection space has significant potential for catalysing urban reform-oriented processes.

	Presence of grassroots in the form of mobilised urban poor communities.	SDI groups and other organised collectives can help activate and inform the urban reform agenda.
	Realisation of City of Harare Pro-Poor Water Policy initiative 2023.	Although this is originating at the departmental scale, it still reflects institutional appetite for an inclusive urban agenda.
	Realisation of City of Harare Decentralisation Initiative 2018.	This could help trigger bottom-up urban development and also enhance opportunities for revenue collection, which in turn may improve urban services.
	Realisation of National Development Strategy 1 (2021 – 2025).	This establishes the policy direction at the national level and commitment towards regularisation (Section 613 – 618).
Neighbourhood and district economic development	Realisation of City of Harare Informal Sector Development Policy.	This sets the relevant city-scale institutional framework for addressing NDED domain challenges.
	Strengthening of City of Harare Small and Medium Enterprises Committee.	This creates the appropriate institutional structure for addressing NDED domain challenges.
	Realisation of National Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Policy 2020-2023.	This sets the relevant national institutional framework for addressing NDED domain challenges.
	Realisation of Harare SMEs Sector Infrastructure Development Plan.	This provides the ideal scope for connecting NDED-related urban reform processes.
	Realisation of National Financial Inclusion Strategy.	This highlights interest at the national level to chart an inclusive development agenda, for example through designing pro-poor financial tools.
	Current drive towards regularisation and licensing of HMEs.	This has the capacity to address the disconnect between formal- and informal-sector economic activities, especially linking the latter to opportunities.
	Redevelopment of Glen View Area 8 Home Industry Complex.	This can act as a reservoir of NDED insights on how to practically address challenges and strengthen the sector's institutional capacities.
Structural transformation	Realisation of City of Harare Strategic Plan 2012-2025.	This indicates Harare's interest in and commitment to visioning processes which resonate with proposed solutions to the PCP.
	Instigation of Harare Combination Master Plan Process.	This presents a timely opportunity for ACRC experiences to link with a very current visioning

		process (albeit this is being constrained by a funding gap).
	Implementation of Ease of Doing Business Programme 2017.	This has the potential for attracting investment into Harare.
	Implementation of City of Harare Decentralisation Initiative 2018.	This has potential for promoting inclusive and participatory decisionmaking.
	Implementation of Devolution Agenda.	The fact that this is premised on constitutional provisions indicates prospects for actualisation or pushing urban reform agendas anchored to the devolution agenda; however, this subject is contested.

6.4. Relevance to crosscutting issues

6.4.1. Climate change

Trends in global warming have led to temperature extremes, changing rainfall patterns, stress to water service delivery, and incidences of flooding (Ndebele-Murisa and Mubaya, 2019). In the rainfall season in 2020-2021 and 2023-2024, Harare experienced unusually heavy flooding in low-lying suburbs like Budiriro. Some 15,135 Harare properties were classified as dysfunctional and irregular on the basis of their unofficial land tenure, infrastructure arrangements and vulnerability, with some of them being in flood-prone areas (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021). Increasingly, climate change is damaging the health and earning power of the most marginalised in the city.

Water equity programming and environmental regulatory capacity are areas that the city must attend to as part of raising its resilience to climate risks, including droughts, flooding, epidemics and storms. Harare also has an environmental committee supported by technical staff. However, city-specific data on climate change impacts are incomplete and/or not readily available. It has to be acknowledged that even where the city is clear on climate risk sites, some developments that are detrimental to the environment and increasing exposure to climate change impacts have still been implemented. This particularly holds for high-income developments linked to political elites, such as the Long Cheng Mall development. The latter was undertaken on a wetland towards the west of Harare.

The 2020 Zimbabwe National Human Settlements Policy (ZNHSP), the National Climate Change Policy and draft Land Policy Framework show evidence of ongoing reform initiatives, including European Union-funded and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-implemented land survey reforms and capacity development, UNDP-UNICEF execution of urban resilience, and other national initiatives. Embedded in the ZNHSP are proposals to regulate informal settlements. The previous housing policy and legislation were dominated by conventional approaches that included

mobilising resources and capacitating state and subnational institutions to build housing units. However, the sheer scale of current informality led to the replacement of the National Housing Policy with the new National Human Settlements Policy, with a focus on upgrading informal settlements.

Informal settlement upgrading has also been highlighted in the Climate Change Response Strategy document of 2014 and the National Climate Change Policy of 2017. However, how these progressive policy proposals will be implemented is of concern. The informal settlement domain has been identified as the most vulnerable to climate change, demanding urgent action in building climate change resilience capacity (Government of Zimbabwe, 2015; 2019). Different actors are active in this domain, with each pushing for a different approach. Consensus building is yet to materialise, and more is required to deal with ideological differences.

The debate concerning wetlands in Harare has in recent years attracted significant policy-level and academic attention (Zhakata, 2021). Wetlands serve as important natural reservoirs that gradually discharge water into streams and rivers. Wetlands also act as sponges that retain water and, in the context of climate change, help cushion residents from the impacts of phenomena such as droughts. However, informal housing developments have been criticised for fuelling the occupation of wetlands, thereby disrupting and threatening the city's water supply system. Ruzvidzo (2020), for example, observes that an estimated 30 wetlands in Harare are under threat from informal residential developments. Yet evidence from Harare shows that regulatory instruments governing wetlands are conveniently waived when powerful elites are involved in illegal land developments (Community Water Alliance, 2021). Chinese projects have also been accused of flouting wetlands guidelines, ostensibly in the interest of the central state's Look East Policy.³⁵ For example, the central government allowed the contested Longcheng shopping complex to be built, despite strong reservations from environmental rights groups and Harare officials, highlighting centre–local tensions.

6.4.2. Pandemics and repeated disease outbreaks

Cholera and typhoid have intermittently affected the Zimbabwean capital. These outbreaks are the result of uncollected refuse and stressed city health, water and sanitation systems. A cholera outbreak in 2008–2009 caused 4,300 deaths in Harare, with another occurring in 2018. These cholera outbreaks proved that urban boreholes could not be considered as a permanent solution to water challenges (Muchadenyika and Williams, 2018).

Covid-19 also affected the City of Harare operations and the residents in general. Aside from the health implications, during the pandemic, urban mobility shocks were also experienced when the government banned non-ZUPCO urban transport vehicles,

³⁵ The Look East Policy is Zimbabwe's foreign policy thrust characterised by the establishment of closer socioeconomic and political ties with China, in response or to counter Western-imposed sanctions.

based on Statutory Instrument 200 of 2020 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020b). Like other local authorities, Harare City was asked to clean up and renovate workspaces used by SMEs and informal traders (Bill Watch, 2020) with a three-day ultimatum being issued by the Office of Harare's Provincial Development Coordinator (Chidakwa and Maphosa, 2021). Following the expiry of the ultimatum, authorities embarked on massive demolitions. Affected operators lost their property and trading spaces. This triggered vendors to move to street trading, using carts to sell their wares (Toriro and Chirisa, 2021), as well as night trading, door-to-door selling, and car-boot sales (Kiaka et al., 2021).

6.5. Fit with ACRC's theory of change

The study findings from the City of Harare have demonstrated some degree of alignment with ACRC's theory of change. The significance of mobilised citizens, robust evidence, enhanced state capacity, elite commitment and reform coalitions all came out strongly across the domains, city systems and political settlement studies. For instance, the informal settlement domain research established how the presence of SDI-affiliated organised groups have become a critical tool for engaging the state, especially City of Harare around potentially transformative and scalable settlement upgrading pilots. However, the findings also indicate that beyond the presence of mobilised citizens, there has to be a framework of collaboration that defines specific terms for inclusive settlement upgrading. This helps not only to guarantee enduring practices but also introduces some level of predictability to the collaborations. The experiences from the Dzivarasekwa Extension settlement upgrading pilot under the Harare Slum Upgrading Pilot shared elsewhere in this report are instructive here.

Both the city systems and domain studies have shown the importance of robust data in helping to unlock transformative pathways for the City of Harare. Current processes aimed at generating citywide data on housing informality through joint settlement and enumeration activities illustrate some realisation of the need for evidence regarding the extent and nature of the informal settlement challenge. Consistent with this evidence thrust, City of Harare has also rolled out an initiative focusing on digitisation of land records as a way of improving land administration procedures. The land and connectivity domain, for example, revealed knowledge gaps in relation to land records for the City of Harare, citing how this has fuelled land corruption by both fraudulent council staff and political elites. The findings also illustrate how technical and financial capacities within the City of Harare are key to enabling coproduction of robust evidence. City of Harare, for instance, has been hamstrung by the lack of information and communication technologies. These findings reinforce the significance of enhanced state capacity, which happens to be a key conditionality for urban transformation under the ACRC theory of change.

The city systems findings from Harare have demonstrated the importance of elite commitment as a vital ingredient in catalysing transformative change within City of Harare's infrastructure systems. Elite commitment may be operationalised through legislative and policy frameworks. Resource allocations through annual city budgets

also provide evidence of institutional support at the highest level of council. For example, the recent launch of the SMEs Policy by the City of Harare (discussed earlier in this report under Section 5.4) highlights such commitment. However, the political settlement study in Harare has also shown that elite commitment is mediated by multiple and complex political interests within the City of Harare. Political settlement findings have indicated that the City of Harare is an arena for political contestations across political party lines, scuttling transformation agendas within domains. This means that notwithstanding the presence of progressive policy frameworks, such as the SMEs Policy, ruling party elites can still potentially block transformation within the NDED domain. Politics, therefore, occasionally overrides whatever elite commitment is in place, especially if there are opportunities for illicit rents or electoral mileage to be gained. It is important to note, though, that interferences with elite commitment do not always emanate from centre–local contestations. Instead, there are instances when the opposition-run City of Harare has, on its own, failed to translate elite commitment into practical inclusive settlement upgrading programmes, even in the presence of a Harare Slum Upgrading Strategy adopted in 2012.³⁶

7. Implications for future research and interventions

The ACRC study in Harare has revealed significant opportunities for further research and points to a range of interventions. Research should include exploring the roles, politics and power of actors at the domain scale and how these intersect with how the domain performs. Below, we present some of the novel insights that have emerged from the findings, as well as dimensions that still require further clarity.

7.1. Emerging insights from the findings

While it has always appeared as if informal markets politics is a localised phenomenon, the NDED findings indicate a different picture altogether. The NDED study findings from the Glen View Area 8 Furniture Complex, for instance, show that Mbare is controlled by local-level political activists from the ruling party, ZANU PF. This means that any subsequent work within the domain has to pay particular attention to the politics of urban markets in the City of Harare. That is, there is a risk of either side of the political divide perceiving any intervention targeting the market as a way to prop up the other party. A politically nuanced stance towards markets is, thus, critical, even beyond the documented hotspot of Mbare. Under the land and connectivity domain, the findings reveal that, despite weakened land administration systems within the City of Harare, there appear to be pockets of technical and political elite commitment at all the three scales of the state. This demonstrates that, notwithstanding the prevalence of illicit land deals across the City of Harare, there is potential for charting urban reform pathways. The informal settlement domain shows that even ruling party grassroots elites, at some point, acknowledge the need to respond to the official procedures for

³⁶ Harare Slum Upgrading Strategy – a settlement upgrading framework adopted by the City of Harare in 2012 under the Harare Slum Upgrading Programme.

land acquisition. This does appear to be a huge shift from what has generally been depicted regarding the dominance of extra-legal and politicised land access processes.

7.2. Areas for further research

While the study results have cast some light on how domains and systems operate in Harare, paving the way for exploring transformative urban pathways, a few areas still call for further inquiry. The Harare study illustrates how contestations within domains are complexified by prospects for electoral politics and illicit rents. The study also demonstrates that domains also experience moments of convenient collaboration across political lines. This is demonstrated especially within the informal settlements and land and connectivity domains, where political parties collude around land deals. There are, however, areas that still require further illumination. Below we summarise some of these potential spheres for additional investigations.

1. The informal settlement domain is evidently contested. However, a gap exists in terms of understanding how “climatising the informal settlement agenda” might depoliticise the question of land and housing informality in the City of Harare. During the foundation phase, evidence seemed to point towards the informality–climate nexus having scope for securing convergence, but this was not sufficiently explored. This subject, thus, requires some additional scrutiny to help shed light on some potential openings for pursuing a transformative agenda for the City of Harare.
2. Further research is required to map power in these settlements and explore the possibilities and political implications of user-led service provision initiatives.
3. More research is required to recommend clear policy and programmatic options to address the concerns of affected parties, especially informal sector workers and HMEs, with regards to improving viability of their enterprises.
4. Additional inquiry could explore the specific conditions that catalyse and sustain elite commitment, linking this with the role of reform coalitions. That is, research could examine the role that could be played by existing mobilised and organised citizens deploying reform coalitions-like spaces in aiding and instituting sustained elite commitment to progressive urban transformation programmes in the City of Harare.
5. It remains unclear how operationalisation of Zimbabwe’s devolution agenda, as an inherently political process, may affect City of Harare’s transformation agenda. The ruling elites, for instance, appear to be blocking the establishment of Provincial Metropolitan Councils in line with the devolution thrust from the findings. Additional inquiry could, therefore, explore how this devolution agenda intersects with opportunities for urban transformation in a city like Harare.

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