

Cities for the urban poor in Zimbabwe: urban space as a resource for sustainable development

Alison Brown

This paper explores the political, economic, and social processes that influence the development of urban form in cities of the developing world. It argues that urban space in fast-growing cities is undervalued by city officials and, as a result, fails to support the livelihood needs of the urban poor. The lack of recognition of urban space as a critical urban resource, and its potential contribution towards improving the quality of life for the urban poor, is a major constraint on the achievement of sustainable development. The paper draws conclusions from a case study of Harare.

The focus of recent land development in Harare has been on meeting the needs of low-income households for shelter and services. This has led to a quantitative approach to housing provision that focuses on individual housing units. It ignores broader questions of urban environmental quality and performance (Awotona *et al.* 1995), and creates sterile environments, de-emphasising the city's role as a centre for collective life and as a source of livelihood for the urban poor (Dewar 1993; Behrens and Watson 1997). Cities such as Harare must therefore understand their important role in finding and implementing appropriate measures to influence and control the use of public space for these purposes.

The paper first explores the concept of urban space as a framework for the analysis. Using the illustration of Harare, it then examines how the political context has shaped the city, in the pre- and post-independence era. The effects of economic structural change are then considered, including the dramatic increase in urban poverty. The social demands on urban space resulting from economic upheaval, and people's different perceptions of these, are then considered. The last section argues that urban space should be treated as a critical resource, as reflected in significant policy shifts.

Urban space in the context of sustainable development

The physical space of cities is delineated by a complex system of social conventions. Among these are conventions that define different spaces in urban areas as either private or public. Private space is marked by a system of barriers or signs to deter strangers from entering. Public space is the area outside individual or small group control and is usually multi-purpose in function, although the division is not always clear (Madanipour 1999). In this paper, the term 'urban space' is used to encompass all those areas of the urban environment that are not exclusively private, but are in some way shared with others in the community. This may include areas of land in government ownership, such as roads or stream reserves, but may also include other undeveloped or ill-defined spaces.

In densely populated urban areas, many poor households have very restricted access to private space, as a result of small plot sizes, multiple households on plots, and high room occupancy; urban space is an important resource for these households. The space immediately outside the house or shelter forms an extension of living space and a centre for social interaction. More critically, low-income households frequently gain part or all of their income from informal sector activities such as petty trading, manufacture, or urban agriculture, which rely on access to urban space.

In low-density areas, often on the peri-urban fringe, the problems of poor households result not from lack of space in the home, but from the relative isolation of households from urban centres which provide a choice of employment opportunities and a range of facilities for healthcare or education. In this context, urban space becomes a barrier that has to be traversed at considerable cost to the households whose income is insufficient to provide for the cost of public transport.

Two factors are central to understanding the operation of urban space. First, an analysis of the political and economic forces which influence its production and regulation, and, second, an awareness of the social functions of space and people's perceptions of it within the urban environment (Madanipour 1996). The production of urban space is largely influenced by the land and property development process and the financing mechanisms, regulations, and land tenure arrangements of the city's major institutions and groups (central and municipal government, landowners, development agencies, the construction industry, etc.).

The perception of urban space has been explored by designers such as Lynch (1979) and Bentley *et al.* (1985), and others have looked at the cultural forces which shape city form (Dandekar 1998). However, there has been relatively little consideration of the social dimensions which influence how space is perceived and used, or the different meanings attributed to space by different groups in society. Madanipour (1996) argues that environmental awareness depends on social and economic hierarchies, and that our interaction with urban space cannot be fully understood without understanding the social context of urban life. He argues for a socio-spatial approach to urban analysis which identifies the role of space in social interaction.

The adoption of goals for sustainable urban development requires an assessment of the effect of development on both the natural and human environment. This suggests integrated approaches to urban development, which combine social, economic, and environmental considerations, to give equitable access to resources both within and between generations (Haughton and Hunter 1994). In low- and middle-income countries, an important component of sustainable development strategies has been to find ways of increasing the access of low-income groups to land for shelter, by seeking more efficient use of land, or forms of tenure which improve the security of households (UNCHS 1996). It is argued here, however, that land for shelter is only one facet of the land resource so crucial to low-income households, and that land for livelihoods or social interaction is equally necessary in contributing to quality of life.

Political influences on urban space in Harare

The political context in Harare has profoundly influenced the city's physical form and urban space, and the policies of segregation pursued by the settler community are imprinted on the urban fabric. Modern planning has reinforced this historic polarisation, and the former racial divide has become an income divide in the post-independence city. Government housing policies have concentrated on the provision of single-use, low-income housing projects, and have reinforced segregation and created new low-income communities which are isolated on the outskirts of the city.

Harare was established as a settler colony in 1890. The colonial government was concerned to establish a pleasant environment for the settler population, to support the manufacturing base of the new city,

and to control the African labour force (Rakodi 1995). The new settlement was built around a small fort and administrative offices for the British South Africa Company, and a cadastral plan was prepared with generous streets laid out on two intersecting grids. The first settlement for African workers was established in 1892, and legislation in 1906 allowed the designation of separate black residential areas, and made it compulsory for all African workers not living at their place of work to live in these locations. In 1907, some 20 ha was allocated for the first African township at Harari (now Mbare), 3 km south of the city centre (Zinyama *et al.* 1993).

From this time, the city developed along strictly segregated lines. The municipality area, or townlands, was gradually developed for the settler community, and outlying private farms were subdivided into large residential properties, which were attractive because of cheap land, a rural environment, and freedom from municipality rates and controls (Zinyama *et al.* 1993). The first major subdivision outside the municipal area was at Avondale, 6 km north of the city centre, which was incorporated into the municipality in 1934. Meanwhile the shortage of African housing was becoming acute and, by 1935, an increase in squatters living just outside the city led the government to identify a second township for 2500 people on the state-owned Highfield Farm, about 8 km south-west of the city centre.

The pace of development increased after the Second World War with an influx of new settlers from Europe. Each new suburb was designed according to imported planning fashions of the time, illustrating the 'garden city', 'neighbourhood', and Radburn design concepts (Davison 2000). During the 1950s and 1960s, eight Town Management Boards (later Town Councils), and one Rural Council were set up to administer the outlying areas. During the post-war years, expansion of the urban economy resulted in critical housing shortages for the African population, and employers were required to provide accommodation for workers, while the local authorities built hostels and small family houses for rent in Mbare and Highfield. Where possible, African housing was exported beyond the city limits, and new areas were developed to the south and west of the city including Dzivarasekwa and Kambudzuma in the 1960s, and Glen Norah and Glen View in the 1970s.

Low-income housing

As a result of the struggle for independence in the 1970s, an influx of refugees led to further pressure for housing and the growth of squatter areas to the south of Harare. In 1974 a decision was taken to establish a new town at Chitungwiza some 25 km south of the city beside two established settlements for airport workers. By 1982 the new town had grown to a population of 170,000 (Zinyama 1993), and is now the third largest urban complex in the country.

In Zimbabwe, the supply of land for low-income housing has always been considered as a public sector responsibility and, since independence in 1980, housing policy has aimed to redress the shortage of such through state initiatives, mainly through the provision of serviced plots for home ownership. In the early 1980s work started on several sites and services schemes in Harare, for example Warren Park, Kuwadzana, Hatcliffe, and Budiriro. A decision taken in the late 1970s to sell off the municipal rental stock to sitting tenants was implemented during the first half of the 1980s, when nearly two-thirds was sold (Rakodi 1995).

Unusually for a fast-growing city, Harare's authorities have remained intolerant of informal sector housing. The extensive squatter areas of the late 1970s were all cleared, with little public outcry (Rakodi 1995). New informal settlements are quickly removed and their populations exported to various holding camps, for example Porta Farm, 40 km to the west of the city centre near Lake Chivero. The exception is Epworth, a large settlement on Mission land located 10 km south-east of the city centre, beyond the Harare Municipality boundary, which now accommodates about 50,000 people and is the only regularised squatter area in Harare.

The pressures of rapid urban growth are, however, manifest in high plot occupancy and considerable overcrowding, particularly in low-income areas near the city centre, where the increase of backyard shacks for rent causes considerable social pressures. The social cost of inadequate housing is high. Average occupancy rates in the low-income areas are estimated at about 12 people per unit (Harare City Council Social Survey 1996), but occupancies as high as 27 people living on one stand have been found (unpublished study). Auret (1995) cites problems of family breakdown, increases in crime, threats of assault to and abuse of women, an increase in the number of street children, malnutrition, and high incidences of communicable diseases, which she found to be associated with overcrowding and poor housing.

The population of Harare is now estimated to be about 1.2 million with around 0.7 million in Chitungwiza and a growth rate of around 6 per cent a year. There are about 120,000 low-income households on the City Council's waiting list, and there is a significant shortage of middle-income housing, for which no provision has been made in recent years. Poor households are concentrated in a relatively small sector of the city. At the end of 1997 it was estimated that about 64 per cent of the municipality's total housing stock was in the low-income areas. These house about 75 per cent of the urban population but occupy perhaps a quarter of the municipality area. Some 48 per cent of the population in low-income areas was found to be lodgers, with just over 1000 squatters, although some 12,000 squatters have been relocated to Hatcliffe and others to Porta Farm (Mubvami and Hall 1998).

The land development process

Planning legislation was introduced in 1933 and 1945, ostensibly modelled on the British planning system, but essentially a zoning system operating in the settler areas as a Town Planning Scheme. The standards adopted reflected imported engineering standards for road and infrastructure design, but served to reinforce the cultural divide between the settler minority and the African majority. A regulation that any plot where sewage disposal was by septic tank should be a minimum of 4000 m², reinforced the low-density pattern of settlement, and the subdivision of plots was prohibited. A new planning act in 1976 (amended in 1996) introduced a system of master and local plans, which were extended after independence to cover the township areas.

Designs for African housing were intended to ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure at minimum cost. Research initiated at the end of the 1970s led to the publication in the early 1980s of a series of design manuals, relating to planning standards, building regulations, and water and sewerage designs for the Ministry of Local Government and Housing (Musekiwa 1993; Musandu-Nyamayaro 1993). These documents have had a profound impact on the geometric design and appearance of low-income housing areas and, although now updated, the least-cost philosophy still holds (Davison 2000). Ironically, these manuals perpetuated the separation of low-income housing areas from other sectors of the city, as there is no mixing of plot sizes within the low-income housing schemes.

Urban space in Harare is thus a by-product of the polarised city and its dual planning processes. The overall density of development is extremely low, estimated at 24.7 persons per hectare (about four households per hectare) in the Harare Combination Master Plan in 1989, although this has undoubtedly increased. Wide drainage reserves, or *vleis*, along the streambeds enhance the dislocated character of the settlement and there is almost complete separation of high- and middle-income areas from the low-income communities, which are found mainly in the south-western segment of the city. A study (Swedeplan 1989) estimated that a population of between 141,000 and 354,000 could be accommodated on infill plots in four suburbs alone.

This type of urban layout is completely contrary to the philosophy of sustainable development, which tends to advocate compact cities, mixed-use development and to minimise the use of non-renewable transport resources through high-density construction. In Harare, the segregation of low-income areas from richer suburbs and employment areas, and extremely low densities, severely limits the choice of employment strategies for poor families. The adoption of a philosophy of sustainable development would necessitate a complete rethink of the approach to urban planning and the management of urban space in Harare.

Economic influences on urban space in Harare

Many post-colonial governments inherited economies that were structurally weak, and introduced very little radical change. Trade patterns determined in the colonial period relied on the production and export of raw materials and agricultural produce, which experienced a decline in world market share during the 1970s and 1980s (Rakodi 1995).

Zimbabwe's economy is based on primary production of agricultural produce, and manufacturing. At independence in 1980, the government inherited a controlled economy that had suffered from years of isolation and under-investment during the period of UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) and international sanctions, and a GDP heavily dependent on agricultural production. In addition to foreign exchange and import restrictions, new controls introduced after 1980 included protection of staple foods and wages. In subsequent years, government expenditure rose to over 50 per cent of GDP, mainly as a result of increased spending on health, social services, and infrastructure, partly funded by increased taxation which further undermined the capacity of the private sector to make new investment (Munjoma 1999).

Unusually for Southern Africa, in 1980 the majority of Zimbabwe's urban workforce was employed in the formal economy, partly because a formal sector job had been a condition of urban residence, and partly because planning controls restricted commercial activities on residential plots (Rakodi 1995). By the end of 1980s, rising unemployment, increasing inflation, and difficulties in financing the spiralling budget deficit, led to the recognition of the need for major structural change.

By 1989, the workforce was increasing by about 200,000 school-leavers a year, but the economy was capable of creating only 20–30,000 new jobs annually, mostly in health or education. Unemployment had increased from about 8 per cent at independence to around 26 per cent by the end of the decade. Inflation was running at 11 per cent during most of the 1980s and later increased to 17 per cent, meaning that, with nominal interest rates at about 12 per cent, the real interest rate was negative. Central government debt had reached 71 per cent of GDP in 1989, of which 36 per cent was external. The situation was exacerbated by successive devaluations of the Zimbabwe dollar, and a failure to attract significant foreign investment during the 1980s (Munjoma 1999).

From 1991 to the end of 1995 the government introduced an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) which signalled an end to its 12-year socialist economic policies. The move was broadly supported by the World Bank and the IMF, and the first step in October 1990 was a partial relaxation of import licences, with the full programme introduced in January 1991. The government's objectives were to reduce the budget deficit through: the removal of subsidies; the adoption of appropriate fiscal and monetary policies; the liberalisation of trade to increase exports and imports of manufacturing components; and the removal of controls on prices, labour, and wages. The Zimbabwean approach to structural adjustment also included a focus on employment creation and social welfare, with a programme of cost recovery for social services (Robinson 1991; Nyangulu 1991).

Despite a promising start during 1991, severe drought in 1992 led to an 8 per cent drop in GDP that year, and triggered the country's worst recession since independence. The private sector was unprepared for foreign competition and manufacturing output declined by 20 per cent between 1991 and 1996. Per capita GDP dropped sharply in 1991 to below the 1980 level, and inflation escalated to a staggering 42 per cent in 1992, fuelled by a shortage of agricultural commodities and the phasing out of consumer subsidies. Foreign exchange rates were

controlled until 1993, and were regularly adjusted downward to compensate for the gap between Zimbabwe's inflation rate and those of its major trading partners. Exports increased but the cost of imports also rose, further stoking inflation. By 1995–96 the debt burden had risen to 80 per cent of GDP, and debt repayment constituted over 30 per cent of government expenditure.

By the end of ESAP in 1995, per capita GDP and consumption and expenditure on health and education were lower than in 1990. Formal sector employment had grown by only 12,000 new jobs per annum, and virtually none of the ESAP macro-economic targets had been met (Munjoma 1999). In 1996, the government introduced a second round of economic reform, the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST). By 1997, agriculture and forestry still accounted for 19 per cent of GDP and mining and quarrying 2 per cent, while manufacturing had fallen to 18 per cent. Distribution, hotels, and restaurants accounted for 20 per cent. The largest manufacturing sectors are food and drink, metals and metal products, and chemicals and plastics (CSO 1998).

The economy of Harare is very similar to that of the country as a whole. There are two main employment centres in the city, the central area and the large industrial area of Wokington/Southernton in the south-west. Efforts to decentralise industrial production in the 1970s and 1980s to the outlying settlements of Chitungwiza and Norton were not successful.

One of the more surprising results of the ESAP era was a property boom in the city centre between 1991 and 1997, with the development of more than 30 high-quality new office blocks, and an increase of 60 per cent in the amount of office floor space for rent, totalling about 275,000 m². Several factors contributed to this growth. First, there was a belief in the long-term improvements in the economy as a result of ESAP, and soaring inflation and negative real interest rates made the money markets unattractive for investment. There were still restrictions on international investment, and tight controls on the remittance of dividends by foreign companies, with the result that cash-rich companies were looking to protect their portfolios through safe investments in the local economy.

Pension and insurance funds were leaders in the investment boom, as a result of progressive relaxation in the amount of discretionary funds they could invest, and about two thirds of the new floor space was built by these institutional investors. By 1996, investment in the

commercial office sector had slowed, partly because high interest rates had meant investment returns on the money market reached up to 25 per cent, and were more attractive than the 10 per cent yield from property investment, and partly because of high building costs resulting from high inflation (Munjoma 1999; Matisma 1996; Mugiyo 1996).

The property boom transformed Harare city centre into a modern high-rise city with a dramatic skyline. It also created a powerful lobby among vested interests in promoting continuing control of the urban space of the city centre, retention of high levels of parking, and restriction of informal activities. In 1998, commuter bus services – the minibuses providing low-cost transport – were restricted from stopping on the roadside in the city centre and were relegated to outlying termini, and a one-way system of traffic management was introduced to ease traffic congestion, but did nothing to make it easier for pedestrians to get around.

Social influences on urban space in Harare

ESAP also led to a dramatic and sudden increase in poverty in Harare, and throughout the country. Structural adjustment policies have severe consequences for the urban poor, as removal of consumer subsidies, cuts in government expenditure, and opening the private sector to competition result in a decline in real wages and an increase in unemployment which disproportionately affect poor households. The Zimbabwean experience was no exception.

Faced by the growing poverty crisis, in 1993, the government set up a Poverty Alleviation Action Plan (PAAP). A poverty assessment study carried out in 1996 as part of the programme found that 41 per cent of Harare's population could be classified as 'poor', with incomes below the consumption poverty line (Z\$2500 a month, equivalent to US\$250),¹ and of these over half were 'very poor' with incomes below the food poverty line (Z\$1500 a month, US\$150) (Mubvami and Hall 1998). Although urban poverty in Harare is slightly below the national level of 44 per cent, this represents a very significant proportion of the urban population.

A Poverty Action Plan, launched in 1995, led to the Harare City Consultation, a joint initiative between the City Council and the Municipal Development Programme, with technical assistance from the Urban Management Programme of UNCHS (Habitat) in Nairobi. This included community development and social safety nets

providing free education and healthcare for the poorest households. The City Council is providing new sites for the informal sector, and the Department of Housing continues to provide serviced plots for allocation to individuals and housing cooperatives.

However, political and economic factors make implementation of any coordinated poverty reduction programme extremely difficult. Harare City Council has operated at a deficit budget for some years – it was Z\$732.6 million (US\$30.7 million) in 1998 – and has now adopted a financial recovery programme (Mubvami and Hall 1998). In 1999 the council was suspended for corruption, and the city is being run directly by a government minister. The national economy is being crippled by war and disputes over land reform, and political unrest prior to and in the aftermath of the June 2000 election has caused a drastic loss of confidence in the national economy, and led to further devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar.

Increased poverty creates new and competing pressures on urban space, largely because of the increase in informal sector business and trading, much of which takes place in the street or on undeveloped land. It is difficult to estimate the level of informal sector activity in Harare, as the available figures are conflicting, but there has undoubtedly been a significant increase since 1991. Census figures in 1992 indicated that only 8 per cent of the 500,000 economically active people in Harare Urban Area were working in the informal sector, with 70 per cent formally employed and 20 per cent unemployed, but this is likely to be an underestimate (GoZ 1992). By the mid-1990s, the City Council's research section estimated that the proportion of people in formal sector employment in the city had dropped to 35 per cent, largely as a result of ESAP (Mubvami and Hall 1998). A study in the low-income areas of Dzivarasekwa and Tafara found that the majority of residents employed in the formal sector earned wages below the food poverty line, that unemployment, redundancies, and low pay were seen as the main causes of poverty, and that some 94 per cent of households in the study were engaged in vending, and 50 per cent in urban agriculture (Matshalaga 1997).

Various recent studies highlight the characteristics of the informal sector in Harare. There is a sharp gender division of labour with women predominating in the petty retail trade, particularly in the least profitable sector of fruit and vegetables (Nachudwa 1995; Matemba 1996). There are various specialist retail sectors such as the sale of building materials (Brown 2000) or metal construction materials

(Nangati 1995). Within the production sector there is a preponderance of operators in activities such as carpentry and basketwork, but products also include clothing, shoes, tinsmithing, and mattress-making (Mupedziswa 1994). Services include activities such as hair-cutting, mending watches, electrical repairs, welding, and auto repairs.

City centre operators tend to focus on consumer goods and earn rather higher incomes than elsewhere in the city. In 1998, the City Council estimated that about 1000 informal traders operated in the city centre (Mubvami and Hall 1998), most in designated flea market locations. A survey in 1997 of 40 traders in six flea markets in the city centre found that 70 per cent had joined this business between 1995 and 1997 (Chikaya 1997). These regulated city centre markets are not allowed to sell food, and concentrate on clothing, cassettes, tapes, and kitchenware, with considerable numbers importing goods from South Africa, Botswana, or Zambia, and second-hand clothes from Zambia or Mozambique. Daily rents varied between Z\$10 (US\$0.8) in peripheral locations to Z\$150 (US\$12) in prime locations, but earnings were comparatively high, ranging from Z\$500 (US\$41) to Z\$2000 (US\$166) a week.

While the difficulty of raising capital is the single most pressing problem facing informal sector businesses, lack of reliable and secure premises from which to operate is also a serious constraint, particularly for those conducting their business in the open. The problems of trading in the sun or rain, with consequent damage to goods, are compounded by lack of security for capital equipment (such as welding machines), goods or takings, and harassment by the police and municipal authorities. Even in the city centre, markets are overcrowded, with a lack of toilets, water taps, and lock-up facilities (Mupedziswa 1994; Chikaya 1997). Most traders have to pack up their goods at the end of the day, but the small minibuses – the cheapest form of urban transport – will not transport them and their goods, thus forcing them to hire expensive taxis (Auret 1995).

Perceptions of urban space in Zimbabwe

Preliminary views on people's perceptions of the urban environment were obtained from two pilot studies using street interviews carried out in the late 1990s in the city centre, and in Machipisa, the main shopping centre at Highfield, a low-income housing area about 8 km south-west of the centre (Brown 2000). The studies found considerable

concern about the deteriorating street environment and increasing pressures on urban space, particularly the increase in informal trading, poor street environment for pedestrians, and escalating street crime.

In the centre, attitudes are polarised between those who want to see an orderly, managed environment symbolic of a city centre, and those trying to make a livelihood. People's perceptions of urban space differed significantly depending on their employment status, reasons for being in the city centre, and where the interview took place. Some valued the smart, more upmarket character of the eastern part of the city centre, while others were concerned about the difficulty of negotiating the western area as a pedestrian, and environmental factors such as traffic, noise, dirt, and the problems of pickpockets and street kids.

Attitudes surrounding the informal sector were conflicting. Hawkers themselves resented police harassment, and petty pilfering of goods. They would prefer locations near the main tide of pedestrian flow, and shelter for the rainy season. Some people saw hawkers as part of the wider problem of poverty, and considered that the locations of stalls should continue to be strictly controlled. In the city centre, an interesting example of informal management of urban space can be seen in the management of parking meters by street children. This occurs in several locations and improved management of this system has been proposed as a way of both improving the income of the street children and improving the management of parking facilities (Nyamvura 2000).

The suburban shopping area of Machipisa has a very different function from the city centre and perceptions differed significantly. The area was laid out, probably in the 1970s, according to planning principles of the time. It covers approximately 15 ha and includes 96 designated commercial plots, many of which are subdivided, selling a mixture of food, clothing, electrical and other goods (Ndhlovu 1999). The local plan (City of Harare 1990) allows for expansion of the shopping centre by relocating the bus terminus to the other side of the road, a policy implemented in 1999. The plan also estimates that the surrounding area of Highfield had a population of 98,500, living in 15,200 residential units, half of which had been constructed without planning permission. Of the total population, 38,500 people (39 per cent) were found to be renting, many of those (26,200 people) living in illegal outbuildings.

Preliminary conclusions from the Machipisa study indicate that it caters for a local catchment, with 39 per cent of those interviewed walking to the centre and 42 per cent travelling by commuter bus.

The proportion of people walking to the centre is extremely high, probably because lower-income groups cannot afford public transport fares. It is perceived as a modern employment, leisure, and service centre, with a good range of shops. Several people described its character as 'beautiful', although others felt that it had 'nothing' to commend it, citing problems of dilapidated buildings or crime. Good transport services and its accessibility play a significant role in its attraction. Leisure activities were also an attraction – including the beer halls, turf club, sports facilities, and library.

As in the city centre, hawkers were the subject of conflicting opinions. There was a division between those who do not like the proliferation of the informal sector because the traders are thought to exacerbate pavement congestion and crime, and those who consider the main problem to be the lack of organisation of, and facilities for, informal traders. Traders themselves are concerned about the lack of toilets, water taps, and shade. There are degrees of informality within the area, and in one market stallholders with municipality licences sublet to about eight or nine tenants, making profits of ten times the licence fee. Even on the pavements there are those who consider themselves 'established' – regular traders who trade from tables at the same pitch each day – and 'newcomers' – resented by the more established group, many of whom sell vegetables from plastic sheets on the ground. There are periodic confiscations of goods by the City Council and the police, particularly of fruit or vegetables, a phenomenon that was reported to be worse when foreign dignitaries arrive.

Thieves and petty pilfering are serious problems. There seem to be two facets to this: first, pickpockets who target shoppers and, second, stealing from the informal traders, who lose either goods or money if their attention is distracted. This is a particular problem for informal traders who are operating on their own. Interestingly, a specialist plumbing and electrical market located in an enclosed compound north of the main centre has very little petty crime. Set around four sides of a rectangle, it has only two entrances and forms a safe enclave where stallholders watch out for each other's goods. Customers may park their vehicles unlocked in the compound, and traders leave their wares in the stall at night, supervised by a private night watchman. Pilfering, however, occurs outside the compound, although the presence of a police post in the vicinity is thought to improve security.

Dirt and noise were also major issues of concern. Poor refuse collection in the shopping area, and a broken sewer in one of the

unpaved service streets, were mentioned. People are also concerned about environmental problems, mentioning the lack of drinking fountains, toilets, shade, shelter, and need for places to sit, and the dilapidated appearance of the centre.

Policy implications

Urban space is a scarce resource which cannot be ignored in the context of the debate on sustainable development. In many cities, public space occupies about 20 per cent of the urban realm – in Harare it is probably more – and has many competing functions: as a channel for communications, source of livelihood, or place for social interaction. It is a crucial resource for poor households, particularly those engaged in informal sector employment who suffer from harassment, crime, insecurity of trading location, lack of shelter, and lack of facilities. Yet planning regulations, economic development decisions, and highway improvements create physical spaces that take no account of the needs of the poor, while municipal policing and control inhibit the legitimate attempts of poor households to support themselves.

This paper has shown how the political influences which shaped the development of Harare, compounded by modern-day planning policies, have resulted in a polarised city, where the urban poor are segregated in low-income, single-use ghettos, without the employment opportunities that mixed neighbourhoods have. Many of these suburbs are located so far from centres of employment that travel costs make access to all but local employment facilities prohibitive. Economic structural adjustment policies in Harare have resulted in a city centre environment where greater control of the street is espoused, and has had profound social consequences in the escalating scale of urban poverty. The breakdown in municipal management, which has occurred as a result of the economic crisis and chronic mismanagement, has left a vacuum where crime flourishes and there is little support for the legitimate self-help efforts of the urban poor.

The policy implications of viewing urban space as a crucial resource are considerable. At the city-wide scale, there is scope for allowing building at higher densities, mixed-income neighbourhoods, and more provision for informal activities. The potential for infill development on reserved land should also be explored. At the local level, administrative measures to improve the management of existing space could be explored, in particular the scope for informal arrangements such as those made by the traders in the plumbing and electrical market in

Machipisa. The idea of parking meters supervised by street children in the city centre could also be explored.

There is considerable potential for improving trading facilities for the informal sector, not least by removing the haphazard and indiscriminate confiscation of goods. The aim could be to allow those who at present operate illegally to make a small increment in security and level of formality, to a point where they are happy to pay rent, which can be used to fund further management initiatives. More detailed information would be required on informal trading, including levels of informality, specialisation of trade, sources of supply, storage of goods, and security, before any detailed proposals could be framed. The focus of future policy may be on relaxing current regulations, appropriate planning guidance, and innovative management measures to support informal trading initiatives and reduce crime.

A further policy initiative is to consider the importance of walking as a mode of transport in urban contexts. In poor cities, where a large majority of the population walks, either as the principal way of getting around or to and from public transport, the effect of insensitive traffic management or poorly located bus stations is considerable, and is borne largely by the urban poor. Mechanisms could be sought for leveraging private funding for local improvements of facilities, such as the supermarket in Machipisa, which funded provision of the new bus station.

This paper has shown how, in Harare, the failure of official policy and regulations which affect urban space to recognise the needs of low-income population groups inhibits these people's ability to help themselves. Planning is seen as a rigid set of standards and urban space is a by-product of the planning process, not a resource in its own right. The standards reinforce the structural segregation built into the urban system, and the process of forward planning merely seeks to reinforce the status quo. While NGOs in the cooperative movement are working closely on participatory methodologies for housing provision, this approach is not widely used elsewhere to assess the impact of planning policies on the urban poor. The scope for working with communities to respond to current development pressures is considerable, and still largely unexplored.

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Note

- 1 Between January 1996 and November 2000 the exchange rate has plummeted, from a low in 1996 of US\$1 = Z\$9 to US\$1 = Z\$55.

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