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*Land for Housing: A Political Resource – Reflections from Zimbabwe’s Urban Areas**

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When the Zimbabwean government launched the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in 1999, an international outcry followed, with Zimbabwe described as an international pariah state. Zimbabwe entered a prolonged socio-economic and political crisis. While conventional opposition attacks the FTLRP for its negative impacts on agriculture, food security and economic growth, this article argues that the programme has also had widespread impacts on access to housing land. Over the years, the main political tool used by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU[PF]) was land, especially in rural areas. Later, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, ZANU(PF) used peri-urban farms to bolster its waning support in the urban constituencies. Through ZANU(PF)-aligned co-operatives and land barons, the party became a major player in deciding who had access to land for housing. On the other hand, the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) tried to use its majority control of urban areas to give its supporters land for housing, albeit with limited success. MDC-controlled urban administrations were incapacitated, as most urban land was under a de facto ZANU(PF) administration. This article focuses in particular on the allocation of housing land between 2000 and 2012 in Zimbabwe’s major cities. The ZANU(PF) approach to housing bypassed urban planning regulations, with catastrophic effects on urban infrastructure planning. Further, the article explains developments in council-led housing and the role of non-council actors in housing provision. The Zimbabwean experience shows that it is not enough for a political party to be voted into power; rather, controlling resources such as land is a vital consideration in urban governance and development.

Introduction

The challenges of urbanisation and housing in African cities are well defined. One of the prominent challenges is the informalisation of cities, in which informal housing and economic activities are dominant. In urban literature, there is a wide acceptance of the growth of informal settlements and the informalisation of formal settlements in African cities.¹ As such, many of the cities and towns in Africa south of the Sahara are dealing with crises which are compounded by: rapid population growth, particularly in peri-urban areas; lack of access to

* Some of the interviews used in this article were conducted during field research for an MPhil dissertation submitted (November 2013) to the School of Government, University of the Western Cape. All interviews were conducted by the author.

¹ See, for example, S. Bekker and G. Therborn (eds), *Power and Powerlessness: Capital Cities in Africa* (Cape Town, HSRC Press and CODESRIA, 2012); P. Harrison, A. Todes and V. Watson, *Planning and Transformation: Learning from the Post-Apartheid Experience* (New York, Routledge, 2008); R. Grant, *Globalizing City: The Urban and Economic Transformation of Accra, Ghana* (Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 2009).

shelter, infrastructure and services by predominantly poor populations; weak local governments; and serious environmental issues.² Further, the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN–Habitat) proposes that ‘as the urbanisation of African poverty makes further progress, the prospects of a dignified and productive life continues to elude the poorest among Africans’.³ Growing informality presents city governments with opportunities to devise new, innovative and inclusive urban development and housing methods. At the same time, increasing informality creates severe challenges of urban services provision.

Mike Davis points to a disturbing picture of African cities, with more than 75 per cent of the urban population in Nigeria, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Sudan living in slums.⁴ However, such figures have been refuted by Garth Myers, who questioned the data sources, data authenticity, and the lack of a functional definition of what constitutes a slum.⁵ Despite this, UN–Habitat argues most recently that the average African urban population living in slum areas was 61.7 per cent in 2012.⁶ The prevalence of slums demonstrates the extent and magnitude of the housing challenge in African cities. Further, the decreasing state engagement in low-income housing in sub-Saharan Africa has ‘resulted in increasing informalisation of housing provision for the majority of urban dwellers, while the minority benefit from increased formal housing market activity’.⁷

Academic views on African urbanisation are diverse. Afro-pessimists argue that urbanisation without development is what has contributed to the image of African cities as degrading, irrecoverable and hopeless places.⁸ Other scholars argue that African cities are characterised by ‘unregulated growth, limited opportunities for gainful employment in the formal economy, severe environmental degradation, lack of decent and affordable housing, failing and neglected infrastructure, absence of basic social services, pauperisation, criminality, negligent city-management, and increasing inequalities’.⁹ This in itself shows an urban crisis in perpetuity. These challenges are taking place against the backdrop of weak, underfunded and often contested urban governments.

Simon Bekker and Goran Therborn point to sub-Saharan African cities as portraying ‘powerlessness to implement one’s own plans; powerlessness in front of massive immigration; in terms of pervasive informality and the basic service demands of exploding populations; powerlessness in front of ethnopolitical violence’, making Africa a continent of slum cities.¹⁰ The capacity of African cities to manage and respond to urbanisation is often weak, presenting enormous challenges of service provision. Central to the management of urbanisation and the provision of services is the relationship between central and urban governments. In present-day urban political realities, service delivery is used as a source and resource for political agency. For example, in the period since 2010, city council struggles in Lusaka, Zambia arose from

2 V. Watson, ‘“The Planned City Sweeps the Poor Away ...”: Urban Planning and 21st Century Urbanisation’, *Progress in Planning*, 72, 3 (2009), pp. 151–93.

3 UN–Habitat, *State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets* (Nairobi, UN–Habitat, 2010), p. 2.

4 M. Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London, Verso, 2005).

5 A.G. Myers, *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice* (London and New York, Zed Books, 2011).

6 UN–Habitat, *Global Report on Human Settlements 2013: Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility* (Nairobi, UN–Habitat, 2013).

7 P. Jenkins, H. Smith and P.Y. Wang, *Planning and Housing in the Rapidly Urbanising World* (London and New York, Routledge, 2007), p. 229.

8 F. Locatelli and P. Nugent, ‘Introduction’, in F. Locatelli and P. Nugent (eds), *African Cities: Competing Claims on Urban Spaces* (Leiden, Brill, 2009), pp. 1–13.

9 M.J. Murray and A.G. Myers (eds), *Cities in Contemporary Africa* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 1.

10 S. Bekker and G. Therborn, ‘Conclusion’, in Bekker and Therborn (eds), *Power and Powerlessness*, p. 194.

inter-party power politics, with the party in power nationally actively constraining the opposition-led city council in order to prevent it from developing successful initiatives and creating a springboard for future electoral victory at national level.¹¹ Consequently, ‘cities are sites of contestation marked by deeply contested politics’.¹² Moreover, Daniel Esser argues that the political impasse prevalent in African cities governed by opposition parties is a result of incomplete decentralisation, in which the devolution of functions is not matched with a re-allocation of resources.¹³ Thus the democratisation and resource autonomy of urban governments is critical to the delivery of urban services and the functioning of cities.

In order to understand how entrenched political struggles between central and local governments affect the functioning of cities, we need to focus our analysis on the delivery of urban services in such contested environments. Zimbabwe’s major cities provide an opportunity for such analysis. Urban governance is seemingly entangled in the contested realms of socio-economic and political relations of power. The delivery of urban services such as housing is thus politicised and highly contested, as this article demonstrates.

Zimbabwe’s Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) began in earnest in 2000. Land reform had lasting repercussions for the governance and development of Zimbabwe. At the same time, the urban political landscape witnessed the emergence, ascendancy and dominance of the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), in the running of urban affairs, to the consternation of the ruling party, ZANU(PF). It was unimaginable for a party in government to lack a presence in local government.¹⁴ The absence of central government representation at local level made political players at central government level wary of losing political support, fearing the road to political exit. The fear emanated from the perception of a rival in creation: the problem was no longer simply about the functions of local government, but about political infighting and survival.¹⁵ The governance of urban areas became hotly contested, turning urban councils into significant sites of political struggle.

There are acute housing shortages in Zimbabwe’s urban areas. The housing challenge is constrained by a number of factors, chief among them the availability of suitable and affordable land. In this regard, the government of Zimbabwe admits that there are problems ‘associated with blockages to availability and actual delivery of land for low-cost and/or low-income housing’.¹⁶ Principally, this places whoever has control of land for housing in a powerful position. Most peri-urban farms are under the control of central government and, by extension, ZANU(PF), making the party a major player in urban land allocation.

Ordinarily and at law, land allocation functions reside in local authorities and central government through the state land office. However, since 2000, countering the prominence of the MDC in governing cities and urban areas, a new approach to housing land allocation emerged. Suddenly, local authorities were unable to perform land allocation functions, with ZANU(PF) party structures reigning supreme. Land in urban areas was used as a way of managing the ordinary person’s political life, through chanting ZANU(PF) slogans and songs at most housing

11 D. Resnick, ‘In the Shadow of the City: Africa’s Urban Poor in Opposition Strongholds’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49, 1 (2011), pp. 141–66.

12 J. Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London, Routledge, 2006).

13 D.E. Esser, ‘“When We Launched the Government’s Agenda ...”: Aid Agencies and Local Politics in Urban Africa’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 50, 3 (2012), pp. 397–420.

14 A.Y. Kamete, ‘The Return of the Jettisoned: ZANU(PF)’s Crack at “Re-Urbanizing” in Harare’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2 (2006), pp. 255–71.

15 Kamete, ‘The Return of the Jettisoned’, p. 257; M. Keating, ‘Size, Efficiency and Democracy: Consolidation, Fragmentation and Public Choice’, in D. Judge, G. Stoker and H. Wolman (eds), *Theories of Urban Problems* (London, Sage, 1995), pp. 117–34.

16 Government of Zimbabwe, *Second National Housing Convention Report*, 29–30 October 2009, Elephant Hills Hotel, Victoria Falls (Harare, Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities, 2009), p. xiv.

gatherings. This article explores how ZANU(PF) managed to manipulate the system of land allocation. Attention is given to the process of land allocation, conditions attached and the consequences for urban planning and development.

This research was conducted in the cities of Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo and Mutare. The article is based on 31 interviews conducted with people drawn from urban councils (mayors and councillors), administrative heads of city departments, practising planners within and outside government ministries and departments, international development agencies, community-based and civil society organisations, political parties, and research institutes training urban governance professionals.¹⁷

The Defeat of ZANU(PF) and MDC Ascendancy in Urban Administration

The period after 2000 saw the demise of ZANU(PF) hegemony in urban administration. At the same time, it saw the rise of the MDC in controlling urban local authorities. The contest between ZANU(PF) and the MDC over the administration of urban areas grew in importance. For ZANU(PF), the situation was unbecoming and 'intolerable', as MDC control of urban areas grew with each election. Thus ZANU(PF) tried to wrest back control over MDC-run local authorities, and a 'cat and mouse' relationship ensued between the two. Dele Olowu argues that, within a decade, most of the elements of good governance had been eroded as a result of the power struggle at the national centre, and of legislative changes to neutralise the growing power of the opposition to the ruling party, especially in Bulawayo and Harare.¹⁸ In particular, ZANU(PF) used three instruments to undermine the functioning of MDC-controlled urban councils: the local government minister; changes to the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29: 15); and ZANU(PF) party structures, including youth militia.

The battle to control urban areas resulted in the sacking of opposition executive mayors and their replacement with commissions loyal to ZANU(PF).¹⁹ Historian Terence Ranger narrates the ordeal as:

Elected executive mayors have been dismissed; whole municipal councils have been sacked; commissions appointed by the state have attempted to run cities. A whole series of new state authorities – governors for both Harare and Bulawayo; district administrators for the townships – have been inserted above and into the cities.²⁰

In the capital city, Harare, after the sacking of the mayor, Elias Mudzuri, in April 2003, and the subsequent resignation of a number of councillors in protest, the situation became worse as of December 2004, when not enough elected councillors remained to make a quorum.²¹ The local government minister appointed commissioners to run city affairs in accordance with the Urban Councils Act. These commissioners were ZANU(PF) senior officials, and their term was continually extended in contravention of the Urban Council Act. Chirisa and Jonga sum

17 These are 5 from central government ministries, 5 from urban social movements, 6 from local authorities, 7 from non-governmental organisations and international development agencies, 3 from political parties and 5 from consultancy, practising planners and research institutes.

18 D. Olowu, 'Decentralization and Local Government in the Zimbabwean Constitution', in N. Kersting (ed), *Constitution in Transition: Academic Inputs for a New Constitution in Zimbabwe* (Harare, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2009), pp.117–18.

19 Mayors sacked and replaced by ZANU(PF) commissions are Elias Mudzuri (Harare), Misheck Shoko (Chitungwiza), Francis Dhlakama (Chegutu) and Misheck Kagurabadza (Mutare).

20 T.O. Ranger, 'City Versus State in Zimbabwe: Colonial Antecedents of the Current Crisis', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 1, 2 (July 2007), p. 1.

21 A.Y. Kamete, 'For Enhanced Civic Participation in Local Governance: Calling Tyranny to Account in Harare', *Environment and Urbanization*, 21, 1 (2009), pp. 59–75.

it as the ‘defeat of democracy in council business’;²² while Kamete describes it as an assault on democracy.²³

In June 2006, Zimbabwe’s government issued a directive compelling all local authorities to transfer all water and sewerage services to a parastatal, the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), at zero cost. One can argue that the drastic shift was meant to weaken MDC-run local authorities. Urban councils lost substantial amounts of revenue, as water had been a cash cow. Further, the government of Zimbabwe ‘continued to treat ZINWA as an extension of itself, financially propping it up, and defending it to the hilt even in the face of palpable operational deficiencies to further its political objectives’.²⁴ In mid 2008, a cholera epidemic claimed more than 4,000 lives.²⁵ In January 2009, the government backtracked, and water and sewerage functions were handed back to local authorities. However, the move attracted resistance from ZINWA, since the parastatal did not want to relinquish assets and power to local authorities. As of 2014, those urban councils whose water is still under ZINWA control provide operational challenges between themselves and the parastatal.²⁶

In 2008, the Urban Councils Act was amended to include (i) the abolition of the executive mayoral system and re-introduction of the ceremonial mayoral system, and (ii) the appointment of special interests councillors, as well as the appointment, by the local government minister, of ceremonial mayors who did not have to be councillors.²⁷ Reversion to the ceremonial mayoral system was apparently an attempt to scuttle the power and control of MDC executive mayors in managing urban affairs. Further, section 114 of the Urban Councils Act gives the local government minister the powers to suspend and dismiss elected councillors. Thus a political party in control of central government can (ab)use section 114 to frustrate citizen’s choices at local authority level. During the Inclusive Government (2009–13), ZANU(PF) retained the local government ministry, with Ignatius Chombo as the minister. The minister used these powers to dismiss democratically elected councillors, thereby overshadowing the will of the local citizens.²⁸

To cement ZANU(PF)’s control over urban areas, the party used unfettered powers of the local government minister, such as appointing special interest councillors and senior city management staff, setting conditions of service for councillors and staff, and suspending and dismissing councillors. Many felt that special interest councillors brought nothing special to council chambers except ZANU(PF) loyalty. In conformance with Statutory Instrument 94 of 2010, Minister Chombo appointed 86 special interest councillors, to complement the 389 elected councillors. It emerged, however, that ‘most appointed councillors in urban councils turned out to be ZANU(PF) candidates who had lost elections’.²⁹ In brief, special interest councillors

22 I. Chirisa and W. Jonga, ‘Urban Local Governance in the Crucible: Empirical Overtones of Central Government Meddling in Local Urban Councils Affairs in Zimbabwe’, *Theoretical and Empirical Research in Urban Management*, 3, 12 (August 2009), p. 176.

23 A. Kamete, ‘In Defence of National Sovereignty? Urban Governance and Democracy in Zimbabwe’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 21, 2 (2003), pp. 193–213.

24 M. Musemwa, ‘From “Sunshine City” to a Landscape of Disaster: The Politics of Water, Sanitation and Disease in Harare, Zimbabwe, 1980–2009’, *Journal of Developing Societies*, 26, 2 (2010), pp. 165–206.

25 ICG, *Zimbabwe: Engaging the Inclusive Government*, African Briefing No. 59 (Brussels, International Crisis Group, 2009).

26 These include the following towns: Karoi, Hwange, Gwanda, Mutoko, Mvurwi, Gokwe, Chivhu and Plumtree.

27 Chirisa and Jonga, ‘Urban Local Governance in the Crucible’.

28 Examples include the dismissal of 16 MDC councillors between September 2008 and January 2011 by the local government ministry; see N. Musekiwa, ‘The Role of Local Authorities in Democratic Transitions’, in E.V. Masunungure and J.M. Shumba (eds), *Zimbabwe: Mired in Transition* (Harare, Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe and Weaver Press, 2012), pp. 230–51.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 245.

were there to protect ZANU(PF) interests and make MDC-controlled urban councils ungovernable.³⁰ The role of ZANU(PF) through the local government ministry was not, it seemed, to foster service delivery. Rather it appeared to be aimed at making MDC-run urban councils fail.

The March 2008 elections brought major changes to the governance of urban councils. All municipalities, town councils and town boards remained MDC strongholds, with the MDC winning the majority of ward seats.³¹ In particular, the MDC won 29 and ZANU(PF) one out of the 30 urban councils.³² This indicates the total rejection of ZANU(PF) and the trust given to the MDC by the urban electorate. In practice, the election result ushered in another 'urban governance war', as ZANU(PF) launched a spirited comeback. The problems of governing urban areas were further compounded by the 'spatial unruliness' of ZANU(PF) youth, who defied the 'spatial planning framework as reflected in existing legal and regulatory controls'.³³

During the Inclusive Government, the firing and dismissal of MDC elected councillors and mayors by the ZANU(PF) minister continued unabated. In fact, 'ZANU(PF) sought to undermine councils run by the MDC by all means possible; formal and otherwise'.³⁴ Between September 2008 and January 2012, 21 councillors were suspended, with 16 of them totally dismissed by the minister of local government. Confirming political rivalry at the centre of urban governance struggles, all suspended councillors were from the MDC. Further, between May and June 2012, Chombo suspended the mayor, deputy mayor and one councillor in Chinhoyi municipality, who were all from the MDC.³⁵

Political contradictions in Mutare city council further demonstrate ZANU(PF)'s appetite to destabilise MDC-run urban councils. Mutare city was dominated by MDC councillors under the leadership of MDC mayor Brian James. Despite significant progress by the local authority in improving service delivery, local challenges resulted in the mayor being suspended and finally dismissed.³⁶ The mayor was evicted from his offices by ZANU(PF) youth under the supervision of Esau Mupfumi, a ZANU(PF) senior official in Mutare.³⁷ The firing of MDC councillors became a well-established ZANU(PF) strategy to destabilise the functioning of local authorities.

In addition to the destabilising force from ZANU(PF), there were also internal party struggles in MDC-run councils. In February 2010, the MDC fired all its 24 councillors in Chitungwiza municipality, citing corruption, misdeeds and defiance to party directives. The MDC spokesperson argued:

They [expelled councillors] are no longer MDC councillors. They have been fired for lack of good governance, accountability, failure to deliver and to live up to the mandate given them by the people. They have also been dismissed for defying the party. They have been fired for placing wrong priorities in the discharge of their duties – it's a whole litany of complaints from residents and the party that has necessitated their dismissal.³⁸

30 *Ibid.*, p. 246.

31 EISA, *Election Observer Mission Report Zimbabwe* (Johannesburg, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, 2008).

32 S. Chakaipa, 'Local Government Institutions and Elections', in J. de Visser, N. Steytler and N. Machinguta (eds), *Local Government Reform in Zimbabwe: A Policy Dialogue* (Cape Town, UWC Community Law Centre, 2010), p. 60.

33 See A.Y. Kamete, 'Planning versus Youth: Stamping Out Spatial Unruliness in Harare', *Geoforum*, 39, 5 (2008), p. 1721.

34 J. McGregor, 'Surveillance and the City: Patronage, Power-Sharing and the Politics of Urban Control in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 4 (2013), p. 784.

35 D. Muchadenyika, 'The Crisis of Local Government Reform in Zimbabwe', in I. Chirisa (ed), *Contemporary Rural and Urban Planning Issues in Zimbabwe: Implications for Policy and Planning* (Palo Alto, Academica Press, 2013), p. 239.

36 Mutare city council had won two Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce Cleanest City awards (2010 and 2011) and Best Performing Urban Local Authority in Waste Management award at the 2013 Zimbabwe International Trade Fair.

37 'Chombo Suspends Mutare Mayor', *Newsday*, Harare, 28 January 2012.

38 'MDC Fires Chitungwiza Councillors', *The Standard*, Harare, 12 February 2010.

The firing of MDC councillors in Chitungwiza followed the arrest and conviction of the municipality's mayor Israel Marange for corruption. Subsequently, there was disagreement between the MDC leadership and councillors on who should take over as mayor. However, the councillors remained in office as Chombo refused to dismiss them.

In April 2012, the MDC set up a probe team to investigate all MDC-controlled councils in the country. The party argued that the probe was aimed at reclaiming 'Zimbabwe's self-respect, a climate of accountability, and pushing for zero tolerance on corruption and all evils'.³⁹ Based on the findings of the probe team, the MDC expelled 12 councillors in August 2012, citing corruption and mismanagement of office. However, minister Chombo did not suspend the councillors, arguing that the MDC did not inform the parent ministry of the allegations. The councillors continued in office since, according to the Urban Councils Act, suspension and dismissal powers are vested only in the local government minister.

Allocation of Housing Land in Urban Areas

Zimbabwe's urban housing challenge is typified by shortages, overcrowding, obsolescence and the under-provision of infrastructure services. The official housing backlog stands at 1.25 million housing units.⁴⁰ Urban councils and the government are the two principal allocators of housing land in cities. Politics affects the land allocation and approval process. If one submits a land application proposal to any urban council, and if land is available and suitable for residential development, the council executive officials write a report in response to the application. The report is discussed and a decision is taken by the council land committee. If the council land committee approves, the decision is taken to full council, which takes a decision as advised by the land committee. However, 'if council land committee is dominated by one party and full council dominated by another party, it complicates the process'.⁴¹

Section 152 of the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29: 15) provides conditions for the alienation of council land. According to this Act, before selling, exchanging, leasing or donating any council land, the council is obliged to publish its intention to do so in two newspapers, making a copy of such notice public for 21 days in order to receive objections. The Urban Councils Act also mandates selling, exchanging, leasing or donating of land where there is a town planning scheme, with exceptions only possible with ministerial approval. This process was 'often compromised and not followed as corruption syndicates were bolstered between council officials and political parties'.⁴²

The stipulated land allocation process was not followed, as made evident by the post-2000 invasion of peri-urban farms and demolition of houses during Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order (OM/RO) in 2005. Many houses in urban areas were destroyed, rendering close to a million people homeless. The operation seems to have had a political objective, as the 'violence was wanton, symbolic and punitive, signifying ZANU(PF)'s determination to maintain power and social control in the face of a population who probably did not provide a majority vote for it, with areas who voted for the opposition MDC the worst affected'.⁴³ At the same time, ZANU(PF) capitalised on people invading land without following proper town planning procedures. A case in point is the way in which ZANU(PF) 'saw mileage in

39 For the full press statement, see MDC, 'National Executive Releases Names of Dismissed Councillors', 29 August 2012, available at <http://www.mdc.co.zw/index.php/news/42-rokstories/1819-national-executive-releases-names-of-dismissed-councillors.html>, retrieved 15 January 2014.

40 Government of Zimbabwe, *Implementation Guide to the National Housing Delivery Programme 2014–2018* (Harare, Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, 2014).

41 Interview with NGO worker, 20 June 2013.

42 Interview with city official, Masvingo, 25 August 2013.

43 S. Bracking, 'Development Denied: Autocratic Militarism in Post-Election Zimbabwe', *Review of African Political Economy*, 32, 104/105, Oiling the Wheels of Imperialism (2005), p. 342.

Mbuya Nehanda housing co-operative and facilitated the regularisation and formalisation of the housing co-operative'.⁴⁴ Post-2000 land allocations were inspired and driven by politics, relegating normal procedures. In some instances, after invading council, state or private land, land occupiers 'facing evictions approached councillors to either seek reprieve or to be allocated land somewhere'.⁴⁵ People were using politics and political structures as a convenient way of accessing land.

State land is allocated by the state land office (in the local government ministry) 'with provincial governors, and administrators and district administrators having great influence on who gets state land'.⁴⁶ These provincial governors, administrators and district administrators are ZANU(PF)'s 'ears and eyes' at provincial and local level. ZANU(PF) politicised the land allocation process, usurping the powers of local authorities. Further, the allocation of state land is done through housing co-operatives, 'most of which are ZANU(PF)-linked'.⁴⁷ In essence, ZANU(PF) is in control of land, and party loyalists are the beneficiaries, though not allocated according to housing waiting lists. In housing co-operatives like Hatcliffe, Ushehokunze and Stoneridge farm, there is contestation between the city of Harare and government, as the former is 'refusing' to approve layout plans and connect water. These settlements are seen as ZANU(PF) projects spearheaded by the local government minister, evidence of a politicised and contested process.⁴⁸

Urban councils have a prerogative to allocate land to councillors, though 'it is problematic as it escalates a culture of entitlement'.⁴⁹ In practice, councillors' land entitlements covered high-, low-, and medium-density, and industrial areas, a clear sign of primitive accumulation. In addition, land accumulation by minister Chombo shows massive corruption in the housing sector (as the minister owns houses and stands in 16 of the 92 local authorities).⁵⁰ Perhaps councillors looked upon the primitive accumulation conducted by the local government minister and concluded that participation in local government gives them entitlement to land and properties.

Between 2000 and 2004, the mere change of faces and benefit of new experience brought new dynamics to council decision-making processes. Land allocation changed, as councillors 'shared interests and mutual benefits when they got into office'.⁵¹ In terms of assets, 'most MDC councillors had nothing, and thus prioritised amassing housing stands'.⁵² A former MDC councillor argued that MDC councillors 'were interested in housing stands and office and not service delivery'.⁵³ MDC councillors embroiled in land corruption became rich and powerful within the party. Corruption, incapability and a culture of clientelism became defining features

44 Interview with co-operative member, Mbuya Nehanda Housing Co-operative, 3 June 2013.

45 Interview with councillor, Mutare, 23 May 2013.

46 Interview with government planner, 17 June 2013.

47 Interview with co-operative member, 15 July 2013.

48 Interview with co-operative member, Ushehokunze, 6 July 2013; Hatcliffe, 14 August 2014.

49 Interview with MDC official, Harvest House, 19 June 2013.

50 2 Glen View houses, 2 flats in Queensdale, 1 property in Katanga Township, Stand Number 1037 Mount Pleasant Heights, 4 Norton business stands, 3 Chinhoyi business stands, 4 Banket business stands, 1 commercial stand in Epworth, 2 residential stands in Chirundu, 4 commercial stands in Kariba, 1 stand in Ruwa, 1 stand in Chinhoyi, 2 stands in Mutare, 2 stands in Binga, 4 stands in Victoria Falls, 1 stand in Zvimba Rural, Chitungwiza (2 residential and 2 commercial stands), Beitbridge (4 stands), 20 stands in Crow Hill Borrowdale, 10 stands in Glen Lorne, 2 flats at Eastview Gardens (B319 and B320), 1 flat at San Sebastian Flats in the Avenues Harare, 79 West Road, Avondale, Greendale house, Number 36 Cleveland Road Milton Park, Number 135 Port Road Norton, 2 Bulawayo houses, Number 18 Cuba Rd Mount Pleasant, Number 45 Basset Crescent Alexandra Park, 2 Chegutu houses, 1 Glen Lorne house (Harare), 2 houses (Victoria Falls), Stand along Simon Mazorodze Road, Norton (one stand), Avondale (two stands), 365 Beverly House (one stand), Bulawayo (three stands), Mica Point Kariba (one stand). See 'Chombo, Wife Fight Over Assets', *The Herald*, 4 November 2010.

51 Interview with councillor, Harare, 6 June 2013.

52 *Ibid.*

53 Interview with former MDC councillor, 3 June 2013.

of some MDC councillors.⁵⁴ Such councillors used their ill-gotten wealth to pursue their political ambitions, despite incessant criticism from the party.

Council land is allocated by council to individuals using the council housing waiting list method, on a first come, first served basis. However, corruption rendered this method useless, as thousands have been on these lists for decades. There are 'known cases of notable business people and politicians who bribe council officials to get housing stands overnight'.⁵⁵ Examples include a former ZANU(PF) parliamentarian, Phillip Chiyangwa (nephew to Robert Mugabe), who acquired a total of 109 properties (mostly land) from councils, presumably through shady deals.⁵⁶ Such primitive wealth accumulation, as reported in the state media, came into public view during the businessman's divorce. Wealth accumulation (land and properties) by senior ZANU(PF) officials such as Phillip Chiyangwa and minister Chombo is part of ZANU(PF)'s 'blend of accumulation, power and violence for which no end is in sight'.⁵⁷ Moreover, the conventional method of land allocation using the housing waiting list 'has been compromised by corrupt councillors'.⁵⁸ Councillors are of the view that as long as land is in their wards, they must have authority on land allocation. Within the City of Harare, 'MDC councillors created some housing co-operatives though they have not occupied land'.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, this facilitates corruption among councillors.

From a planning point of view, the process of acquiring a piece of land is very clear: for instance, compulsory acquisition or expansion of an urban area through government proclamation. None the less, 'only in cases where ZANU(PF) had no interest, law would apply'.⁶⁰ Where the party had interests, law would not apply, as is made evident by the use of youth squads to grab land in cities. Most open spaces in Harare have been invaded by ZANU(PF) youth and supporters without council approval.⁶¹ In addition, the allocation of marketing stalls at Mupedzanhamo and Mbare Musika is controlled by ZANU(PF) functionaries with little influence from Harare city council.⁶²

Further, central government, through FTLRP, acquired farms around cities. In the view of ZANU(PF), 'giving land to MDC-run councils would entail promoting the MDC'.⁶³ This brought a dilemma for ZANU(PF) in urban housing development, as central government could not provide land to urban councils. Instead, ZANU(PF) gave FTLRP-acquired peri-urban land, without services, directly to housing co-operatives, resulting in the sprouting of unplanned settlements around cities. The concept of housing co-operatives is noble and beneficial, but its politicisation brings many challenges to coherent urban development.

Farms surrounding cities have been allocated to co-operatives, 'with a view to create new constituencies that are loyal to ZANU(PF)'.⁶⁴ This strategy worked well on a pilot project in the constituency of Harare South, the only one within the capital city retained by ZANU(PF)

54 De Visser, Steytler and Machingauta (eds), *Local Government Reform in Zimbabwe*; Institute for a Democratic Alternative in Zimbabwe (IDAZIM), *Local Governance in Transition: Zimbabwe's Local Authorities During the Inclusive Government* (Harare, RTI International and IDAZIM, 2010).

55 Interview with Harare councillor, 22 July 2013.

56 'Chiyangwa in Messy Sivorce', *The Herald*, 29 November 2013; for a detailed analysis, see City of Harare, *Special Investigations Committee's Report on City of Harare's Land Sales, Leases and Exchanges from the Period October 2004 to December 2009* (Harare, City of Harare, 2010), pp. 1–54.

57 D. Moore, 'Progress, Power, and Violent Accumulation in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 30, 1 (2012), pp. 1–9.

58 Interview with former permanent secretary, 14 June 2013.

59 Interview with NGO director, 20 June 2013.

60 Interview with city planner, 15 June 2013.

61 See Kamete, 'Planning Versus Youth'.

62 N. Kriger, 'ZANU PF Politics under Zimbabwe's "Power-Sharing" Government', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 30, 1 (2012), pp. 11–26; McGregor, 'Surveillance and the City'.

63 Interview with councillor, Masvingo, 28 June 2013.

64 Interview with private developer, 30 July 2013.

in elections conducted between 2000 and 2012. However, most housing co-operatives led by known ZANU(PF) functionaries have failed to deliver, and in many cases they have defrauded potential beneficiaries. This is substantiated by the findings of the Government of Zimbabwe's Land Audit Report on land management and allocation in Chitungwiza. The Land Audit's key findings are illegal allocation of 15,604 housing stands by ZANU(PF)-linked land barons, youths, housing co-operatives, council officials and councillors; uncoordinated incremental development (without any development plans); non-approval of housing co-operative plans; sub-standard buildings; flouting of town planning regulations and procedures, and high incidence of contravention of safety and health standards (due to stands allocated in wetlands, and electricity, roads and sewerage servitudes).⁶⁵

For most cities, available land for housing (in peri-urban farms) has been gazetted to become state land. As a result, acquiring urban land for purposes of urban expansion and housing requires negotiation with the ministries responsible for lands and local government. Urban councils found themselves with a need 'to get land acquired under the FTLRP which counters the MDC programme for land distribution'.⁶⁶ Councils rely on the benevolence of land ministers and local government ministers to acquire land for housing, and 'ZANU(PF) thwarts this process so as to restrain the governance of MDC councils'.⁶⁷

Through the Land Acquisition Act (Chapter 20:10), ZANU(PF) uses the compulsory land acquisition process as a conduit to get land access. Intrinsically, ZANU(PF) 'mobilised and capitalised on landless people'.⁶⁸ In fact, ZANU(PF) rewarded FTLRP participants in urban areas with land and properties.⁶⁹ The party invaded peri-urban farms and 'allocated stands to ZANU(PF) supporters with the local government ministry giving lease agreements'.⁷⁰ Some people in urban areas, especially low-income earners, have 'taken advantage of political allegiance to ZANU(PF) to form co-operatives where they allocate themselves land and later push for the regularisation of such housing schemes'.⁷¹ Politics became a convenient tool for land access. A case in point is the Epworth Local Board, which won an eviction order in the High Court of Zimbabwe in 2001 against 6,000 informal settlers, many of whom had accessed land through ZANU(PF) structures and politicians.⁷² However, in some cases, political structures

65 The land barons are Frederick Mabamba's (ZANU[PF] councillor, fired after the land deals investigation) United We Stand Co-operative, which illegally allocated and developed more than 5,000 stands, and Chigumba (ZANU[PF] MP), who allocated about 2,004 housing stands unprocedurally. Some co-operatives cited in the report for illegal allocation of land are Yemurai Disabled Co-operative, Chitungwiza Ruvimbo Housing Co-operative, Zimbabwe National Army's Heritage Co-operative, Zanoremba and Face East. Most of the 26 co-operatives in the town 'fraudulently acquire state land working in cahoots with unscrupulous former councillors' (named in the report) (p. 10). The report further notes that 'a total of approximately US\$20,423 million was paid by beneficiaries to co-operatives and land barons. The monies so paid were principally used for personal financial gain' (p. 12). For detailed analysis, see Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing (MLGPWNH), *Audit Report on Issues of Land Management and Allocation: Chitungwiza Town and Seke District*, 4–22 November 2013 (Harare, Republic of Zimbabwe, 2013), pp. 1–30.

66 Interview with political analyst, 6 June 2013.

67 *Ibid.*

68 Interview with NGO director, 20 June 2013.

69 Interview with urban planning consultant, 12 June 2013.

70 *Ibid.* See also P.B. Matondi, *Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform*, (Uppsala, London, and New York, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Zed Books, 2012).

71 Interview with councillor, Bulawayo, 19 July 2013.

72 ZANU(PF) politicians and structures have refused to give consent to such an eviction order; see I.E.W. Chirisa and K. Muhomba, 'Constraints to Managing Urban and Housing Land in the Context of Poverty: A Case of Epworth Settlement in Zimbabwe', *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 18, 8 (2013), pp. 950–64.

came in after land occupation, as ‘ZANU(PF) took advantage of people benefiting through the FTLRP’.⁷³

Housing co-operatives went beyond housing provision struggles, to include land reclamation, and challenged institutional arrangements for housing provision.⁷⁴ The urban land question became more critical than ever in Zimbabwean history, as social movements (community-based organisations and co-operatives) challenged the conventional means of housing provision. Most housing co-operatives were ZANU(PF)-aligned; and most local authorities refused to accept these co-operatives, seeing them as ‘part of an illegal housing and urban planning system’.⁷⁵ Housing co-operatives are used as platforms for political membership mobilisation.⁷⁶ Politically aligned housing co-operatives had easy access to housing land and have been used as a way of gathering votes and rewarding those active in local politics.⁷⁷

Housing co-operatives are targets for political infiltration, especially during elections. Some co-operatives, such as Joshua M. Nkomo (in Harare), ‘force members allocated stands to register four of their family members in that political constituency for voting purposes’.⁷⁸ Housing-linked voter registration and voting is an attempt to use co-operatives to garner more party supporters in the urban constituency. In order to join ZANU(PF)-linked housing co-operatives, prospective members are asked to possess a ZANU(PF) membership card, even in MDC strongholds.⁷⁹ The proliferation of housing co-operatives has therefore been political, as it enabled the managing of the ordinary person’s political life to some extent.⁸⁰

Housing co-operatives have also posed serious threats to ecologically fragile lands. For instance, in Mutare, Gimboki Housing Scheme is developing part of Dangamvura and Chikanga, including areas which are unsuitable for human settlements – the Dangamvura scheme is ‘on a mountain slope posing threats of inhabitants getting drowned in cases of slope failure due to heavy and torrential rainfall’.⁸¹ In essence, politics is riding roughshod over issues of environmental integrity and preservation, as well as planning principles.

Furthermore, allocation of housing land is characterised by confusion and contestation. For instance, land in Whitecliff, Harare, has been sold by the central government ‘though the land was being promised to other prospective land seekers by some politicians’.⁸² Moreover, the land in question here is at the centre of conflict between a private property owner (Pfungari Properties) and government. Elsewhere, a ZANU(PF) official was allocating land in Hopely, in Harare South. Further, in Manyame, ‘ZANU(PF) politicians were allocating land without the knowledge of Chitungwiza municipality’.⁸³ Another senior ZANU(PF) official was allocating and selling housing stands nearer Harare International Airport, ‘where people believed that the “illegal” housing scheme was a front for the local government minister’.⁸⁴ In many instances, land seekers are losing money in shoddy land deals spearheaded by ZANU(PF) politicians.

73 Interview with NGO director, Mutare, 6 August 2013.

74 L. Masuko, ‘War Veterans and the Re-emergence of Housing Co-operatives’, in S. Moyo, K. Helliker and T. Murisa (eds), *Contested Terrain: Land Reform and Civil Society in Contemporary Zimbabwe* (Pietermaritzburg, S & S Publishers, 2008).

75 D. Muchadenyika, ‘Slum Upgrading and Inclusive Municipal Governance in Harare, Zimbabwe: New Perspectives for the Urban Poor’, *Habitat International*, 48 (August 2015), p. 4.

76 Interview with residents’ association director, 9 July 2013.

77 I. Chirisa, M. Gaza, and E. Bandaiko, ‘Housing Co-operatives and the Politics of Local Organization and Representation in Peri-Urban Harare, Zimbabwe’, *African Studies Quarterly*, 15,1 (2014), pp. 37–53.

78 Interview with co-operative member, 15 July 2013.

79 Interview with co-operative member, 19 July 2013.

80 Interview with planning school lecturer, 17 August 2013.

81 Interview with government planner, 6 August 2013.

82 Interview with Whitecliff resident, 21 August 2013.

83 Interview with Manyame resident, 25 June 2013.

84 Interview with prospective home-owner, 28 July 2013.

During the Inclusive Government, ZANU(PF) used parallel government structures that undermined the work of urban councils.⁸⁵ In addition, ministries responsible for housing and urban land were controlled by two different political parties: MDC and ZANU(PF), respectively. The ministry responsible for land ‘allocated housing stands directly to beneficiaries’, thereby usurping and circumventing the role of the ministry responsible for housing, which was MDC-controlled.⁸⁶ The effect has been the occupation of surveyed land without services, giving problems to urban local authorities, who do not have resources to build off-site infrastructure. The Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities (MoNHSA) has been forced to enter into partnership with land developers who possess land.⁸⁷ As a result, MoNHSA partnered Sunway City, a subsidiary of Industrial Development Corporation, which had land to deliver housing stands in Harare. None the less, the housing stands ‘were not affordable to low-income earners and subsequently the housing waiting list could not be followed’.⁸⁸

In addition, the construction of Willowvale flats in Harare was financed through a loan of US\$25 million from the World Bank in 2009. Loan repayment necessitated housing units to be sold at higher price, so as to pay back the principal and interest. It is clear that such schemes are not balancing housing provision and affordability, as high-income earners benefit from such schemes. MoNHSA also runs its own housing projects; for instance, the ministry is developing and offering housing stands in White Cliff (Harare) and Lower Paradise Park (Marondera).

After 2010, land in general was no longer available in most cities. MDC-run councils typically had an acute shortage of serviced land and a critical shortage of housing.⁸⁹ This presented the party with the challenge of using land and housing to buttress its support. For available small pieces of land, MDC tried to some extent to make its members benefit, for example ‘in Willowvale and Mufakose flats in Harare; and Kilan and Cowdry Park in Bulawayo city’.⁹⁰ The allocation of housing stands in Budiriro, Harare, shows the significant role of political parties. Harare City Council ‘allocated 2,000 housing stands in line with sympathetic MDC supporters’.⁹¹ However, ZANU(PF) members quickly invaded the housing stands, contesting the land allocation.

Existing land allocation methods are logically sound, though political dimensions are worrying. As part of ZANU(PF) political strategy, the infills are supposed to be allocated to its supporters ‘as a way to dilute the opposition constituency strongholds and narrow the gap, as this becomes vital in national elections’.⁹² This strategy was executed through violence and patronage networks under parallel council structures.⁹³

In general, land for housing in urban areas is lagging behind in terms of housing delivery. Shortage of land for low-cost housing in cities is made evident by 62 slums in the city of Harare.⁹⁴ Most local authorities lack legally developed land suitable for the development of low-cost housing.⁹⁵ Local authorities are hamstrung to meet the extent of housing need. At the same time, occupation of land around urban areas is politically motivated and led.

85 Kriger, ‘ZANU PF Politics’.

86 Interview with housing officer, 7 June 2013.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*

89 McGregor, ‘Surveillance and the City’.

90 Interview with planning school lecturer, 26 July 2013.

91 *Ibid.*

92 Interview with private developer, 30 July 2013.

93 See Kriger, ‘ZANU PF Politics’; McGregor ‘Surveillance and the City’.

94 Dialogue on Shelter, Zimbabwe Homeless Peoples Federation and City of Harare, *Harare Slum Profiles Report: Edition 2* (Harare, Dialogue on Shelter and City of Harare, March 2014).

95 UN–Habitat, *UN–Habitat Zimbabwe Review of Activities in Zimbabwe since 2006: Towards a Comprehensive and Inclusive Human Settlement Development Strategy and Policy* (Harare, UN–Habitat Zimbabwe, 2006).

Developments in Council-Led Housing Schemes

The urban housing problem in Zimbabwe is similar to other critical shortages. The housing backlog is estimated to be over one million, though there is a no comprehensive assessment to substantiate this figure.⁹⁶ The housing challenge was further aggravated by the infamous OM/RO, which destroyed housing and livelihoods of the poor.⁹⁷ By 2000, most urban councils had stopped housing projects that aimed to give completed housing units.⁹⁸ Instead, councils provided land only, with people providing infrastructure themselves.⁹⁹ High land-servicing costs and the economic challenges constrained development in council-led housing.¹⁰⁰ Councils were struggling even to pay salaries, and the situation became worse after the dollarisation period in January 2009. Central government could no longer provide Public Sector Investment Project (PSIP) grants to local authorities. This development led to the dominance of housing delivery by private players, community-based organisations, co-operatives and company-assisted housing projects.¹⁰¹

Prior to 2000, local authorities benefited from the Housing Guarantee Fund, National Housing Fund, PSIP, and partnerships with building societies in housing delivery. By 2003, there had been a decline in housing provision in urban areas, from an annual average of 15,000–20,000 units, during the period 1985–1995, to a meagre 5,000 units in 2000.¹⁰² Up to 2000, local authorities had access to low-interest loans, both on the open market and from government. This was possible because government had access to long-term low-interest loans from the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund, extended over periods of 25–30 years, with an annual interest rate of 4–5 per cent. Zimbabwe failed to pay its debt to multilateral financial institutions, resulting in the country becoming restricted to costly loans, at interest rates of 18–25 per cent per annum.

A decline in housing finance resulted in a decline in housing delivery. For some time, ‘local authorities facilitated housing delivery through providing off-site infrastructure’.¹⁰³ Grants and loans from development agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the World Bank, which helped cities to provide off-site infrastructure, could no longer be extended.¹⁰⁴ Investing in off-site infrastructure is expensive because of high initial capital outlay. The city of Harare does not have the infrastructure capacity to support new housing developments. For example, the sewerage treatment and water capacity is not sufficient to support even an additional 100,000 housing units. To that end, ‘the Iranian project aimed at building between 15,000 and 20,000 housing units in Harare failed due to insufficient infrastructure’.¹⁰⁵

Zimbabwe’s urban planning is shaped around the British planning system of spacious stands, quality building materials, and expensive, generous infrastructure. However, most

96 Government of Zimbabwe, *National Housing Policy 2012* (Harare, Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities, 2012).

97 A.Y. Kamete, ‘Interrogating Planning’s Power in an African City: Time for Reorientation?’, *Planning Theory* 11, 1 (2012), pp. 66–88.

98 Muchadenyika, ‘Slum Upgrading’.

99 This is the practice for all land allocated by local authorities to housing co-operatives and consortiums in the post-2000 era.

100 Muchadenyika, ‘Slum Upgrading’.

101 D. Muchadenyika, ‘Contestation, Confusion and Change: Urban Governance and Service Delivery in Zimbabwe (2000–2012)’, M.Phil thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2014.

102 N. Marongwe, S. Mukoto and K. Chatiza, *Scoping Study: Governance of Urban Land Markets in Zimbabwe* (Harare, Urban Landmark, 2011).

103 Interview with city planner, 21 August 2013.

104 For detailed information of USAID, SIDA and World Bank contribution to housing in Zimbabwe, see E. Ramsamy, *The World Bank and Urban Development* (London and New York, Routledge, 2006).

105 Interview with city planner, 21 August 2013.

urban councils have accepted that the current housing delivery approach is untenable. The 2012 national housing policy reviewed the expensive conception of urban planning and housing delivery through allowing incremental development and emphasising the importance of community-based organisations.¹⁰⁶ In addition, cities have refocused internally, using different kinds of technology to make habitable houses, as well as ‘reducing off-site infrastructure’.¹⁰⁷ For Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare, the review of local development plans resulted in densification, the reduction of building lines, stand sizes, and roads, and creating semi-detached houses, which in reality are an acceptance that there are no resources.¹⁰⁸ Cities are also allowing the construction of housing and infrastructure to start simultaneously (parallel development).

Partnership arrangements that are not exclusively council projects have increased in magnitude. The urban councils provide the land and the developer provides the required infrastructure. The council role is thus limited to land allocation and development control rather than ownership of housing projects. When housing provision is driven solely by a public sector institution, issues of affordability can be catered for. The reverse is true in the case of housing provision by private entities. The City of Harare and Zimbabwe Building Society partnership housing stands ‘were unaffordable to low-income households’.¹⁰⁹ The largest post-independent housing initiative, the Old Mutual, Central African Building Society (CABS) and City of Harare housing project in Budiriro (Harare), aimed at delivering 5,000 stands, is attributed to a networked MDC mayoral leadership.¹¹⁰ However, eligibility for the CABS–City of Harare partnership required a CABS bank account and a defined income bracket, making it difficult for ultra-low-income households to benefit. For low-cost housing delivery, city council partnerships with profit-oriented organisations subvert issues of affordability. Table 1 shows City of Harare partnership housing projects.

Within Harare, the only partnership project that helped the ultra-low-income groups is a slum upgrading project in Dzivarasekwa Extension (Harare), supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.¹¹¹ The project provided not only 480 tenured housing stands but also expansive infrastructure services (water, sewerage, roads). It initially earmarked Mbare, the oldest suburb in Harare, but ‘ZANU(PF) claimed 51 per cent of the housing units’,¹¹² an indication of anti-developmental patrimonialism. The ZANU(PF) youth vigilante group Chipangano warned that if its members were not guaranteed to be 51 per cent of beneficiaries, the project would not commence. Chipangano play a key role in maintaining ZANU(PF)’s urban patronage system, hijacking council property and functions in Harare’s central Mbare district, where it controls the city’s major markets and bus termini.¹¹³ Due to political contestation in Mbare, the project was subsequently moved to Dzivarasekwa Extension, a settlement where people went after the 1991 and 2005 government-led evictions.

To put into perspective the other cities, Table 2 shows city–private sector partnership housing projects in Bulawayo, Masvingo and Mutare. Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that local authorities are constrained to deliver housing projects without partnerships. However, Table 2 shows huge

106 Government of Zimbabwe, *National Housing Policy 2012*. Government defines incremental development as a housing development strategy that allows the developer to start constructing essential services such as water and sanitation and allows beneficiaries to occupy their stands.

107 Interview with housing director, 30 June 2013.

108 *Ibid.*

109 Interview with NGO worker, 20 June 2013.

110 Interview with Harare city planner, 18 June 2013; the project is attributed to the work of the City of Harare MDC Mayor Muchadei Masunda (2008–13).

111 For detailed analysis of this project, see D. Muchadenyika, ‘Slum Upgrading’, pp. 1–10.

112 Interview with Mbare resident, 14 July 2014.

113 McGregor, ‘Surveillance and the City’.

Table 1. City of Harare housing partnership projects (2008–2011)

Name of project	Year started	No. of housing units/residential stands
Slum Upgrading Project Dzivarasekwa	2011	480 stands
CABS Project in Budiriro	2009	5,000 units
IDBZ	2008	72 units
CYBC (Mabvuku)	2007	42 stands
Shelter Zimbabwe (Chizhanje area, Mabvuku)	–	6,000–7,000 stands
Pearl Properties	2010	Block of flats (132 units)
Glaudina Housing Development	2007	1,351 stands

Source: City Of Harare Department of Housing and Community Services, *Department of Housing and Community Services Annual Report 2011* (Harare, City of Harare, 2012)

Table 2. Council–private sector partnerships in the cities of Mutare, Masvingo and Bulawayo

Developer	No. of stands allocated	Completed houses	Houses under construction
MUTARE			
Aloe Enterprises	617	500	117
Pegasus	693	85	0
ZIMTA	1,381	100	188
Aloe Enterprises	130	0	0
Dream House	333	0	0
Total	3,154	685	305
MASVINGO			
Treasure Consultants	500	16	21
KPM International	500	0	0
Mac Dowell	20	0	20
Steel Makers	7	6	1
NSSA	653	0	0
ZIMRE	437	0	0
Total	2,117	22	42
BULAWAYO			
Aggregate Properties	1,00	6	17
Glendinning	1,004	244	204
Habek Deug	207	125	73
Bopse	381	197	205
ZIGEU	500	425	75
Standard Products	377	0	4
GG	116	0	0
Hardware	118	45	32
Glenkara Homes	1,702	696	150
Total	4,505	1,738	610

Source: Adapted from S. Mapurisa, 'Local Authorities' Rapid Response to Housing Delivery in Zimbabwe', in K. Chatiza (ed.), *Urban Housing and Community Services Delivery in Zimbabwe: A Compendium of Selected Papers Presented At Housing Directors' Forum Meetings* (Harare, UN–Habitat and UCAZ [HDF], 2012), p. 57

variance between number of stands allocated and completed houses. Presumably, this shows that these council–private sector housing partnerships are slow in delivering the final housing stock.

Operation Garikai is the only government-directed universal project that has resulted in the provision of low-cost housing in the cities of Bulawayo, Masvingo and Mutare between 2000 and 2012, as shown in Table 3. Operation Garikai was a government housing programme led by the Zimbabwe National Army in the aftermath of the OM/RO. Government participation in actual land servicing and house construction was through the flagship Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle, which, however, has remained a modest contribution to addressing housing shortages in Zimbabwe.¹¹⁴ At present, Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle faces severe

114 K. Chatiza and A. Mlalazi, *Human Settlement Needs Assessment in Zimbabwe: Critical Review and Proposed Methodology* (Harare, UN–Habitat and Government of Zimbabwe, 2009).

Table 3. Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle projects

Location	Stands allocated	Houses completed	Houses under construction
MUTARE			
Garikai Phase I Chikanga 3	537	272	31
Garikai Phase II Chikanga 3	333	–	–
BULAWAYO			
Cowdry Park Garikai/Hlalani-Kuhle I	7,000	200	718
MASVINGO			
Runyararo NorthGarikai I	340	100	240

Source: Adapted from S. Mapurisa, 'Local Authorities' Rapid Response to Housing Delivery in Zimbabwe', in K. Chatiza (ed.), *Urban Housing and Community Services Delivery in Zimbabwe: A Compendium of Selected Papers Presented At Housing Directors' Forum Meetings* (Harare, UN-Habitat and UCAZ [HDF], 2012), p. 56

challenges of infrastructure servicing, completing the houses and handing over the projects to local authorities.

Housing Delivery Outside Council Initiatives

The economies of urban Zimbabwe have been in crisis since the late 1980s, resulting in local authorities failing to deliver adequate housing, education, health and other services.¹¹⁵ As a result, in terms of housing delivery, non-state actors provided a higher quantity than local authorities. This can be attributed to capacity challenges and changes in the housing delivery system. Dialogue on Shelter, the technical partner supporting urban poor housing, suggested that 'government is not efficient in housing delivery'.¹¹⁶ Alternatively, government could create enabling conditions, such as housing finance and bye-laws. Urban social movements, such as the Alliance of Dialogue on Shelter and Zimbabwe Homeless Peoples Federation, managed to deliver 15,000 tenured stands and 3,000 housing units to its members.¹¹⁷

Through the national housing loan development facility, central government explored joint ventures with the private sector and local authorities in delivering housing. The majority of these joint ventures, however, cater for medium- and high-income earners. Table 4 shows government joint ventures in Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo and Mutare in delivering high-density housing.

Co-operatives and savings groups played a significant role in terms of housing delivery for low-income communities. In particular, 'these developments were concentrated in peri-urban areas, using incremental housing development, though infrastructure services are poor'.¹¹⁸ This is largely due to the flexibility of these groups, which enabled them to survive in a hyperinflationary environment. Despite these attempts, 'the challenge is how to increase the scale of these operations'.¹¹⁹ Scalability and changing the regulatory framework are key considerations in addressing low-cost housing concerns. Urban housing co-operatives are normally preoccupied with quantities of housing units delivered.¹²⁰ Official government statistics reveal that, cumulatively, community-based organisations delivered over 10,000 units (serviced stands

115 A.Y. Kamete, "'At the Bottom of the Social Heap": A Youth Underclass in Inner-City Harare?', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9, 1 (2006), pp. 67–89.

116 Interview with NGO director, 20 June 2013.

117 Figures collated from Dialogue on Shelter Statistics.

118 Interview with planning school lecturer, 6 June 2013.

119 Interview with NGO worker, 20 June 2013.

120 A.Y. Kamete, 'Revisiting the Urban Housing Crisis in Zimbabwe: Some Forgotten Dimensions?', *Habitat International*, 30, 4 (2006), pp. 981–95.

Table 4. National Housing Loan Development Facility joint ventures

Location	Project	Status	% complete
Harare	Dzivarasekwa	800 high-density stands 300 mm-diameter sewer line Roads, sewerage and water reticulation services	30%
Bulawayo	Parklands Home Link	137 high-density stands Roads, sewerage and water reticulation services	70%
Masvingo	Nemanwa	300 stands Roads, sewerage and water reticulation services	5%
Mutare	Chikanga	201 high-density stands Roads, sewerage and water reticulation services	100%

Source: MEPIP, 'First Annual Medium Term Plan (2011–2015)', pp. 127–8

and finished houses),¹²¹ while building societies delivered more than 40,000 units. Thus non-state actors kept some reasonable momentum in housing delivery.¹²² Between 2000 and 2012, the City of Harare allocated 12,554 housing stands to 254 housing co-operatives, with 2,301 housing units completed.¹²³ During the same period, the City of Harare could not deliver any housing project on its own without partnerships.

Housing co-operatives have been effective, but in some cases managers defrauded members for their personal benefit, without delivering on agreed goals. In November 2013, this prompted the local government minister to issue a directive compelling all co-operative members to stop paying contributions.¹²⁴ In reality, people are suffering, 'as some co-operative leaders, known ZANU(PF) functionaries, continued forcing people to pay or risk losing housing stands'.¹²⁵ Most housing co-operatives are dominated by ZANU(PF) in terms of membership and leadership, making these housing schemes highly politicised.¹²⁶ Low-cost housing projects have been hijacked by politics, as a government planner observes:

I have attended several co-operatives including the one currently developing Hatcliffe Extension. ZANU(PF) slogans are the norm before every member passes any message during co-operative meetings. The co-operative got that land through the local government minister, despite several court contestations by the land owner.¹²⁷

The pace of development in co-operative housing schemes is very slow, owing partially to the small monthly member contributions (US\$20–100). The money covers all administration costs and development activities such as water, sewerage and road construction. Despite this observation, Table 5 shows the expansion of low-cost housing outside the council in the city of Mutare.

Of course, housing provision during the period 2000–2013 was hindered by the melting down of the economy. Despite these challenges, Shelter Zimbabwe, as a single private company,

121 However, this number can be an underestimate, as statistics collated from Harare alone indicates that the city allocated 12,554 stands to 254 housing co-operatives between 2000 and 2012. Further, the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation statistics indicates that the movement facilitated access to 15,000 housing stands to its members between 1998 and 2014. See 'Muchadenyika, 'Slum Upgrading'.

122 MoNHS, *National Housing Policy Roll-out Report* (Harare, Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities, 2013).

123 Statistics collated from the City of Harare Housing Co-operatives Register.

124 'New Measures to Govern Co-operatives', *The Herald*, 5 November 2013.

125 Interview with co-operative member, 29 June 2013.

126 Interview with government planner, 15 July 2013.

127 *Ibid.*

Table 5. Housing projects in the City of Mutare

Name of project	Number of units	Project status
Chikanga infill housing scheme	166 stands	Being serviced with water, sewerage and roads.
Hobhouse III high-density residential scheme	±1,432 stands	1,200 stands have water and sewerage. Occupied already.
Greenside low-density scheme	181 stands	Occupied since 2005. No roads.
Shangani (Murambi West) residential infill	32 stands	Stands allocated in 2003 and 2008. No services.
Birkley South	180 low-density residential stands	Allocated in 2008. No services.
Dangamvura golf course	54 high-density stands	Finalising roads.
Dreamhouse housing scheme	365 high-density residential stands	Roads outstanding. Water and sewerage partially completed.
Beira Corridor phase 1	320 low-density residential stands	Roads and sewerage on course.
Gimboki South	5,500 high-density residential scheme	Yet to start. Run by Gimboki Housing Consortium.

Source: Adapted from City of Mutare, *City of Mutare Integrated Development Plan (2010–13)* (Mutare, City of Mutare, 2010)

developed 1,167 housing stands in Harare and Epworth between 2000 and 2012.¹²⁸ Of these stands, 821 covered high-density areas. These projects have been completed and duly awarded certificates of compliance by the relevant local authorities.

From the foregoing, it is clear that low-cost housing is no longer spearheaded by local authorities, but through housing co-operative schemes, private companies and other low-income groups. The role of the council has been limited to land allocation. Cumulatively, low-cost housing schemes outside council initiatives have contributed significantly to housing delivery. The challenge is that housing co-operatives circumvent urban planning laws and, in some cases, the housing waiting list. Council urban services management is riddled with corruption, 'as urban councils are taking money without making sure there is proper compliance to services infrastructure'.¹²⁹ The situation is further aggravated by housing co-operatives in which people are refusing to pay for urban services, arguing that they were not allocated land by councils. Rather, they recognise central government, and, in particular, the local government ministry that allocated them land.

Conclusion

If a system is confronted and threatened by internal and external exigencies over a period of time, then change is often imminent. However, urbanist Edgar Pieterse argues that most urban struggles require '*incremental change*, which is the only way of intervening in conditions of profound complexity and entrenched power dynamics embedded in capitalist modernities'.¹³⁰ Incremental development is now an important housing development strategy in Zimbabwean cities, predominantly being used by housing co-operatives and other self-help groups. This suggests an acceptance of the view that conventional housing delivery methods, in which government and local authorities provide serviced stands and completed housing units, are no longer possible.

Edward Ramsamy's assessment is that 'Zimbabwe's critical shortage of housing for the low-income urban poor ranks next to unemployment as the most serious problem confronting

128 Interview with property manager, 14 July 2013.

129 Interview with property owner, 16 August 2013.

130 E. Pieterse, *City Futures: Confronting the Crisis of Urban Development* (London and New York, Zed Books, 2008), p. 6 (emphasis in original).

the country in the post-independence period'.¹³¹ Despite this, the role of city councils in providing housing has fallen drastically, placing the country's existing urban housing stock under severe stress. Instead, housing co-operatives and private companies are providing significant new housing in urban areas. Furthermore, central government, through its ministries and agencies, has contributed to housing provision through developing housing in compulsorily acquired land – for example, Dzivarasekwa (Harare), Chikanga (Mutare), Parklands Home Link (Bulawayo) and Nemanwa (Masvingo).¹³² The sharp rise of co-operatives in housing delivery brought challenges for councils in terms of properly monitoring and managing housing development in urban areas. This is mainly because the administration of housing co-operatives is deeply entangled in political struggles.

Zimbabwe's urban politics is profoundly contested, making housing provision tenuous and politically motivated. Urban politics is composed of 'various overlapping and mutually implicated institutional sites of engagement and contestation'.¹³³ Players involved in urban politics include political parties; local governments, social movements, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector, among others. The interaction among these players determines the production and delivery of urban services. Service delivery in general has been marked by contestations and contradictions, particularly in the delivery of low-income housing.

Such political struggles for the control of Zimbabwe's urban areas are leaving an urban dilemma, of the sort described by Mamdani as spatially and administratively disconnected local governance structures, which, reinforced by economic and social exclusion, leave large parts of the population within cities voiceless and without political leverage over their own destinies.¹³⁴ The general public, especially the urban poor, have lost confidence in local authorities, owing partly to these unresolved housing struggles. For instance, if the urban poor build their own houses, city councils and central government often demolish such houses, using planning law and regulations as a façade. Briefly stated, there is a growing tendency of rapid social and economic exclusion in Zimbabwean cities, characterised by the criminalisation of 'informal' urban economic activities and settlements.

Perhaps the central argument of this article is that the control of land in urban areas is an important factor in shaping urban development. The Zimbabwean experience shows that it is insufficient for a party to be voted into power; rather, controlling the resource base, including land, is an important consideration in shaping urban development. ZANU(PF) did not run city governments, but it had control of urban resources. This made the party a *de facto* ruling regime in urban areas, even where its MDC opponents ostensibly controlled the councils. This raises questions about the feasibility and functionality of opposition-controlled African cities.

In the absence of a functional urban government system, which can facilitate or provide affordable and decent accommodation, the prevalence of slum-like settlements characterised by 'overcrowding, poor or informal housing, inadequate access to safe water and sanitation, and insecurity of tenure' increase.¹³⁵ As such, housing for the urban poor is under immense stress, as made evident by 62 slum settlements in Harare, with an estimated 37,936 households and approximately 165,609 people.¹³⁶ Urban life in such settlements is characterised by squalid

131 E. Ramsamy, *The World Bank and Urban Development: From Projects to Policy* (London and New York, Routledge, 2006), p. 167.

132 MEPIP, *First Annual Medium Term Plan (2011–2015) Implementation Progress Report 2012* (Harare, Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment Promotion, 2012).

133 E. Pieterse, *City Futures*, p. 11.

134 M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996).

135 UN-Habitat, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003* (London, Earthscan, 2003).

136 Dialogue on Shelter, Zimbabwe Homeless Peoples Federation and City of Harare, 'Harare Slum Upgrading Profile Report'.

living conditions: shacks made of plastics and cardboard boxes, shallow wells and absence of sanitation facilities. The success of urban councils in housing provision was muted by both political and financial crises. Consequently, councils could provide only unserviced land to housing co-operatives and self-help groups. None the less, 'if housing is only about a roof, housing co-operatives and self-help groups performed well, though infrastructure provision in these areas remains a tremendous challenge'.¹³⁷ Most new settlements do not have running water, reticulated sewerage or surfaced roads,;but have features reminiscent of rural areas, such as shallow wells, pit latrines and gravel roads . It would seem that civilisation is in reverse in Zimbabwean cities.

Council-led housing schemes benefited middle-income people, such as civil servants, and not low-income individuals. A case in point is the Willowvale flats in Harare, which were built as a low-cost housing project but ended up benefiting high-income groups. Outside council housing, initiatives specifically by community-based organisations and co-operatives have contributed more to the delivery of low-cost housing. Council partnerships with private firms concentrated mainly on medium- and low-density housing projects, owing to the profit motive of private capital.

Clearly, then, councils have redefined their role from a provider of housing to only a virgin-land allocator and regulator of private and co-operative housing developments. There is not a single housing project wholly undertaken by the city councils of Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo or Mutare since 2000. At the same time, councils have allocated land to various co-operatives and private developers. As a result, the private sector and co-operative movement have made the most significant contribution to housing development in urban areas. The consequence, perhaps predictably, has been a decline in the health and well-being of people living in new settlements without access to reticulated water and sanitation and other social service facilities.

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137 Interview with planning school lecturer, 6 June 2013.