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Governing the Poor in Harare, Zimbabwe

Shifting Perceptions
and Changing Responses

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Acronyms

CBD	Central Business District
CHRA	Combined Harare Residents Association
EM	Executive mayor
ESAP	Economic structural adjustment programme
HDRAs	High-density residential areas
LDRAs	Low-density residential areas
MDRAs	Middle-density residential areas
MLGNH	Ministry of Local Government and National Housing
MP	Member of Parliament
MPWLGN	Ministry of Public Works, Local Government and National Housing
MYDGEC	Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation
PAAP	Poverty Alleviation Action Plan
SDF	Social Development Fund
TCs	Transit Camps

Abstract

This report reviews the issue at the heart of urban governance, namely the relationship between the urban governors in central and local government institutions and a significant portion of the community that is governed, namely the urban poor. The discussion first develops a conceptual framework that forms the basis of the subsequent analysis of urban governance, urban poverty and the urban poor. The review then moves on to a general presentation of official perceptions and the treatment of the urban poor. It reviews those perceptions of the poor in urban areas as resourceful and helpless as well as those perceptions of them as a nuisance, an asset and a liability. The discourse then focuses on Zimbabwe before presenting a detailed analysis of the case of Harare. The paper presents the official perceptions by using evidence from the city. It also presents an analysis of official responses arising from such perceptions and of the reactions of the poor to such responses. From this analysis, the argument is developed that urban governance in Harare is unpredictable, volatile and fluid. This conclusion exposes the distortions in the system of governance and argues that the style of governance results in both the poor and the governors being on the defensive. The discussion concludes by calling for the system to be opened up to accommodate the poor as partners.

1. Introduction and background

The relationship between rulers and ruled is governed by perceptions. In most cases, there is very little philanthropy in these perceptions. Many of them are based on selfish interest, which itself is an outcome of “rational” calculation. Though appearing to have the interest of the other at heart, in reality each party seeks to extract as much capital as possible from the relationships. This is true of both the “governors” or “rulers” (those in institutions of governance) and “the governed” or “the ruled” (in this case the poor) (Oluwu and Akinola, 1995) act in a manner that fits this description.

Empirical observations reveal that the relationship between rulers and ruled is fluid. This fluidity confirms the lack of permanence of interests and of the perceived usefulness of one party by the other. In this case, animosity, hostility or open warfare often erupt with rulers abandoning their protégés or, as in democratic societies, the ruled opting to be ruled by others. This is borne out by the many shifts from leniency to repression, from sensitivity to insensitivity, as well as in changes of government at both central and local levels.

This paper is based on the conviction that an analysis of the shifting perceptions in urban governance is a good starting point for full understanding of the changing responses by the rulers to the state and activities of the ruled. Since governance is itself a concept that is primarily concerned with the relationship between rulers and ruled, an analysis of mutual perceptions is an essential aspect of understanding and interpreting governance at any level of government.

Using the case of urban local governance in Harare, the paper seeks to explore empirically the fluidity in the relationship between governors and governed. The former are the rulers (politicians), whether elected or employed professionals/technocrats. The governed are the ruled, in this case that group collectively known as the urban poor. This publication is a continuation of a project that has already yielded several papers that have examined urban poverty, governance and sustainability as well as housing and homelessness (see Kamete, 1997; 1997a; 2000; 2001; 2001a).

The previous papers dealt with specific sectoral issues like poverty, the environment and housing. What emerges from these studies is that the way stakeholders view each other influences their interactions. This realisation led to perceptions being comprehensively examined in their own right as substantive and separate dimensions of urban governance. This discussion, therefore, is designed to explain the basis of certain views and responses, with particular emphasis on the perceptions of the institutions of governance, in charge of policy

formulation and charting out responses to various actions and reactions in the urban sphere.

The discussion first revisits the concepts of governance, poverty and the urban poor. It then examines the analyses regarding commonly held perceptions of the poor in the urban centres of the developing world. Then it proceeds to present an overview of the realities on the ground in Harare in the context of local governance and local government. Thereafter, the shifting perceptions and the changing responses, as well as counter-responses, are analysed in detail with respect to the way the poor are governed in the city of Harare.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Urban governance as relationships

Urban governance is essentially about relationships and interactions. It primarily focuses on the relationship between those tasked with the responsibility of governing (the governors) and those over whom the governorship is exercised (the governed) (Onibokuni, 1995; Olowu and Akinola, 1995). A leading research institution succinctly points out that governance "... is about roles, rules and relationships ..." (GDRC, 2000). Recognising that power is within and outside government and that there is no unitary interest, many institutions advocating for "good governance" emphasise the value of relationships (UNCHS, 2000; UNDP, 1997). These relationships are sometimes riddled with conflicts, hence the need for mediation, conflict resolution and reconciliation (GDRC, 2000).

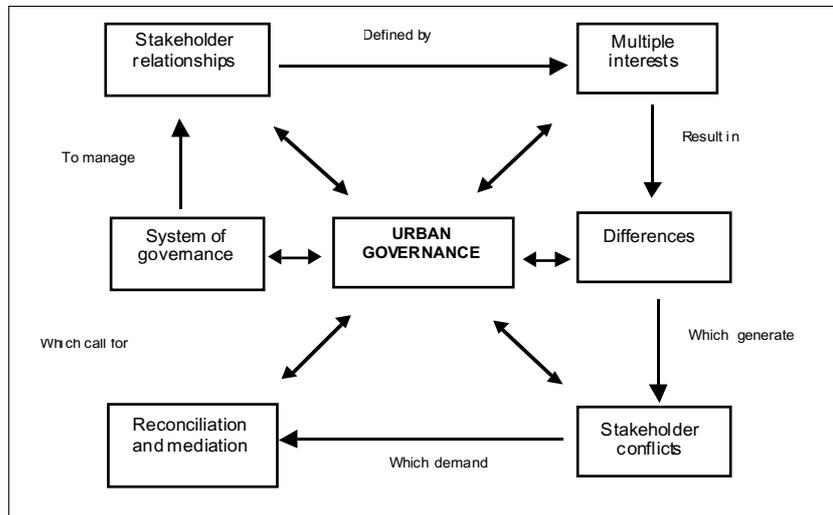
Conflicts arise out of the fact that governance deals with a multiplicity of institutions and interests (cf. El-Beblawi, 1997). These interests sometimes result in differences that have to be managed (Figure 1). For this reason, the conceptualisation of governance as comprising "the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences" (UNDP, 1997: 3) captures the essence of the critical role of relationships in governance.

It can be argued that the relationship is based on perceptions of "self" and "other party" well as of own and other party's interests, relevance and usefulness. It is this perception that defines and explains particular alliances, hostilities, misunderstandings and differences. Perception has to do with the reception, recognition and interpretation of sensory stimuli based chiefly on memory (see Dictionary.com, 2000). It involves gaining insight and understanding (Kamete, 1999). An analysis of the perceptions of the rulers can therefore yield invaluable insight into the way they govern: it also explains shifts, if any, in the way the institutions of governance and those who occupy them carry out their duties.

2.2 The urban poor

Simply put, the urban poor are urban residents who live in poverty. That poverty may relate to incomes that fall below the minimum required for basic survival, lack of access to basic services, the lack of power, exclusion from basic socio-political and economic processes, vulnerability or insecurity (cf. Chambers, 1995: 175). It is now recognised that poverty is much more than pecuniary deprivation but encompasses some of the non-monetary aspects cited above (World

Figure 1: Relationships, differences, conflicts and mediation



Bank, 1990; 2001). The identification of poverty has natural implications for the identification of the poor.

The Recife Declaration is useful in identifying the poor in an urban context. The Declaration points out:

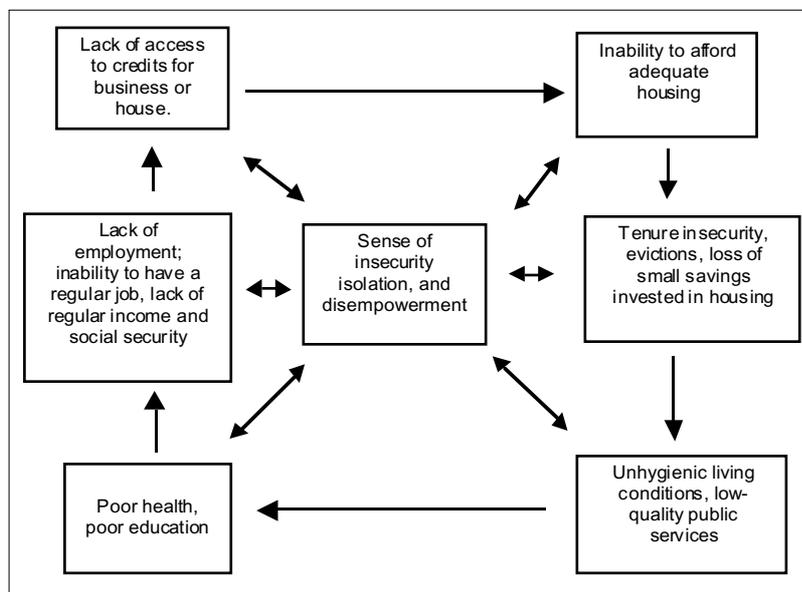
The poor experience not only a lack of income or access to basic assets and basic services, but also a devalued social status, marginalisation in urban space and a degraded living environment, limited access to justice, information, education, decision-making power, and citizenship; and vulnerability to violence and loss of security.

The poor are thus in an unenviable situation. Their inability to access basic necessities compromises not only their comfort but also a whole range of environmental, physical, social, mental and emotional attributes. It is in this regard that some commentators have coined the evocative phrase “cumulative deprivation” (Baharoglu and Kessides, 2001: 6). Figure 2 captures these cumulative deprivations as perceived by Baharoglu and Kessides.

As the term suggests, these deprivations cumulatively enhance each other and make the whole poverty scenario worse, thereby aggravating the unenviable situation of those affected. Urban poverty has certain complexities that are brought about by, for example, the lack of credible social security schemes and social networks, or what the World Bank (2001: 3) calls “... community and inter-household mechanisms for social security ...” It is for this reason that other relationships become increasingly important for the survival of the poor. In most cases these relationships happen to be those with the rich and the powerful, who in most respects are privileged and have the role of governing the urban centres.

The stress placed on the poor forces them to act or behave in ways that generate certain favourable and unfavourable perceptions among observers, including those in institutions of urban governance. For example, because of their desperate situation, the poor may act in environmentally destructive ways, behave in politically threatening ways or behave in ways that endear them to the governors (Pino, 1998: 257; Kamete, 2001a). In addition to the very poverty of these people, their actions and behaviours contribute significantly to the shaping of the perceptions of the governors. The perceptions thus shaped are in turn used to frame methods of governance, whether repressive or tolerant, friendly or hostile.

Figure 2: *Cumulative impacts of urban poverty*



Source: Baharoglu and Kessides, 2001: 6

3. Assessing the Urban Poor: An Overview

A resource, a nuisance, an asset or a liability? As a group, the urban poor can be any or all of these at different times and under various circumstances. What determines the exact character of the poor is a complex set of interrelated factors that include institutional approaches and the prevailing macro-economic, political and socio-cultural environment. Perceptions also matter. The following discussion reviews this issue in greater detail.

3.1 The urban poor as a resource

The poor have been known to be very resourceful in ensuring their survival in an otherwise hostile urban environment. Throughout the urban centres of the developing world, the poor have demonstrated their endless initiative and ability to access land and housing, to create employment and provide basic utilities like water, power and transport. In fact, some commentators have become convinced that it is the poor who are the real builders of the cities and towns of the developing world (Hardoy and Satterthwaite, 1989; Webster, 1994). It has been acknowledged that the poor have both needs and aspirations and resources that they put to use to satisfy those needs and aspirations, hence the call that the resourcefulness of the urban poor must be understood and incorporated into areas like housing development and livelihood strategies (Davidson and Payne, 1993: vii).

The petty commodity production sector, which is dominated by the poor, has been shown to be important in keeping the mainstream capitalist mode of production afloat in the poverty-ridden cities of the developing world (Arimah, 2001; cf. Burgess, 1985). Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1989) maintain that the prosperity of the city depends on the work done by lowly paid rural migrants who form a significant part of the urban poor in most urban centres.

Perhaps the best-documented and most lauded efforts of the poor are those in housing provision and employment creation. Informal settlements stand as undeniable testimony to the resourcefulness of the urban poor in housing themselves (Vaa and Tranberg-Hansen, 2002; cf. Turner, 1976; Dwyer, 1975). In cases where formal housing stocks are grossly inadequate and where demand overwhelms supply, the poor have adopted housing provision strategies that, though sometimes leaving a lot to be desired, have at least kept the problem in check (UNCHS, 2001; Tiple 2000; Kamete, 2001a).

In the absence of meaningful growth in employment in the formal sector, the poor – among whom are recently arrived immigrants, children, females, the aged, the disabled, the unskilled and uneducated – have been able to create jobs for themselves in the residential areas, in the city centre, on the roadsides and in many other parts of towns and cities (Cole, 1976; Payne, 1977; Hardoy and Satterthwaite, 1989; Rakodi, 1993; Mupedziswa and Gumbo, 2001). They have been known to engage in such ventures as small-scale manufacturing, waste recycling, trading, construction and agriculture (Lund, 1998; Rogerson, 2001). It is because of such resourcefulness and tenacity that the urban poor have managed to survive in the face of socio-economic adversities and institutional hostility.

The urban poor in Zimbabwe are not different. They are surviving in a macroeconomic environment that can only be described as hostile (Jenkins, 1997; Kamete, 2001b). They have managed to develop methods that enable them to access incomes to make up for the absence or loss of employment or to supplement inadequate wages from the formal sector. With an unemployment rate of over 60 per cent and a housing backlog of close to a million, Zimbabwe's urban poor have succeeded in creating their own jobs and in providing housing. How they have done this makes for a very interesting study (Kamete, 2001a). If this group had not managed to be innovative, the poverty situation in urban Zimbabwe would by any standards be explosive. By being a resource amid poverty and poverty-stricken institutions of governance, the poor in Zimbabwe have managed to make significant contributions to the building of their urban areas (Chitekwe and Mitlin, 2001). In so doing they may also have contributed to saving the cities and towns from socio-economic and political collapse (cf. Brown, 2001).

3.2 The urban poor as helpless

Paternalistic analyses usually regard the urban poor as helpless populations who are in need of external assistance if they are to make it in towns and cities. The logic behind this perception is simple and inviting. The poor are not adequately equipped to survive in the urban areas because of a lack of education, skills, experience and physical assets (Nelson, 1999). They do not have economic opportunities, economic power and influence (Nelson, 1979). They also lack the organisational attributes needed for political survival. Neither do they have the necessary legal resources (IDS, 2001: 104). Since the individual poor have very different backgrounds they are not cohesive enough to organise themselves and make a strong point.

These economic, political, psychological and social conditions result in the poor being powerless and at the mercy of the vagaries of urbanisation. As a result they have no adequate access to essential services like water supply, sewage disposal, housing, education and public health (Cheema, 1986: xi; UNCHS, 2001). The poor are thus viewed as helpless and in need of assistance. This help

can be political, technical and social and it should be rendered by relevantly endowed powers in the urban areas (see Nelson, 1979).

These perceptions apply in the Zimbabwean context. Apart from a minority who own houses, (a significant proportion of which are beyond their physical life expectancy), the urban poor in Zimbabwe clearly lack meaningful physical assets (DSHZ/ZIHOPFE, 2000; Kamete, 2001a). They certainly have very limited access to formal economic opportunities and have virtually no economic power and influence to talk of. Despite occasional and spontaneous bursts of expression and unity, mainly through protests and demonstrations, on their own the poor in the cities and towns of Zimbabwe have demonstrated a lack of organisational attributes needed for long-term socio-political survival (Kamete, 2001). This, coupled with their inherent heterogeneity, means that the less well-to-do in the urban centres of Zimbabwe lack internal coherence. This perception has seen some “benefactors” step in to “assist” the “helpless” poor.

3.3 The urban poor as a nuisance

The poor in urban areas have also been perceived as a nuisance and a threat to the order and prosperity of the urban areas. This view can be both paternalistic and derogatory. The very presence of hungry, formally unemployed, uninformed and uneducated masses, with no way to earn an honest living, is frightening. These desperate people can do anything, including resorting to violence in order to make a living (cf. Albert, 1994). Slums and squatter settlements – which invariably house the poorest sections of the urban communities (cf. Hardoy and Satterthwaite, 1989) – have often been regarded as havens of crime, political instability and other forms of deviance, the top of the list being immorality (Osaghae, 1994; Albert, 1994; cf. Payne, 1977).

In an effort to survive, the poor have been known to “ignorantly” and “innocently” disturb the order, prosperity and comfort of the urban environment by such destructive practices as stream-bank cultivation, street-corner vending, illegal subdivisions, unauthorised building, as well as illegal occupation of land and buildings (Hardoy, et al., 1992; Mbiba, 1995; Brown, 2001; Chitekwe, 2001). This they do by carrying out their activities in violation of such principles as public health, safety and convenience as well as the urban planning regulations and zoning ordinances that are designed to ensure the attainment and protection of these noble principles (Kamete, 1999).

The existence of urban poverty can also be viewed by those in power as a constant reminder of political failure and managerial ineptitude. This explains the periodic forced removals of squatters and the homeless poor from public view to isolated areas where they will not cause embarrassment and discomfort in the presence of visitors, especially foreign dignitaries (cf. Thomson, 1984).

Zimbabwe is no exception to the above scenario. The poor population’s quest to acquire basic necessities has certainly done some harm to the city. One only needs to visit any one of the older pre-independence high-density areas to

confirm this. Illegal subdivisions have made it possible for 200m² stands in a typical urban high-density residential area to accommodate 10 or more families (DSHZ/ZIHOPFE, 2000). This is not unique to Harare. Mutare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Kadoma, and even small towns like Victoria Falls and Kariba are affected by this overcrowding and subsequent overloading of facilities. In the process, decent residential areas are being converted into slums.

The poor have also hit the environment hard. Undevelopable and fragile areas have been invaded and occupied. River banks and catchment areas (like the Mukuvisi in Harare) are starting to be used for small-scale squatter settlements (Mancitshana, 2001). In addition, stream-bank cultivation is continuing despite incessant official warnings, threats and bans (Kamete, 2001). Most informal sector activities take place where the client is. In most cases this does not coincide with the zones with the necessary officially provided facilities. Human congestion in crowded city centres and poor disposal of solid waste are common. The poor – who incidentally happen to be where matters are not going well – get the blame.

3.4 The urban poor: asset or liability?

In preceding sections it was pointed out that the poor could be a resource or a nuisance to the urban areas. The fact that they are purportedly the real builders of the cities and that they are vital to the continued existence of the capitalist mode of production as suppliers and as a market, need not be emphasised. Some analysts have maintained that it is the private sector, in particular the low-income people, who build the cities and not the governments (Webster, 1994; Truong, 1995; Muyaba, 1995).

To politicians the urban poor as a group can be a political asset. The political significance of the urban poor has been recognised and capitalised on in those parts of the developing world that have universal suffrage (Pino, 1998). As an electorate, they have been known to create politicians from their own ranks or of opportunistic “outsiders” (see Nelson, 1979). By virtue of their numbers (they always outnumber other sections of the urban populations) they can make or break political aspirations. The upsurge in the volume of friendly gestures, assistance, and political rallies and their associated promises in urban low-income areas in the run-up to any general or by-election illustrates this.

But this same group can be a costly liability. In countries that have social welfare programmes, the poor are an extra burden in terms of services and assistance (UNDP, 2001). The weight placed by the indigent and the destitute on the Social Development Fund in Zimbabwe is all too obvious (MPSLSW, 1997). In most cases it is the poor who are unable to pay their dues in the form of municipal service charges, licenses and other fees.

As noted earlier, it is the poor who have been blamed for making some urban centres, particularly cities, uninhabitable (cf. Hardy and Satterthwaite, 1989). This is attributed to what is officially interpreted as their penchant for immoral-

ity and criminal activities, as well as their tendency to promote the degradation of the urban natural environment by adopting destructive practices like urban agriculture and garbage-intensive operations (such as vending) in mainly undesignated sections of cities and towns. All this places a burden – whether economic, social, psychological or political – on the urban local authority and the urban populace at large.

4. Institutional Practices, Local Governance and Urban Poverty

Depending on the perceptions of those in charge, institutional practices and modes of local governance can either help or frustrate the urban poor. These perceptions are a result of the immediate and wider socio-cultural, economic and political factors mentioned above. Each perception will have responses that are tailor-made to address it in such a way that the benefit brought by poverty and the poor to the urban system are maximised or, as is mostly the case, the disbenefits are minimised.

Traditional urban planning and management, with its emphasis on control, has been known to forestall the efforts and activities of the urban poor. Depending on circumstances, this mode of urban governance, aptly called “urban managerialism” (Rogerson, 1995: v), is nothing short of paternalistic and/or repressive. In the former case, the focus of this traditional mode of governance is on the local provision of services to ensure the smooth functioning of the urban system. Services that cannot be economically provided (at least in the view of urban managers) are taken over by the local authority. This has seen such services as water supply, sewage disposal, roads, health and education being the domain of the public sector (Devas and Rakodi, 1993). The urban poor sometimes legally enjoy the benefits of these subsidised services and find it easier and more bearable to survive in the urban areas. There are times when those who are unable to pay cannot access these provisions legally, but the very existence of these services is reassuring, as some means of accessing in one way or another can always be devised.

The managerial approach also focuses on control. There is a clampdown on anything that does not conform to municipal requirements as enunciated in by-laws, statutes and official guidelines. Ostensibly, this is done to save urban settlements from disorder, ruin and eventual collapse. Inevitably, the poor, either by design or from ignorance, find themselves at the wrong end of this form of governance. Informal settlements and informal economic activities in areas not so designated are the object of what can best be described as repressive managerialism. To the poor, whatever the reasons for this repression, this form of management and governance is frustrating. It prevents them from functioning in urban environments by, for example, forestalling their livelihood efforts (Hardoy and Satterthwaite, 1989; Payne, 1977).

Current emphases on enabling approaches to urban planning management decry indiscriminate control and advocate the facilitation of the activities of

urban residents and entrepreneurs (World Bank, 1993). In many areas, including to some extent Zimbabwe, this has seen a change from the eradication of squatter settlements to upgrading (see Makinwa-Adebusoye, 1986; Rakodi, 1988; Butcher, 1989; Pugh, 1991). Virtually throughout the urban developing world, this has been at the recommendation of international agencies, in particular the World Bank (see Thomson, 1984; Pugh, 1988; 1991).

The informal sector has also begun to receive some recognition and help in the form of reduced harassment, provision of credit and the allocation of sites (Vaa and Tranberg-Hansen, 2002). While the definite advantages and disadvantages of this new approach to the urban poor and the alleviation of urban poverty are subject to debate,¹ the shift has been lauded in terms of improved institutional practices and responsive and sensitive democratic governance, in keeping with which calls have been made to make “poverty reduction/alleviation ... a high priority for urban managers” (Webster, 1994: vii).

The urban management and planning system in Zimbabwe has followed exactly the same course. From the strict control mentality of the colonial era, the system became populist between 1980 and 1991. This was the period of reversals. Quite a number of the control mechanisms instituted by colonial governments were reversed or were simply ignored. Among them were curbs on rural to urban migration, service charges (like school fees, hospital fees) and unauthorised informal sector activities. Some politicians openly condemned those who discouraged or opposed such activities as unauthorised urban agriculture (see Mbiba, 1995), illegal subdivisions, erection of backyard shacks and the accumulation of rent and rates arrears (Kamete, 1999a; 2000). Tolerance as well as covert and overt encouragement were common approaches in the day-to-day management of the centres.

Towards the end of the decade, the negative impacts of this permissive management style were beginning to be noticed. These included environmental degradation, frequent overloading of services and infrastructure, and increasing public-sector budget deficits. Tolerance gave way to force, and sometimes outright violence as urban managers set out to stop unauthorised activities like vending, stream bank cultivation, squatting, and non-payment of rents, rates and service charges. The institution of economic reforms in 1991 saw a change in urban planning and management policies and strategies. In the name of “good governance”, efficiency, enabling approaches, private sector participation, commercialisation and privatisation are fast becoming popular concepts. What this means for urban poverty and the urban poor has still to be assessed.

1. Part of the debate centres on the fact that the very low production and operational costs that are crucial for ease of entry are increased when elements like rents and licences are introduced through the so-called enabling approaches. This can result in reduced profits and restricting the informal activities thus affected to an elite class.

5. Urban Poverty in Zimbabwe¹

5.1 General overview

Since the adoption of the first phase of economic reforms in 1991 urban poverty has been on an upward swing in Zimbabwe. More than three in four (75.6 per cent) Zimbabweans are classified as poor while 47.2 per cent are very poor² (ZCTU, 1999). The proportion of the poor is a 43 per cent increase from 52.8 per cent in 1991 (CSO, 1998), and an increase of over 25 per cent on the 1995 figure of below 60 per cent (Nyakazeya, 2000). It is not surprising, therefore, that every three in five (63 per cent) of urban residents in Zimbabwe are poor. The official urban poverty line in Zimbabwe is set at over Z\$16,980³ (CCZ, 2001). The significance of this is made clear when it is remembered that the 1995 urban poverty line was Z\$2,213.28 (MPSLSW, 1997). At that time, 54 per cent of the urban residents were poor. Half of these were classified as “very poor”, meaning that their incomes were insufficient to access the basic food items as represented by the official “food basket”. Table 2 summarises the growth of poverty in Harare between 1995 and 2001.

Table 1: *The growth of poverty in Harare*

Category	Proportion of population (percent)	
	1995	2001 ^a
Very Poor	21	32.3
Poor	20	30.7
Non-poor	59	37.0

a. Calculation based on CCZ figures.

Sources: MPSLSW, 1997; CCZ, 2001

-
1. This part of the discussion is modified from Kamete (2001)
 2. In Zimbabwe the poor are people who earn incomes below the Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL), while the very poor earn below the Food Poverty Line (FPL).
 3. At the time of writing US\$1 = Z\$55

5.2 The faces of poverty in Harare

Table 2: *Glimpses into Harare's poor*

Location	Nature	Who is affected?	Proportion (%) ^a
High-density areas	Income absence or inadequacy Inadequate housing Vulnerability Decreasing access to basic services	Lodgers Retrenchees Retirees Female-headed households Orphans	40
Pockets in MDRAs and LDRAs	Homelessness Inadequate incomes Depreciating incomes Increasing vulnerability Loss of employment	Domestic workers Security guards Pensioners Vagrants	8
Squatters (permanent)	Homelessness Voicelessness Powerlessness Income absence or inadequacy Lack of access to basic services	Unemployed Evicted Retired Retrenched Poorly paid	5
Informal settlements (official Transit Camps)	Homelessness Lack of access to basic services Voicelessness Powerlessness Income absence or inadequacy	Ex-squatters Evictees	2
Unauthorised settlements, public places, riverbanks,	Homelessness Voicelessness Powerlessness Income absence or inadequacy Lack of access to basic services Exclusion	Unemployed Evicted Retired Retrenched Poorly paid Vagrants	5
CBD	Homelessness Voicelessness Powerlessness Income absence or inadequacy Lack of access to basic services Exclusion	Vagrants Street children Street homeless Temporary street dwellers	1

a. This refers to the proportion of all urban residents in Harare.

Sources: *Research findings, 2000–01; Estimates also based on CSO, 1998; Mubvami and Hall, 2000; DSHZ/ZIHOPFE, 2000.*

This section examines how urban poverty manifests itself in Harare. It combines the manifestations relating to basic necessities, activities and circumstances. Figure 3 examines the issue of location. The diagram illustrates the prevalence of urban poverty in Harare. It is just about everywhere. Geographically most people afflicted with various kinds of poverty come from and/or reside in the high-density residential areas (HDRAs) and informal or squatter settlements. Some

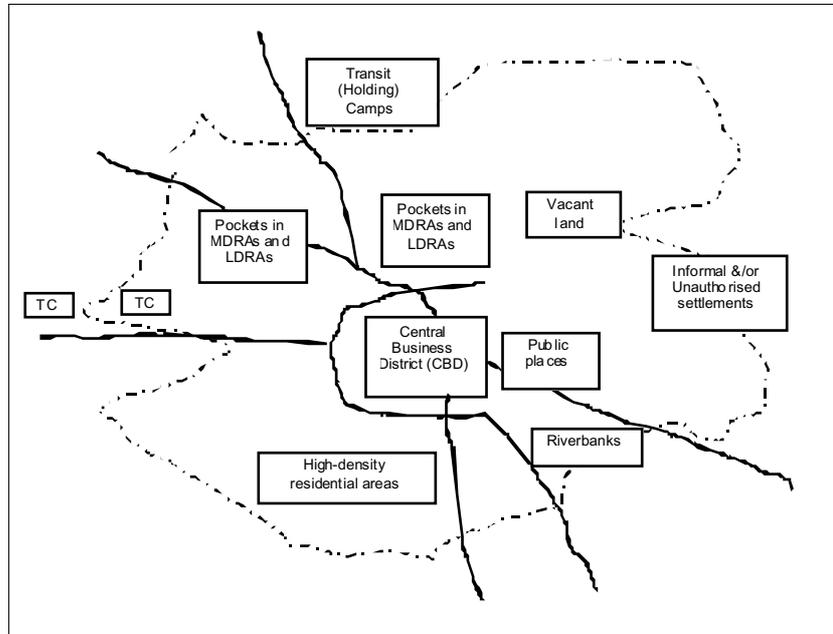
pockets of urban poverty exist in the Central Business District (CBD), where the main feature is vagrancy, homelessness and the increasing phenomenon of street children. Poverty is also invading unlikely parts of the urban landscape such as industrial areas, the middle-density residential areas (MDRAs) and low-density residential areas (LDRAs). This is especially so among pensioners, widows, orphans, domestic workers, squatters and homeless wanderers who colonise open spaces and/or fragile land as well as bridges or seldom used buildings. Using standard depictions of poverty (see World Bank, 2001), Table 3 captures the exact nature of the poverty afflicting these people. It also presents estimates of the numbers in each category.

As shown in the table, there is a “rich” diversity in the experience of poverty in Harare. It ranges from the visibly poor in shacks, in the open, and on streets to the hidden poor in the middle and high-income residential areas and institutions. While most residents reflected in the table are already deep in poverty, some are clearly at risk as incomes become eroded (cf. UNCHS, 2001) and assets are seized or sold involuntarily to cover immediate needs and commitments, which current levels of existing incomes are unable to satisfy. Vulnerability is thus increasingly developing into a critical issue in the city of Harare as it is indeed doing in the rest of the country. The fact that current incomes are less than 10 per cent of the 1991 levels (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 2001) is a harbinger of worse things to come (*Daily News*, 8 October 2001).

In addition to incomes and consumption it can be seen that the affected people, especially those in unrecognised or unauthorised settlements, are also affected by the inadequacy or unavailability of services, particularly education, sanitation and health. They can also be said to be victims of powerlessness and voicelessness, which adversities combine to exclude them from mainstream socio-political and economic processes (cf. World Bank, 2001).

Though they can be employed and vote in elections, these groups are precluded from gainful employment because of the macro-economic instability in the country as well as a dearth of skills or educational qualifications among their members. The absence and loss of jobs have confined these groups to the periphery of the urban economy, where their main form of livelihood consists of participation in various informal sector activities. The system of government and governance also combine to limit the participation of these groups to the casting of a vote. They are virtually excluded from the decision-making processes at the central or local levels, even where such decisions affect them and their livelihood.

Figure 3: *Faces of Poverty in Harare – Locational Aspects*



6. Examining the Perceptions

In the case of Harare, perceptions can be grouped into two broad categories. This discussion first builds up a case for the perception and then fits the poor into that perception, thereby attempting to provide a rationale for particular perceptions. It should be noted that perceptions are the result of stimuli being received, recognised, understood and interpreted. Obviously then, a stimulus is critical to the act of perception. The governors get that stimulus through the *actions* and the *state* of the poor, that is, what the poor *do* or *are* at a point in time. The actions and state of the poor are in turn results of particular contexts, hence the need for extensive background material on the conditions on the ground, how they affect the poor and how they have led to particular actions by and conditions among the poor. The perceptions in this discourse are a result of an elaborate enquiry chiefly involving observation, content analysis and interviews with the stakeholders.

6.1 The positive and paternalistic perceptions

In positive perceptions, the poor are regarded approvingly or seen in a favourable light. Paternalistic perceptions, while not flattering, are neither ominous nor threatening. Both these categories of perceptions have a potential for “good” responses, though paternalistic perceptions can sometimes lead to demeaning or even insulting responses.

Table 3: *The positive and paternalistic perceptions*

Perception	When applicable
A resource	Housing provision Employment creation
An asset	Electoral assets Political capital
A helpless lot	Poorly equipped Incapable

6.1.1 When the poor become a resource

6.1.1.1 Housing provision

It is in the area of housing that the poor display their greatest resourcefulness. With a housing backlog of some 110,000 people, Harare should be teaming with roofless and homeless people. However, a visit to any part of the city shows no more than a few dozen on the pavements, in public places and open spaces. By the end of the year 2000, well over 500,000 people – more than a quarter of the city population – had a roof over their heads, thanks to the ingenuity of the poor sections of the urban population in providing backyard shacks, undertaking extensions and conversions and developing unauthorised settlements.

Table 4: *Population and housing in Harare, 1987*

Location	Population					
	1982	1987			Total	% Increase 1982-7
		In main dwelling	In outbuilding			
		No.	%			
LDRAs	218,604	225,719	65,869	23	291,588	33
MDRAs	11,582	13,359	2,222	40	15,581	35
HDRAs	412,045	540,023	94,021	15	634,044	54
Others	16,173	20,258	0	0	20,258	25
Sub-total	658,404	799,359	162,112	–	961,471	46
Epworth	18,000	18,705	13,545	42	32,250	79
Grand total	676,404	818,064	175,657		993,721	47

Source: Modified from Rakodi, 1995: 200

Table 4 shows a complete picture of the housing scene in Harare between 1982 and 1987. In contrast to a total population increase of 47 per cent between the two dates, the formal housing delivery system only increased housing stock by less than 5 per cent. In fact, between 1986 and 1991 the housing stock increased by 2,051 from 37,358 to 39,409 units, a mere 5 per cent boost (Rakodi, 1995: 201). Not surprisingly the share of population legally housed fell from more than one in three in 1982 to less than one in four in 1987. Whereas the population in formal stocks increased by just over 46 per cent during this period, the informal settlement of Epworth, which relies almost entirely on the resourcefulness of the poor, increased by about 80 per cent (Table 4). Even within the formal residential areas the role of the less well-to-do is still pronounced. The

middle-and low-density residential areas (MDRAs and LDRAAs) registered a 35 per cent expansion compared to a 54 per cent expansion in the high-density residential areas (HDRAs). By 2001 the number of people in informally provided housing rose from 222,446 to over 600,000, a 270 per cent increase. As noted above, 500,000 of these, or 83 per cent, are housed in the high-density areas, a domain of the poor. A further 30,000 are housed in illegal settlements dotted around the city (DSHZ/ZIHOPFE, 1999).

The poor have no doubt managed to make an enormous contribution to housing in Harare. This is happening in a situation where formal housing production is failing to keep up with demand; construction costs have risen by over 1,400 per cent since 1990 and where the land delivery system has virtually collapsed. Whatever the arguments about legality and quality, the resourcefulness of the poor in solving their housing problems, at least for the time being cannot be disputed, and when it is admitted that the chances of the housing stock being increased by “normal” methods are remote – and becoming increasingly so everyday – the scale of this contribution becomes more indisputable.

6.1.1.2 *Employment creation*

By the end of 2001 Zimbabwe’s unemployment level had reached an unprecedented rate of above 60 per cent. Most of this unemployment is concentrated in urban areas where de-industrialisation has become a terrifying reality. (See *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2001, NMB, 2001). The post-1997 downward spiral of the economy, coupled with the increasingly erratic management of the economy, effectively rules out any recovery and a return to work for many in the short to medium term.

Table 5 summarises this grim picture. In all the centres combined employment fell by over 28,000 (1.1%) in the first five years of the economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP). Harare experienced a drop of 6,800, which constitutes about a quarter of all the job losses in the urban centres in question. To be sure, employment did increase in 1997 and 1998, reaching levels of 363,100 in 1997 and an all time peak of 367,000 in 1998. However, between 1998 and the first quarter of 2000 there was a massive drop which saw job levels decline by about a tenth to 332,000 (CSO, 2000).

There have been three major causes of job loss in Harare, namely the slow pace of industrialisation, structural adjustment and de-industrialisation (Kamete, 2001b). Up to 1999 the industrial sector could create only 20,000 jobs annually, a far cry from the over 300,000 school leavers churned out by the educational system every year. Clearly there was a deficit that the formal public and private sector was consistently failing to eliminate. The picture got more complicated as jobs were lost after 1991 due to the newly adopted economic reforms with their emphasis on restructuring and rationalisation, a practice that had become possible due to the liberalisation of the labour laws as demanded by the sponsors of ESAP. The beginning of the year 2000 saw a new phenomenon crop up as the city,

Table 5: *Employment trends in specified urban areas of Zimbabwe (1991-5)*

Centre	Average annual employment figures (thousands)				
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Harare	349.1	343.2	336.3	351.2	334.3
Bulawayo	156.2	153.1	152.5	155.6	146.1
Gweru	27.6	27.1	26.6	26.9	27.1
Mutare	35.5	35.3	34.9	34	33.8
Kwe Kwe	21.1	19.5	18.4	17.6	17.4
Kadoma	14.3	14.7	14.2	14.4	14.3
Marondera	11.1	10.7	10.2	8.5	9.8
Masvingo	16.4	16.6	16.3	15.3	16
Chinhoyi	8	8	7.9	8.1	8.4
Total	2630.3	2620.2	2610.3	2625.6	2602.2

Source: Based on the CSO, 1997

like the rest of the urban sector, saw companies in all sectors fold and jobs being lost. Not that this was something new. Companies had been closing all along as the economy opened up and competition became stiffer (ZCTU, 1996). But by 2001 there was something new, since companies started folding not because of competition but because the economic situation was now unsustainable. Evidence of this de-industrialisation started accumulating when it became known that in the first half of 2001 the manufacturing sector had shrunk by 5.4 per cent (NMB, 2001). Table 6 captures the trends, which, as shown, worsened dramatically in 2001 when the sector declined by over 20 per cent almost double the 2000 rate.

Table 6: *De-industrialisation in Zimbabwe – 1998-2001*

Year	Percentage decline
1998	4.8
1999	5.2
2000	10.5
2001	20.4

Source: CSO, 2001; NMB, 2001a

Complicating the rising joblessness is the spectre of the rising cost of living in the face of dwindling real incomes fuelled by inflation, which by the end of 2001 had broken the 100 per cent barrier. In the first quarter of 2002 inflation was 116 per cent (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 22 February 2001). By that time the value of the local currency was less than 10 per cent of its 1990 value. Salaries and wages have been inadequate to keep pace with the cost of living. In fact, so

volatile is the cost of living that the urban poverty line jumped from about Z\$8,000 to about Z\$17,000 per month in one year (CCZ, 2001). Table 7 traces the movements of the Consumer Price Index from 1990.

In such a hostile and inhospitable environment, Harare's poor have demonstrated their resourcefulness in creating "alternative" means of livelihood. This they have done through the establishment and expansion of the informal sector, which Rakodi (1993: 210) defines as "... small-scale, unenumerated, sometimes illegal economic activities". On a national scale, the number of households sustained wholly by the informal sector has increased from 27 per cent of the national labour force (1.6 million people) to over 60 per cent (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 23 March 2002). In Harare alone, more than half the population relies on the informal sector as their sole livelihood source (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 23 March 2002; cf. Mupedziswa and Gumbo, 2001). The activities they engage in vary from traditional trading to cross-border trading, from vegetable vending to tuck shops, from scrap-metal collection to small-scale manufacturing, from selling cosmetics to hairdressing (see Kamete, 2002).

Table 7: *Changes in the consumer price index (CPI) since 1990*

Year	Consumer Price Index
1990	100
1991	123.3
1992	175.2
1993	223.6
1994	273.4
1995	335.1
1996	406.9
1997	483.6
1998	639.9
1999	1009.6
2000	1573.6

Source: CSO, 1997, 2001

The informal sector serves two purposes designed to address the impacts of the two related maladies described above, viz., unemployment and the rising cost of living. The practitioners in the various units are thus (1) creating incomes because they are unemployed or (2) augmenting incomes because their wages and salaries are inadequate to meet the rising cost of living. The size of this contribution can best be appreciated if one remembers that the country, not to mention the city, has no working social security system. As one commentator observed, in Zimbabwe social welfarism is dead (Dashwood, 2000). There are some vestiges of the government's desire to assist the qualifying poor – both rural and urban – in its paying for health and education through the Social

Development Fund (SDF). The overstretched fund has, however, lost credibility as institutions fail to get paid by the fund that frequently is broke.

That the poor are providing employment for themselves and augmenting their own incomes without gobbling up local public resources is thus a positive aspect that the governors no doubt welcome. Instead of burdening the social welfare system, the poor develop their own survival strategies, which are virtually at no cost to the institutions of governance. Because of this resourcefulness, fundamental questions about the moral obligations of the public authorities are muted, sidelined or forgotten. The governors can thus go on at a leisurely pace, in a relatively crisis-free livelihood arena, without facing the critical moral questions that would arise had the poor “sat on their hands” and rightfully waited for the authorities to deliver as per their obligations and incessant promises.

6.1.2 The poor as an asset

6.1.2.1 *Electoral politics, democratic processes and politicking*

Zimbabwean electoral politics have always been awash with populism. That those in the low-income category are by far the majority of the residents is indisputable. As noted above, national poverty statistics confirm that for every four urban residents in Zimbabwe, three are poor (cf. Nyakazeya, 2001; CCZ, 2001). Judging from election records, more than three quarters (76 per cent) of Harare’s registered voters hail from areas associated with the poor (see Table 8). The figures increased in the landmark 2000 parliamentary elections where the HDRAs made up about 82 per cent of the registered voters. Getting the endorsement of the poor is therefore an important step towards the realisation of political ambitions especially in citywide elections such as those for member of parliament (MP), executive mayor (EM) and head of state. Winning seats is also vital for representation on a variety of political and civic bodies, such as party central committees and national executive assemblies.

The voting pattern in the city of Harare shows that the poor are more likely to vote than the other income groups, whose apathy has till recently assumed legendary proportions (see Moyo, 1992). Table 8 confirms this. About 60 per cent of the low income voters cast their vote compared to just under half the electorate in higher income areas. Of the total 287,740 votes cast, about 80 per cent (227,709) were from HDRAs. It seems higher-income groups believe they have nothing to gain from electoral politics, or that their vote makes no difference, or, as was the case before the economic downturn, they are happy and comfortable and no change is threatening or enticing enough to warrant the arduous toil of registering and voting. Whatever the reasons, as a political and electoral asset, the higher income groups are virtual write-offs, if not because of their small numbers, then because of their confirmed apathy.

Needless to say, in local elections the poor are important for the election of the ward councillor. Based as it is on population thresholds, the ward delimitation

Table 8: *Election constituencies and voting in Harare, 1990*

Constituency	Registered voters	Actually voted	
		Number	Percent
HDRAs			
Dzivaresekwa	38,938	38,538	99.0
Glen View	43,303	28,873	66.7
Harare South	41,592	25,762	61.9
Highfield East	39,248	14,782	37.7
Highfields West	36,426	33,132	91.0
Kambuzuma	33,728	14,728	43.7
Mbare East	34,542	17,880	51.8
Mbare West	36,108	13,493	37.4
Mabvuku	43,139	20,293	47.0
Mufakose	36,808	20,308	55.2
<i>Total HDRAs</i>	383,832	227,789	59.3
OTHER AREAS			
Harare Central	44,344	17,120	38.6
Harare North	32,366	18,371	56.8
Harare West	44,344	24,460	55.2
<i>Total Other areas</i>	121,054	59,951	49.5
GRAND TOTAL	504,886	287,740	57.0

Source: Based on figures from Moyo, 1992: 176-9

exercise always yields more representatives for low-income areas than for other income groups. In fact for Harare, two thirds of the constituencies are in HDRA's, the rest being shared among MDRA's, LDRA's, commercial and industrial areas. Table 10 shows that in terms of representation the HDRAs contributed 77 and 81 per cent of the representatives in 1990 and 2000 respectively. This means that when it comes to discussions in council or parliament, representatives of the low-income areas are always in the majority. This is important in the process of democratic decision making, which in the case of Harare means a vote in full council. Those representing low-income areas will always outvote their counterparts from other areas of the city.

The significance of this is heightened by the fact that the issues brought before council tend to be polarised along economic status lines (see Kamete, 2001). Though this majority does not automatically translate into solidarity, the power and influence of the poor through their representation cannot be overestimated. It would be too risky to ignore them. Therefore, the temptation to convert this majority to personal political gain is plain to see.

Table 9: Election constituencies for the 2000 parliamentary elections in Harare

Constituency	Voters	Percentage of total
HDRAs		
Glen View	47,151	
Harare South	35,027	
Harare North	46,852	
Highfield	37,958	
Kambuzuma	34,687	
Mabvuku	44,396	
Mbare East	35,065	
Mbare West	36,058	
Kuwadzana	39,481	
Budiriro	48,582	
Dzivaresekwa	46,078	
Glen Norah	47,938	
Mufakose	37,372	
Total HDRAs	536,645	81.9
OTHER AREAS		
Harare Central	36,808	
Harare East	41,201	
Hatfield	40,366	
Total Other areas	118,375	18.1
GRAND TOTAL	655,020	100.0

Source: Zimbabwe, 2000: 12-13

Table 10: Constituency representation in the legislature, 1990 and 2000.

Year	Total	HDRAs		Other areas	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1990	13	10	76.9	3	23.1
2000	16	13	81.3	3	18.8

Source: Calculations based on Moyo, 1992; Zimbabwe, 2000.

6.1.2.2 Making a political statement

The politics of Harare have shown that the poor can help make or unmake politicians. Opportunistic politicians do not miss the chance to mobilise the poor to make a statement or extract concessions or other benefits from the system. There are known cases where politicians and professionals in local and national institutions of governance have manipulated hordes of demonstrating crowds to get their own way. Demonstrations, protests or solidarity marches are not uncom-

mon in the city (Kamete, 2001; 2001a). The case of a professional who authorised the destruction of illegally planted crops and then got into trouble when public protests forced the political system to cave in and suspend him (Mbiba, 1995: 95) is not an isolated one (Kamete, 2001). More recent cases include those relating to indigenisation, land redistribution, mortgages, rates and rent increases and protests against some judicial decisions, mostly foreclosures and attachment of property.

When it comes to such events, numbers do count. And those numbers are mostly found among groups of people who are willing to be “used” as long as they can sense some future benefit from their “effort”. Phrases like “hire-a-crowd”, “rent-a-mob”, “hired crowd” and “hired thugs” are now established in common urban parlance (Mavhunga, 2002; Mujokoro, 2002; Mutsaka, 2002; *Zimbabwe Independent*, 22 February 2002). In such cases the poor, the unemployed, the underemployed and the unemployable become valuable assets. Politicians have used such crowds against the sheriff, the judicial system, the local authority, businesses and even against other races. The crowds have also been used to settle personal vendettas and professional feuds. Concessions have been extracted and criminal activities perpetrated (a significant number by senior politicians¹) through the use of or threat of unleashing such rented mobs. The most vivid, though extreme examples are the protracted extortions that characterised the “resolution” of labour disputes in the latter half of 2000 and most of 2001.

6.1.3 *The poor as helpless*

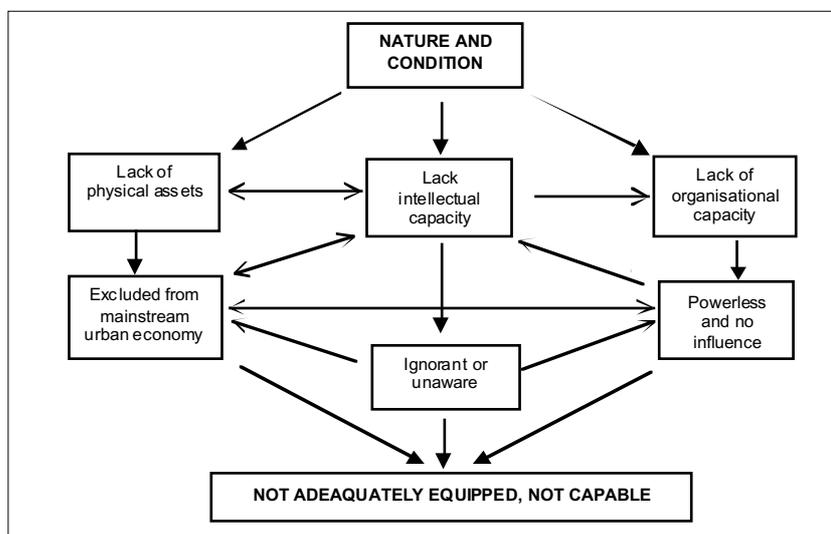
In Harare this view is based on the perceived inability of the poor to improve their lot mainly because, among other things, they are powerless, voiceless or simply incapable. The situation provides justifications for some “Good Samaritans” among the governors to step in and “selflessly” assist. The first reason for this perceived helplessness is the lack of economic clout and influence, owing mainly to a dearth of physical assets among the poor. As shown in preceding section the rate of homelessness among the poor is high. Figures by Mubvami and Hall (2000) reveal that 75 per cent of the residents of Harare do not have a house to their name. This is important. Urban experts argue that a house is an important asset in the urban economy as it provides a springboard to other urban opportunities (Hardoy and Satterthwaite, 1989; USAID, 1998). It should be noted also that many benefits in urban Zimbabwe are attached to a residential address. Among these benefits are education, health and participation in democratic electoral processes such as voting.

Literacy levels in Harare, as in the rest of Zimbabwe, are among the highest in the world. The 1992 census shows that only 7.27 per cent of the population had never been to school. About 61 per cent of these were in the non-school

1. Some of the cases involving senior politicians are now before the courts. At the time of writing there had been at least one conviction.

going age. The combined literacy rate for all age groups above 15 years was 94.04 per cent (CSO, 1994: 38-48). There is, however, a lingering belief among politicians and experts that the poor do not possess or have access to the essential intellectual assets that can help them find their own way in the urban system. The feeling appears to be that, though literate, most of them are uneducated, ignorant, uninformed, disorganised and inarticulate. This means that they need leadership, and what better source of this leadership could there be than the benevolent governors?

Figure 4: *The helplessness of Harare's poor*



Apart from the issue of intellectual capacity, this perception appears to be largely baseless. That the poor are uneducated is true in terms of lacking formal education, especially secondary school education. It is true also that most of them are untrained in specific jobs. This is as far their “ignorance” goes. Evidence shows that they are not uninformed, especially as regards their rights, privileges and responsibilities. They do not appear to be disorganised either. There are more than 100 civil society organisations in the poor areas of the city, ranging from pure social groups like church clubs and burial societies to full-blown residents’ associations. But then it can be argued that most of the larger, more formal organisations are a result of external impetus and assistance. This is irrefutable. Perhaps this is where the argument about leadership comes in and where outsiders – especially the governors and “non-poor” civil society – feel justified in stepping in to “help” the “helpless”.

The feeling appears to be that, on their own, the poor cannot take care of their immediate needs, let alone live comfortably in the city. Such necessities as

infrastructure, utilities and social services can only come, courtesy of benefactors who possess the requisite key knowledge, ability and influence. This means, for example, that these specially endowed helpers are aware of the legal stipulations regarding these necessities. They also have knowledge as to how to plan, deliver and manage them or as to where and how to enlist help to do so. This patronising view finds “proof” of these “observations” in the circumstances and actions of the poor who, on their own, appear not to be getting anywhere in addressing their needs or, if they try, they do so incorrectly or even illegally, characteristics which again can be ascribed to their proven “ignorance”.

6.2 The negative and derogatory

Negative perceptions regard the poor in a “bad light”. Instead of being useful, benign and largely innocent, they become the very opposite. Instead of being victims, they become villains. The set of perceptions in this category implies that the poor are “bad news” to urban development as they compromise planning, policy and management. They are retrogressive. Whereas the rest of the urban community is trying to push forward, the poor remain stagnant or pull back, thereby retarding prosperity.

Table 11: *The negative and derogatory perceptions*

Perception	When applicable
A Nuisance	Crime
	Destructive
	Violence
	Immorality
A liability	Embarrassment
	Electoral risk
	Political danger
	Financial burden

6.2.1 The poor as a nuisance

This is an openly derogatory and hostile label. It is a condemnation of the poor who are blamed for what they *do* rather than what they *are*. It is an acquired or – some would insist – deserved label. This perception regards the poor as being responsible for the bad things happening in the city. Among these countless vices are crime, violence, immorality and the destruction of the environment.

6.2.1.1 *The criminal*

This perception is rooted in what the poor do, whatever the motivation. Table 12 summarises some of the dominant activities giving rise to such labels. The

table shows that, as urban residents, most poor people do not bother to fulfil their civic responsibilities, flagrantly violate standing regulations and laws, as well engage in countless other vices. The fact that most of these misdemeanours and vices are associated with HDRAs seems to buttress the perception.

Cases of the poor not fulfilling their civic obligations have cost the local authority upwards of Z\$400 million dollars in lost revenue. Some of the obligations spurned by low income groups include payment of licences (such as pet, cycle and cart licences), fines, supplementary charges (rates), water and various kinds of user charges for services received in council schools, clinics, hospitals, markets and other institutions.

The most notorious infractions committed by the poor relate to planning, public health, safety and environmental sanitation (Kamete, 1999). Most affected are building codes and land use activities. By the beginning of 2001 there were more than 500,000 people housed in illegal shacks in the HDRAs and upwards of 10,000 illegal tuck shops (*The Herald*, 17 March 2001; Kamete, 2001). These violations inevitably lead to overcrowding and the eventual overloading of facilities as the design capacity of infrastructure is exceeded. Typical examples of overcrowding and overloading of facilities are noted in Mbare where stands designed for single families of no more than six people have on average five households with 20 people (Kamete, 2001a).

Table 12: *Crime, vices and destruction*

Feature	Description	Effects
Not fulfilling civic duties	Free riders: Not paying fees, licences	Robbing local authority of revenue.
Infractions	Building illegal structures, carrying out illegal land use activities	Disrupting the planning and management of the city, overcrowding, overloading facilities 500,000 people in illegal structures
Unauthorised settlements	Squatter settlements	30,000 households in dangerous, unhealthy environments
Theft	Robbery, confidence tricks, providing havens for criminals and hiding places for stolen property	Setting of stereotypes. Different HDRAs associated with certain classes of theft.
Violence	Criminal violence, protests, "hired mobs", riots	Political, social and economic nuisance
Vices	Prostitution, shebeens, child labour, cohabitation, drug abuse	Violation of religious, cultural and social values

Perhaps the most common picture HDRAs evoke is one of various kinds of theft, where the aim is to deprive victims of their property. So entrenched is this per-

ception that some HDRAs are associated with various forms of theft. Table 13 captures the various labels attached to specific areas.

Table 13: *The labelling game: HDRAs and what they are famous for*

Residential area	Label
Mbare, National	Bag-snatching, pick-pocketing
Mufakose, Kambuzuma	Grand larceny, confidence tricks, armed robbery, vehicle theft
Highfields, Mabvuku, Tafara, Epworth	Mugging, burglary

Violence and immorality feature prominently in the perceptions. Violence associated with various forms of crime such as armed robbery, rape, burglary, carjacking and mugging is commonly associated with the poor and unemployed, especially those in HDRAs. Mufakose, Mbare, Highfields and Epworth are among the most notorious of the violent areas of the city. Not only is there violence within these areas but the HDRAs also “export” this violence to other parts of the city and beyond. In addition to the “traditional” forms of violence, there are new forms of violence emerging in the city. Riots associated with protests and demonstrations are becoming commonplace, as is politically motivated violence, especially where the “hired mobs” are concerned.

Immorality and vices have long been associated with the poverty-stricken parts of Harare. Unemployment and “unemployability” are in addition to plain bad manners regarded as the main root causes of such vices as prostitution, the abuse of soft drugs (mostly marijuana), child abuse, shebeens (illegal home-based beer outlets) and adultery. That the spread of HIV/AIDS is associated with the poor should thus come as no surprise. The significance of this becomes clear if it is remembered that 25 per cent of the population is infected.

6.2.1.2 Environmental destruction

The destruction of the natural environment is one area of almost total unanimity on the major contribution of the poor sections of the city’s society. Table 14 summarises some of the misdeeds of the poor leading to this perception. As shown in the table, there is an assault on the city’s water, trees, soils, air and amenities. The table tries to apportion blame among Harare’s residents according to popular perceptions.

The generally accepted diagnosis is that the poor are largely responsible (see E2000, 2001a; Gumbo, 1997). It is what the poor do that is leading to the collapse of a once solid and enviable environmental profile. Enquiries revealed that the poor through their practices are deemed to be responsible for deforestation, atmospheric pollution, chemical pollution, the creation of eyesores, increases in stench, siltation of streams and rivers and the poisoning of water sources. It is

acknowledged, though, that some “high-tech” pollution by the “not-so-poor” is responsible for atmospheric pollution, effluent discharges into the rivers and loss of amenity through negligence (E2000, 2001; Table 13). However, the blame in the destruction of the environment is overwhelmingly put on the low-income groups in general and the poor in particular.

It is widely acknowledged that the poor through sheer ignorance or malice do not care about the long-term sustainability of the environment. As long as they can get through the logistics of day-to-day survival it is well for them (Kamete, 2001). What is particularly irksome to the public authorities is that at times the poor behave as if they do not care. For example, the city’s Department of Housing and Community Services has put in place an orderly method where those who want land for farming can apply to council and get it. The fact that there is plenty of undeveloped and undevelopable land within and outside the city boundaries ensures that all who want to farm get a plot. Somehow people spurn such mechanisms and opt to continue unauthorised farming and even claim permanent ownership to land to which they do not have legal ownership. For this reason, urban agriculture is often cited as a good example of the destructive nature of the poor in HDRAs. It has been found, though, that even some residents in LDRA and MDRA practice urban farming; and these practice it on a larger scale. The difference though is that a majority of these do it legally, or so the perception is (see Mbiba, 1995).

6.2.2 Harare’s poor as a liability

The local authority, and in some cases central government, gives evidence of the perception that the poor are a liability. This perception revolves around the role of the poor in threatening the fortunes and prospects of public authorities and professional city managers. This view is the diametrical opposite of the one that regards the poor as an asset who can enhance the (mainly political) fortunes and prospects of the public authorities, individually and collectively.

The poor can be and have been a source of embarrassment to the public authorities. This they do by standing out as reminders of policy failures or as evidence of the incompetence of those tasked with looking after them. In this way, informal settlements that are poorly serviced (if at all), populated by unhealthy, poorly dressed and hungry people are not a welcome feature of the urban landscape. The sight of homeless people roving the streets, sleeping on pavements or taking over public open spaces has been used by opponents and critics to show just how pathetic the performance of the public authorities is (Kamete, 2001). Added to the list of the symbols of failure are street children, backyard shacks, overcrowding, begging and school drop-outs. The fact that these are characteristics that are almost exclusively confined to the urban poor serves to strengthen the perception that the poor are a source of shame to the authorities.

Harare’s poor have also been a burden on public resources. In terms of financial expenses alone, the poor are costly to maintain in the city. Although Zimba-

bwe does not have a working social security system, government has put in place some rudimentary cushion for the indigent to take care of basic necessities like education and health. The Social Development Fund (SDF) has been the premier social welfare tool used by government to take care of the poor. It came about as a response to the structural adjustment programme (MPSLSW, 1991). By the turn of the century the resources of the SDF were hardly enough to meet demand. In fact, by 1999 the fund was practically broke.

Table 14: *Villains at work? What the poor do to deserve the tag*

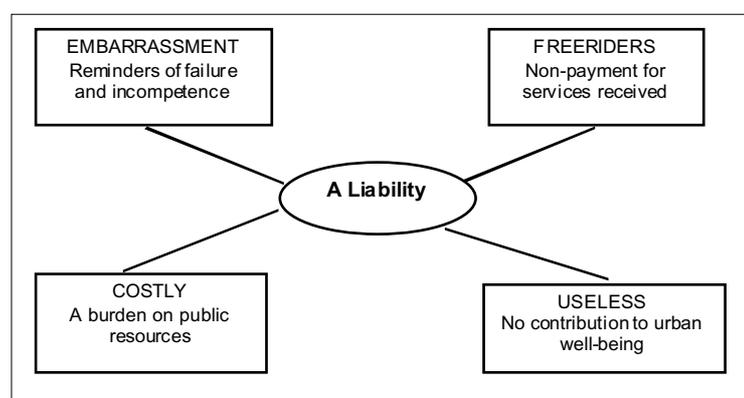
Activity	Facts and figures	Accomplices
Urban agriculture	1990 – 8 % of city area 1994 – 16% of city area 2001 – 25% of city area More than 50% illegal ^a More than 30% on slopes and stream banks and fragile land 60% cultivated by the poor 75% use chemical fertilisers >90% grow for household consumption	40% practised by the non-poor 90% of this illegal 60% of these encroach on to stream banks and slopes 100% of them use chemical fertilisers All of these grow to sell, though some produce is also set aside for domestic consumption
Deforestation	Loss estimated at 4 hectares a year About 200 dealers in the open Most prevalent around low-income areas and informal settlements	About 70% of dealers employed to poach Urban residents provide a market Some official settlements (TCs) replicating the problem. Shortage of and high cost of paraffin (600% hike in 2001) Shortage of and high cost of electricity (about 15% increase every quarter) Costly electrical appliances Import duty and sales tax contribute to high cost.
Sand poaching	10% done by the poor for own building 90% for sale	>50% of poachers employed to poach Ready market among middle and high-income earners 60% sold on sites offered by or in full view of city officials No certification process
Informal settlements and illegal structures	10% of city population stay in illegal settlements 13.6% of these along river banks 48.6% in permanent squatter settlements 93% of all stands in HDRAs have illegal outbuildings Half the 12,056 tuckshops illegal 40% of city population are lodgers in these shacks	2.2% legally settled by government in 3 Transit Camps Government settlement located on catchment area of major river TCs more overcrowded TCs worse in service provision and less healthy than unauthorised settlements

a. Illegal in the sense that the farming plot is not allocated by the local authority or is not designated for agricultural use according to the operative plan.

Source: Kamete, 2001

This is where the problems started. By then, beneficiaries of the fund receiving services from council institutions were in fact getting the services free as the fund repeatedly failed to remit payments to service providers. The local authority was in a dilemma, since government had decreed that no one on the fund's list of beneficiaries could be denied services from any public institution. The beneficiaries thus represented a huge drain on institutional resources, thereby enhancing the view that they are a liability.

Figure 5: Harare's poor as a liability



In addition, these groups are viewed as being unhelpful to the propping up of the nation-state and the local authority in terms of productivity and contributions to well-being. The work that the poor do is not regarded as work at all. There has been an acknowledgment that the contribution of the informal sector, which is the domain of the poor, should be incorporated in national accounts. So far this does not seem to have happened. In addition, it is a known fact that the poor do not contribute financially to the running of the city. They do not pay any taxes or rates. Though they are supposed to pay lodgers' fees, most of them do not because they find neither reason nor incentive to do so (cf. Schlyter, 2002). As the first executive mayor of Harare hinted, the poor are like parasites. They suck the city's precious resources without giving anything back (DRUP, 1997).

The poor can also be a huge threat to the positions and prospects of individuals or groups, especially in political terms. Previous sections have detailed how the poor can be used to win battles and wars. By their numbers and excitability, the poor can also bring down fiefdoms and destroy careers. Especially since 1997 when the economy took a tumble, the poor have been switching their allegiance from established political systems to newer ones. Nowhere is this clearer than in all elections – parliamentary, council, mayoral and presidential – that have taken place since 2000. Table 15 shows what happened in the presidential election of 2002.

As the figures in the table show, more than 75 per cent of the electorate in the HDRAs switched their support to the opposition in the presidential election. In fact, in the parliamentary elections of 2000 all the constituencies in Harare went to the opposition. The opposition also made a clean sweep in the mayoral and council elections of 2002. This scenario vividly demonstrates how dangerous the poor can be in terms of shattering political dreams and destroying established fiefdoms.

A good example of the danger posed by the poor to the political well-being and survival of those in institutions of governance is the case of the council that was suspended in 1999. The sitting councillors were victims of a public outcry that followed erratic water supplies to some high-density areas. So incensed were the people affected that they managed to bring in other issues of incompetence and corruption and protested repeatedly. Eventually they succeeded in having the executive mayor resign and forcing the minister to suspend the entire council (Kahiya, 1999). Though the Combined Greater Harare Residents' Association finally engineered the downfall of the council, its seeds lay in the HDRAs, where the low-income residents' disgruntlement was carried on to the streets and into Town House.

Table 15: *Switching electoral support in Harare: The poor as a political liability*

Constituency	Total	Opposition Vote (%)
Budiriro	24,983	83%
Dzivaresekwa	25,816	70%
Glen Norah	23,115	82%
Glen View	19,357	85%
Harare Central	18,306	76%
Harare East	22,834	73%
Harare North	25,429	77%
Harare South	20,030	68%
Hatfield	25,287	61%
Highfields	18,280	82%
Kambuzuma	18,913	82%
Kuwadzana	23,440	78%
Mabvuku	22,472	76%
Mbare East	16,873	67%
Mbare West	17,893	80%
Mufakose	20,088	60%
<i>Total</i>	<i>343,116</i>	<i>75%</i>

Source: ZWNEWS, 2002

7. Responses and Counter-responses

This section explores the responses of the institutions of governance to what they perceive the poor to be in time and space. The discussion also details the counter-responses of the poor. A few cases are presented to illustrate each response and/or counter-response. Though civil society is not the specific subject of the discourse, its role and contribution is factored in where this is necessary and where the analysis would not be complete without the an explicit discussion of its part in the events and processes being discussed.

7.1 Responses and counter-responses based on positive perceptions

Table 16 provides a summary of the responses that positive and paternalistic perceptions have traditionally elicited from the public authorities. It is quite clear from the table that a typical positive perception has a very high chance of inviting a positive response. Apart from control and what appears to be selfish exploitation of opportunities by those in institutions of governance, all other responses appear to conform to this observation. The counter-responses are a mixture of the positive, negative and indifferent.

Table 16: *Responses and counter-responses based on positive perceptions*

Perception	Cases	Official response	Counter-response
Resource	Housing Employment creation	Promotion Accommodation Tolerance Control	Obedience "Playing along" Non-observance
Asset	Electoral politics Democratic processes Political statements	Enticements (Incentives; promises) Exploitation Abuse	Willing tools Indifference
Helpless	Inadequately equipped Incapable	Rescue Improve Provide Educate	Acceptance

While normally there are specific responses for specific perceptions, some responses cut across perceptions. Similarly, a single perception can have several responses attached to it. While this discussion may give the impression of a neat

allocation of responses among perceptions, it should be pointed out that no perception is limited to one specific technique. The reverse is also true. Indeed some responses come as a “cocktail”, consisting of several response forms, sometimes designed to address several perceptions.

7.1.1 Based on the perception of the poor as a resource

Promotion, accommodation, tolerance and control are the four principal response forms that are linked to the perception that the poor are a resource to the city of Harare. Promotion involves deliberate and active encouragement and championing of the cause and/or activities of the poor. In this case it involves the encouragement of the progress, growth, furtherance or acceptance of the housing and livelihood endeavours of the poor. Areas where promotive measures have been noted include the formation of housing cooperatives and savings and loan associations. There are over 100 housing cooperatives in Harare alone (Mubvami and Kamete, 2000; UNCHS, 2001a). More than 90 per cent of these draw their membership from homeless low-income residents, whose aim is to acquire a house of their own. The local authority and central government’s Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation (MYDGEC) actively support these groups from their formative stages through registration and managerial training. There are a host of other enabling policies and actions designed to promote housing cooperatives. Among these are the priority the cooperatives get in the allocation of land, and the allocation of cheap unserviced land to registered cooperatives (see Kamete, 2001c).

Through lobbying by the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation (ZIHOPFE) and Dialogue for Shelter for the Homeless in Zimbabwe (DSHZ), the public authorities have also come to recognise and assist the sprouting savings associations organised and run by the homeless who hail from informal settlements and the bottom rungs of the HDRA lodgers, the so-called “poorest of the poor” (DSHZ/ZIHOPFE, 2000; Mancitshana, 2001). This group of residents can now apply for land as a group and get it. It is important to note that group applications carry more weight in land allocations than individual applications. Members of cooperatives can get land ahead of individuals who applied before them (Kamete, 2001c). It is just a matter of time before ZIHOPFE manages to acquire this coveted and much sought-after right to officially “jump the queue” (cf. Chitekwe and Mitlin, 2001).

The counter-response to this promotional measure has been characterised by the poor “playing along” by forming housing cooperatives, dutifully paying subscriptions and managing to at least build something. Members of housing cooperatives have also come to tolerate political rallies and official ceremonies as long as they yield some tangible benefit, like land or cash donations. Kugarika Kushinga Housing Cooperative, the biggest in the land, is the beneficiary of several tracts of land donated by the state president himself (Kamete, 2001c). By the end

of the 1990s, housing cooperatives in Harare were building more houses and servicing more residential stands than the public sector. The UNCHS (2001a) argues that Zimbabwe's housing cooperatives constitute the greatest success story in Eastern and Southern Africa. Mubvami and Kamete (2000) demonstrate that most of the success is concentrated in Harare. The same success story is set to be repeated by the savings associations run by ZIHOPFE once all the formalities are completed and the homeless members begin getting land.

The promotion of cooperatives is also actively encouraged in the creation of employment. Again, central and local government have designed a package of promotional measures that include registration, allocation of industrial stands and the creation of home industries (Kamete, 2002). Added to these is the landmark partial deregulation of non-residential activities in residential areas, which effectively meant that a house could be used as home and workplace (Kamete, 1999). The policy of indigenisation, whose aim is to economically empower blacks, has been used to justify and support a whole range of economic initiatives run by the poor (DSEI, 1998). It has also been used to incorporate and promote the informal sector, which now has a full-fledged ministry in one of the vice-president's offices (Marawanyika, 2002).

As in housing, the counter-response has been very positive. This has been assisted by the widespread loss of jobs following the adoption of ESAP and the near collapse of the economy that began in 1997. The massive job creation activities by the poor noted above is largely a response to the conducive environment created by the public authorities. By the end of 2000, for example, there were more than 150 units in the HDRA of Warren Park alone (Kamete, 2002). In fact, reports indicate that by the beginning of 2002 over 80 per cent of employment was in the informal sector (Marawanyika, 2002). Interestingly, most visible informal sector enterprises are the domain of the HDRAs and tend to be dominated by the poor. The rich prefer small to medium scale enterprises in other parts of the city.

Acts of tolerance and accommodation occur when the authorities "turn a blind eye" to activities and developments that are not permitted. Among the banned activities are backyard shacks and undesignated tuck shops. Unauthorised market places and street or shop-front vending are also rampant and take place in full view of the authorities (MLGRUD, 1996). The city fathers and central government have been known to exercise "benign negligence" in such cases, allowing otherwise nefarious developments and activities to go on unchecked.

The counter-response to this reluctance to apply the letter of the law has been a growth and proliferation of backyard shacks, illegal tuck shops and illegal activities such as outlawed industrial and commercial enterprises in residential areas. By the end of 2000, over 500,000 residents of Harare were accommodated in illegal structures in the HDRAs. About 30,000 families were resident in various unauthorised and or informal settlements around the city (Kamete, 2001a). Added to this is the known fact that that over half the residen-

tial stands have some form of illegal industrial or commercial activity going on (Kamete, 2000a).

The public authorities have also used control as a form of response to the activities of the poor. Control involves actively defining what is permitted or not in terms of predefined criteria like the setting of upper or lower limits. Controls have been placed on location, size, amount, operations, extent or effects of housing, industrial and commercial activities. There are controls in the form of building codes, planning regulations and public health requirements. These are designed to guide and direct the activities of the poor so that the positive aspects are maximised and the negative ones correspondingly minimised.

The poor have counter-responded to these controls in three ways, namely non-observance, obedience and “playing along”. Cases of non-observance are evident in the backyard shacks and illegal tuck shops discussed above. They are also evident in illegal income generation activities that go beyond those permitted by the partial deregulation of industrial and commercial activities in residential areas. About three in five of all low-income households practise this type of non-observance (Kamete, 2000a). Obedience is known to take place where the local authority sets the controls and actively monitors them. This is the case with public health regulations in conventional markets, as well as building codes in conventional housing such as that built by housing cooperatives. It is also the case where hawkers’ licences are needed in order to trade in the city. Some residents observe the building codes in the extension of their houses in the HDRAs (Tipple, 2000).

Residents also “play along”, giving the impression that they are in agreement with the controls while not doing what is required, or painting a picture of compliance when they in fact are flagrantly violating official stipulations. Cases abound where people who have permission to operate one activity operate a whole range of activities and use one licence or permit to “dupe” the urban planning and management system. Strategies to buy time have also been observed in the case of tuck shops and illegal structures or illegal activities. This is achieved by not arguing with the system but quietly agreeing to everything while gaining time on a daily basis. The official regulatory machinery easily falls prey to such neatly contrived ploys (Kamete, 2001).

7.1.2 Based on the perception of the poor as an asset

The perception that the poor constitute an asset to the urban system or to the public authorities has over the years elicited three forms of response, namely, enticements, exploitation and abuse. Enticement by the public authorities is characterised by acts that are designed to arouse hope with the purpose of luring the poor to act in a way that suits or benefits the public authorities. The most common forms of enticement used in Harare are incentives and promises of good things to come. Nowhere is this practised more frequently than in electoral

politics, politicking and democratic processes. The elections of central government and local government representatives have been known to bring many benefits to the poor. Laws are relaxed, threats are discontinued and the system all of a sudden starts delivering or aid starts flowing in the form of “seed money” and equipment to self-help projects. At the same time endless promises are made to make life better, to do away with repressive legislation or to lift the poor out of their miserable station in society. This is nowhere more evident than in the just concluded tripartite¹ elections in Harare.

The counter-response to enticements is predictable. Incentives are always readily accepted. The relaxation of repressive controls and the provision of material benefits like land and markets are always oversubscribed. For example, the markets and land allocated before the 2002 elections were all taken up. The suspension of the enforcement of regulations saw the poor intensifying their activities in illegal structures, urban agriculture and illegal activities (*The Herald*, 17 March 2001).

Exploitation occurs when those in institutions of governance, upon realising the value of the poor as electoral assets, take advantage of the opportunity by using or abusing them. In Harare’s case this has assumed both ethical and unethical overtones. Vote-buying is a practice that has been in existence for years, but it assumed greater proportions after the appearance of a stronger opposition in 1999. No longer could those who had held a monopolistic grip over the electorate rest on their laurels. Since they had failed to deliver for so long, they adopted short-term measures, which to all intents and purposes amounted to bribing the electorate. Acceptance of the “bribes” meant that the recipients became tools of the benefactors. This is the genesis of the notorious “hired mobs”, which mostly comprise women and unemployed and unemployable youths. The “contract” between the two parties (the user and the used) appears to be that those receiving payment can render services in the form of campaigns, rabble-rousing and, of course, the vote.

The poor have displayed two forms of counter-responses to these responses. They either become willing tools or, in some cases, they develop an indifferent attitude. During the past three years the trend has been that the poor will play along. They accept the “bribe”, take to the streets and do all that they are expected to do in order to shame or destabilise the opponent. However, when it comes to the ballot box, the poor have been increasingly reneging on their part of the deal. Those who are known to engage in such “hiring”, especially established politicians from the ruling party, have been performing badly since 2000. In fact since that year, they have got nothing from the electorate, as they have no single representative in the local authority or national legislature (ZWNEWS, 2002; see Table 15).

1. The election held in March 2002 was made up of three separate elections. These were the presidential election, mayoral election and council elections. The election for members of parliament was held in June 2000.

7.1.3 *Based on the perception of the poor as helpless*

As indicated above, the perception that the poor are helpless is grounded in the conviction that they are inadequately equipped to make it in the city and/or are incapable of making it on their own. The response of the institutions of governance comprises mounting what amount to rescue operations. The operations assume various forms, the most popular of which are provision and improvement.

The perception that the poor cannot take care of themselves has inevitably been translated into policies and actions whose sole purpose is to take care of the needs of the poor by providing suitable infrastructure and services to them. Infrastructure levels in the HDRAs of Harare are among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. Access to potable water and sewerage is 100 per cent (MLGNH, 2000). Roads and electricity are standard requirements in all housing developments. The public sector believes that its role as provider is still relevant. Despite calls to cut back on expenditure, subsidies (intended and unintended) still characterise all public sector service and infrastructure delivery to low-income groups (Kamete, 2000). Free health and universal free primary education have only recently started to be discarded. Added to this are the social safety nets in the form of the SDF and the public works programme (Zimbabwe, 1994).

The public authorities also believe that the lot of those in dire straits can be improved. Convinced of this, government has embarked on various programmes to upgrade decaying residential areas like the Mbare Hostels and other areas of Mbare and Epworth and to provide better housing in government-run camps to take care of the homeless. The most famous attempt at improving the conditions of poor began in 1991 when central government opened two Transit Camps (TCs) with presentable wooden cabins. The camps were meant for former squatters and are intended to be temporary, until a more permanent solution is found for their problems. The TCs are equipped with sanitary facilities and safe water points. To date, three TCs have been set up in Hatcliffe Extension, Porta Farm and Dzivaresekwa Extension.

The counter-response to this provider strategy is predictably one dominated by acceptance of the services and other offerings from the public authorities. There are no cases of refusal, even when the cost, especially after the economic reforms of 1991 and the economic collapse that began in 1997, has sometimes been prohibitive. The fact that the cost-recovery mechanisms are inefficient and in some cases unwillingly implemented, has signalled to the poor that they can accept the offerings without trepidation. The high levels of electricity, sewer and safe water connections demonstrate this confidence among the poor sections of society, as do the high literacy levels and child immunisation rates (CSO/DHS, 1995; Matshalaga, 2000). The greatest evidence of acceptance is the counter-response to the Transit Camps. The TCs have been oversubscribed. Originally meant to house less than a 1,000 families, the three TCs are now home to 4,132 families, with a population of 22,647.

7.2 Responses and counter-responses based on negative perceptions

Table 17 captures the responses and counter-responses originating from negative perceptions of the poor by those in institutions of governance. The two perceptions have given birth to a wide array of responses. The table suggests that most of the responses are largely as negative as the perceptions upon which they are based. A few, like tolerance and enticement, are less hostile and distrustful. Tolerance has been discussed under the responses and counter responses based on the perception of the poor as a resource to the city.

Table 17: Responses and counter-responses based on negative perceptions

Perception	Cases	Official response	Counter-response
Nuisance	Criminal Environmental destruction	Criminalisation Regulation Repression Tolerance	Obedience "Playing along" Non-observance
Liability	Embarrassment "Free-riders" Useless Costly	Concealment Reining in Tolerance Monitoring Poverty alleviation	"Playing along" Exploitation

7.2.1 Based on the perception of the poor as a nuisance

Where the poor are regarded as a nuisance, the traditional response has been to put an end to the misdeeds giving rise to that nuisance. This necessarily entails tough measures that are backed by or are based on some statute. Criminalisation and regulation are the hallmark of such responses. Regulation is based on the conviction that some activities of the poor, while not iniquitous in themselves, are or have the potential to be inappropriate, perhaps through some excess or oversight. The ideal, according to the local authority, is to ensure that they are appropriately undertaken. In such a situation the remedy is to provide guidance and direction by means of controls.

This is achieved through regulatory instruments, which, for example, prescribe appropriate land uses, stipulate maximum and/or minimum quantities, and set out conservation requirements and entitlements. The instruments also spell out penalties for violations. Urban agriculture best illustrates this approach. While the practice is permissible, some controls are imposed on such aspects as location, land ownership and eligibility. The same approach is adopted with respect to building structures like outbuildings and tuck shops, where the local authority requires adherence to building, planning, public health, safety and environmental sanitation regulations.

An even tougher set of responses has been established to deal with activities that are taking place, but which, according to the public authorities, should not be (see Kamete, 2001). Violence, theft, illegal settlements and vices fall within

such categories. The only remedy is to stop such activities. The approach adopted in this case can be labelled as criminalisation – a process where those who practise such nefarious activities legally become “perpetrators” of crimes against the state. Having been caught carrying out such illicit activities, the perpetrators are arrested, hauled before the courts and charged with a crime where restitution will be required or a custodial penalty will be imposed. Spot fines and “admission of guilt fines” are exacted in some instances from those who are not ready to contest the local authority’s case against them.

Repression is the enforcement arm of regulation and criminalisation. This is where the law-enforcement agents implement the laws and regulations by, for example, arresting offenders, evicting squatters and destroying illegal structures. Repression is in fact the purpose of the laws and regulations which, as detailed above, seek to stop or minimise “bad” things in the city. The existence of law-enforcement machineries at both central and local levels epitomises this repression. The municipal police are well known when it comes to bringing order to the city by slashing illegally planted maize crops, evicting illegal settlers and repressing various kinds of infractions. The state police, including the feared riot squad, are always on hand to help, if needed. The destruction of illegal structures and unauthorised food markets is always carried out by the municipal police under the protective eye of the regular and riot police, who are ready to intervene if there is resistance.

The counter-response to criminalisation and regulation has been discussed in a previous section on observance or non-observance. The over 60 per cent increase in criminal prosecutions in the HDRAs, and the sprouting of illegal settlements along the banks of the Mukuvisi River and in public open spaces, are expressions of defiance. The ever increasing cases of illegal residential and commercial structures cited above also fall in this category, as do the mushrooming shebeens, unauthorised urban agriculture, sand poaching and deforestation (E2000, 2001; Kamete, 2001).

Cases of obedience to or partial observance of the laws and regulations have been discussed above, examples being building extensions, markets, public health and trading licences. This happens when there is active monitoring or the penalties are so severe that the risk is unwarranted. For example, planning regulations stipulate that unapproved buildings can be destroyed upon issuance of a stop order. If the perpetrator is not willing to pull down the structure, the local authority has the right to step in, destroy the structure and pass on the cost to the owner of the building. This may explain why residents carrying out alterations and extensions to their houses try to obey at least some of the building codes (Tipple, 2000; Schlyter, 2002).

In most cases this obedience is in fact an act of “playing along” as the residents try to “dupe” the system into believing that there is compliance. Cases of “over-trading” and “over-extensions” are common. This is where those with licences or permits go beyond what they have been allowed to do. Sometimes

they do less than what is stipulated in the permit or licence. For example, cases of people using non-standard inferior building materials in areas hard to see or inspect have been reported in the HDRAs. Uncertified meat is also used in legal food markets, contrary to public health regulations.

7.2.2 Based on the perception of the poor as a liability

The perception of the poor as an embarrassment has a special kind of response that is designed to conceal, minimise, play down or eliminate the disconcerting spectacle. One of the most vivid official attempts at redressing the discomfiture is illustrated by the occasional rounding up of the homeless and the very poorly housed. Box 1 provides details of one of the official strategies to avoid international and peer embarrassment. The so-called clean-up campaign was nothing more than a specially contrived plan to ensure that the visitors, among them the head of the Commonwealth, the media and other observers did not see repulsive scenes of extreme poverty, disorder and maybe hear complaints from vagrants. This could be a huge drawback to the governors' objective of presenting Harare as an orderly city with happy, satisfied people.

**BOX 1:
THE URBAN POOR AS LIABILITY:
THE PRE-CHOGM CLEAN UP**

The 1991 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) scheduled for Harare was going to attract dozens of leaders and news reporters from all over the world. The Queen was on the list of delegates. She was going to visit Mbare, one of the oldest high-density residential areas in Zimbabwe. Mbare had a lot of squatters and vagrants who benefited from the bustling activities of the township, in particular its long-distance international bus terminus. Epworth, a former squatter settlement outside the city, was also to be visited by the Queen. This settlement had un-authorised residents (squatters) who had invaded the area, possibly to benefit from the tortuous upgrading programme.

A few days before CHOGM, central government and the local authority suddenly pounced on the unsuspecting squatters and vagrants in Mbare and Epworth and forcibly transported them to Porta Farm, a council property outside Harare. Entrance by visitors to the farm was restricted for a long time and was by official permission only.

The coincidence between CHOGM and the "cleansing" of the city raised questions of purpose. Were these poor people a reminder of failures in the planning, political and economic systems? Certainly this action can be compared to that taken by Mrs. Marcos, the then Philippines First Lady, who walled out of sight the slums lining the road to the international airport, presumably to shield the authorities from international embarrassment! (See Thompson, 1984).

Where the poor are perceived as free riders, the local authority has tried to rein them in or tolerate the neglect of civic duties. Sometimes there have been attempts to rationalise cases where these groups do not make a contribution to the development of the city. The city's primary method of trying to rein in the poor is through the suspension or denial of services. Water and electricity are often cut off if the householder is in arrears. Children are suspended from attending classes until requisite school fees are paid. The most bizarre of the punitive measures is perhaps the detention of discharged patients until the medical bill is settled.

Sometimes – though only up to a point – tolerance is exercised, especially where there is mediation or interference from external forces. This explains why the city in 2001 reported uncollected revenues of more than Z\$400 million. Most of this was made up of arrears in housing charges (rent, water and supplementary charges) in HDRAs. Clinics, schools and various fines constituted the rest. It should be noted that the commission during whose tenure the revenue losses were incurred prided itself on being tough in collecting revenue. It is therefore telling that such a boastful administration would fail to collect so much money from the poor. The answer may lie in internal tolerance or external interference (*Daily News*, 6 March 2001).

The counter-response in these cases cannot be easily generalised. Some of the poor (50 per cent) pay up. This is usually the case when water and electricity are cut off. Sometimes the affected households continue without the service for months (40 per cent) because they cannot raise enough money to settle the bill. In very rare cases there are petitions and protests, especially if whole blocks are cut off (6 per cent). This is usually the case when elections are near. The protests are usually dominated by denunciation of council officials who are deemed to be unsympathetic to the plight of the poor (*Daily News*, 6 March 2001; cf. Mbiba, 1995: 95).

The perception of the poor as useless or costly to the urban system is met with tolerance and monitoring. Tolerance occurs when the authorities allow the situation to continue. In this case tolerance is a sign of indecision and the absence of definitive strategies to tackle the situation. During the colonial period, people who constituted a potential burden to the system were sent home. All blacks who could not produce proof of gainful employment were “repatriated” to their rural homes (Mafico, 1991; Schlyter, 2002). Whites could live off the system, since the administration sought to look after its own.

The post-independence era saw influx controls lifted without corresponding measures to address the problem in the destination centres. Harare was the most affected as it became the most preferred destination. By 1997 the city was receiving more than 60,000 new arrivals every day (Tawengwa, 1997). The increase in poverty has compounded the problem of “parasitic” residence and the city can do nothing except “monitor” the situation. In this case, strict vetting criteria have been put in place to ensure that only deserving cases benefit from public

assistance through, for example, the SDF and preferential treatment in housing allocation. This monitoring is the primary method of responding to cases where there is the possibility of abuse of the philanthropy of public authorities in, for example, health and education assistance.

The counter-response to these responses are characterised by the poor capitalising on the situation. The poor have noted the indecisiveness of the system, the attractive assistance and the loopholes and have taken advantage of them. The fact that immigrants continue to flow in and beneficiaries (some clearly undeserving) of the SDF continue to swell in number is a reflection of the exploitation of a situation that to the poor is “attractive”, because they can “get away” with it. That the SDF is now practically broke is undeniable testimony to this reality. The overloading of facilities in the HDRAs due to excessive overcrowding is also proof of this, as is the proliferation of cases of defaults and arrears involving persons who can afford a beer-drinking binge at a shebeen.

A more recent approach to addressing the embarrassing nature of poverty is poverty alleviation. The thinking behind this response is that getting rid of poverty will remove the problems that are associated with it. Zimbabwe's Poverty Alleviation Action Plan (PAAP) has been enthusiastically embraced by all urban centres, including Harare (Zimbabwe, 1994). The aim is to get people out of the poverty trap and into the mainstream urban economy and community. In addition to employment creation, PAAP focuses on “labour-based public works programme, entrepreneurial development, facilitation of youth and women's projects and the promotion of greater participation in productive activities” (Zimbabwe, 1994: 1). PAAP is a central government initiative. It had an initial budget of Z\$270 million (then US\$33.75 million). Due to the centralised nature of the strategy and the aggregate statistics on expenditure, little is known about how Harare benefited from this strategy.

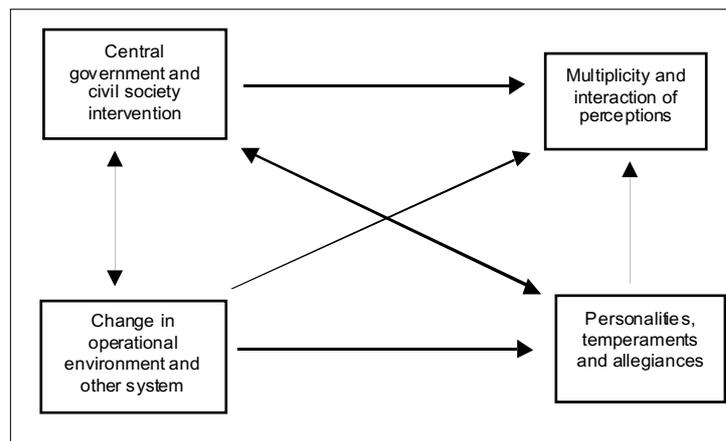
8. The Consequences: Implications for Urban Governance

The perceptions, responses and counter-responses have helped mould the terrain of urban governance in Harare. The whole set of relationships between those in institutions of governance and Harare's poor owes its construction and reconstruction to these realities. If there is going to be a fair assessment of the resultant governance terrain, then "unpredictable", "volatile" and "fluid" are among the most appropriate descriptions.

8.1 Unpredictability

Issues of governance in Harare are becoming increasingly unpredictable because of the four key variables shown in Figure 6. The multiplicity of perceptions, the existence of other stakeholders – mainly civil society and the nation-state – and personalities and the changing operational environment all come together to render any intelligent guesses difficult. It may be possible to make accurate predictions, but only in the very short term, after the situation has almost unfolded to its conclusion.

Figure 6: *The unpredictable terrain of governance in Harare*



In the first place the perceptions do not operate in isolation. There are quite a number of them, and they operate in any combination, and sometimes in contra-

dictory directions. Two cases illustrate this. Mbiba (1995: 95) describes the “Mabika Case” involving illegal urban agriculture (Box 2). Nobody could have anticipated that such a simple procedure as enforcing council by-laws and national environmental protection laws by the local authority could take such an interesting twist. The official action was well within the law. In fact, if the authorities were to be blamed it was that they had been slow in implementing the law, having sent out quite a number of warnings, which of course were ignored.

BOX 2:

REVERSAL AND OFFICIAL COWARDICE

A top official of the city of Harare authorised the slashing of an illegally cultivated maize crop in the HDRAs of Mufakose, Mabvuku and Tafara. That action was probably sanctioned by some elected officials. The basis of this action was that the poor are a nuisance and a danger. They were violating city by-laws and regulations. Enforcement was thus inevitable. However, after the concerned households took to the streets, some elected officials saw their votes evaporating. Further, the slashing of the crop was an embarrassment to the councillors whose sympathy towards the electorate and control over it were now in question. Some outsiders saw the chance to make political capital of this uproar and joined the demonstrators to make a statement. These developments forced council to order an investigation, which culminated in the suspension of the official who had spearheaded the slashing of the crop.

Source: Partly adapted from Mbiba, 1995: 95

The preceding case demonstrates the complexity of the terrain as well as the interaction of perceptions, responses and counter-responses. It also drives home the point that personalities and temperaments matter. A combination of these variables makes realistic predictions almost impossible. Predictions work where things are logical and make sense. Judging from this case it appears the governance terrain in Harare possesses neither of these attributes.

The second illustrative case involves the destruction of illegal structures. The details of the case are in Box 3. The case introduces yet another variable to the complex maze, namely central government intervention. It should be noted here that central government is in every way as complex as local government, if not more so. In this case council and its professionals agreed that the poor were acting destructively and criminally. They were both a nuisance and a liability. Logically they had to be stopped, hence the demolitions.

Interestingly, civil society and central government had other ideas. The latter saw a helpless lot being persecuted by a cold-hearted administration (Kahiya, 2001). Central government, whose support base in the urban areas had suffered

a knock in the previous election (see also Table 15), saw its valuable electoral asset, the poor, being further estranged by a local authority that was itself becoming a political liability. However discerning the commentator, these developments on the governance scene would have been difficult to fathom before they had started to unfold.

8.2 Volatility

Urban governance has been described by one agency as “...a messy reality” (UNCHS, 2000). This in part explains why the perceptions, responses and counter-responses discussed here make the scene in Harare extremely volatile. Table 18 explains why the situation can be explosive. It suggests that the legal, historical, political and emotive factors are the main contributors to volatility.

Table 18: *Governance and volatility in Harare*

Aspect	Contribution	Cases
Legal	When there is a contradiction between the response and reality or when the response does not make sense to some stakeholders	Destruction of backyard shacks; Urban agriculture; Informal sector
Socio-economic	When it appears that the poor are deliberately targeted, discriminated against or insulted	As above
Political	When there are political fortunes or prospects at stake	As above
Historical	When what is in place appears to perpetuate historically rooted imbalances or injustices, or contradict what the liberation war was all about	As above

The table points to the fact that the issues that contribute to volatility have the potential to trigger emotions. In fact, this is the single most important contributing factor when it comes to governance in Harare. The huge volumes of emotional outburst witnessed when the maize crop discussed above was slashed (Box 2) and when the illegal structures were destroyed (Box 3) had to do with questions of the law being out of touch with reality. They were also triggered by the feeling that the actions of the local authority tended to treat the poor as lesser beings, whose views and needs could be relegated to the bottom of the agenda, so that more important issues could take centre stage. This socio-economic variable assumes significant overtones when it is remembered that the “governors” tend to be persons who are not “in the same boat” as the governed and can therefore take actions that they know will not adversely affect them. A more controversial but equally emotive issue arises when the local authority responses are regarded as perpetuating the hard-line stance initiated by the colonial central and local administrations.

BOX 3:

THE CASE OF ILLEGAL STRUCTURES

“In dealing with illegal tuckshops ... council, on the advice of planners and environmental groups discerned nothing more than a violation of standing regulations on planning, public health and environmental management. Council also discovered that the proliferation of these illegal structures was depriving it of revenue while undeservedly benefiting from council services” (*Daily News*, 5 March 2001). The conclusion was that this was a crime and it had to be addressed like all other crimes. This perception was translated into instruments whose primary goal was the eradication of the perceived nuisance. Virtually overnight a directive was issued to the technocrats to destroy the structures without notice. The municipal police, protected by the state riot squad, moved in and started a two-day demolition blitz in which over 500 illegal structures were destroyed (*The Financial Gazette*, 24 May 2001). Virtually the same scenario was repeated in council’s handling of backyard shacks (ZIHOPFE, 2001).

When council launched its demolition blitz in March 2001, there was an outcry. There were at least 15 recorded public demonstrations and one petition to the government, one to the local authority and an international appeal through the media and the Internet (ACHR, 2001; *Daily Telegraph*, 30 March 2001; Justgiving, 2001). Government then weighed in ordering the commission to stop the destruction or go (Kahiya, 2001). This, added to the international and local outcry, forced council to review its policy. It came out with a revised action plan that echoed what had been raised by the “outsiders” about livelihoods and employment. “In what amounted to an honourable retreat in the face of irresistible feedback ... council agreed to regularise the tuckshops while insisting that some of them would still have to go. A new set of regulations was put in place about the number, location, size and taxing of the new regularised tuckshops” (*Daily News*, 5 March 2001).

At least once in early 2001 the minister took some sections of the governed with him to Town House and forced a meeting with the chairman of the commission.¹ However, commentators agree that this was nothing more than “political posturing” (Kahiya, 2001). To label the encounter between the minister and the commission as mediation would be a misrepresentation. The minister dictated terms, gave an ultimatum and unilaterally set up a committee, appointed wholly by him, to regularise the structures. At the meeting in question the chairman of the commission running the city “... was told to stop the destruction” (Kahiya, 2001). Predictably, the minister’s demands and prescriptions brushed aside environmental concerns and elevated socio-economic issues above anything else. The constitution of the appointed committee² strongly implies that environmental concerns are to be subservient to the socio-economic needs of the tuckshop owners”.

1. This was at the peak of the tuckshops and shacks controversy. The minister took with him members of the ZITOA and the AAG.

2. The committee is made up of activists from the AAG and ZITOA. None of the committee members has any interest in environmental issues.

Source: Kamete, 2001

The destruction of illegal shacks in Box 3 captures this mood. This action makes affected people recall the pains and tribulations of the liberation struggle whose purpose was to liberate the people. Liberation here is taken to mean getting rid of anything colonial. In other words, the new administration should not behave in the same way the pre-independence one did. It is here that people point out, “*This is why we fought the war*”. The re-emergence of anti-colonial sentiments in 2000 has brought this emotional issue back into the limelight more than two decades after independence.

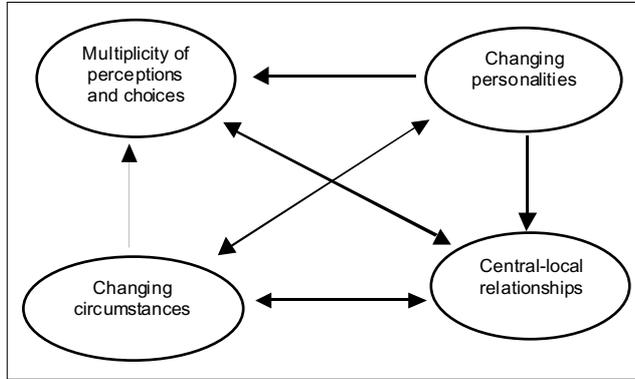
As a result of all these factors the atmosphere of governance in Harare tends to be charged and ready to explode. It has exploded on several occasions. The explosions take various forms, mostly street protests, passive resistance and all-out war. In the past four years there have been at least two riots, one in 1997 and another smaller one in 2000. The governors on the other hand have also waged their own wars on those they govern. The destruction of illegal structures, evictions from unauthorised markets and the rounding up of street vendors as well as countless arrests and prosecutions have been the premier expressions of this war.

Central government and civil society intervention and interference have meant that the frontiers of the wars have been widened, with short-term alliances being forged and dissolved as circumstances change. Since 2000 the pattern of alliances has been that central government and welfare-related civil society have adopted a pro-poor attitude, while civil organisations that draw their membership from the rich and educated have been pummelling the local authority for incompetence and indecision because of its perceived leniency in dealing with the misdemeanours of the poor. The downfall of the first executive mayor and his council in 1999 was in part engineered by these organisations, particularly the Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) (*Daily News*, 6 March 2001, 5 October 2001).

8.3 Fluidity

In this discussion fluidity is characterised by variability or a tendency to change. “Things” (events and processes) are never the same. This is true of the outcomes of the perceptions, responses and counter-responses among the rulers and the ruled in Harare. Combining all the facets discussed in the preceding sections leads to the realisation that indeed things can never be constant. To expect them to be so would be totally out of touch with reality. The fluidity in the case of Harare is heightened by several factors, the most significant of which are reflected in Figure 7. While in some cities fluidity can be anticipated or even predicted because it is based on known factors like political parties in power, the situation in Harare is so variable that change and contradictions have been known to occur within the same administration, on the same subject and with the same personalities. Again Boxes 2 and 3 provide classic cases of this fluidity.

Figure 7: *Fluidity in governance in Harare*



The variety of perceptions and choice of responses account for much of the fluidity. As noted above, while some of these perceptions may be complementary, some are contradictory and subject to personality and mood changes in the institutions of governance. A comparison of the sacked elected council and the appointed commission illustrates this point. While the sacked council, for all its incompetence, was in a way pro-people, it did in some significant cases make “anti-people” decisions. It was this administration that first mooted the destruction of backyard shacks way back in 1997. It was thanks to government and civil society that the mayor acquiesced in a reprieve. It was also the same pro-people council that later began the spiral of hikes in service charges to make good its chronic budget deficit. It can be seen here that even the same administration is prone to change at any time, even acting in ways that are not congruent with its known ideology and declared leanings.

The fluidity continued during the tenure of the commission appointed to replace the sacked council. The commission, which was accountable to no electorate but only to the minister who appointed it and the state president who approved the appointment, was decidedly anti-poor. The commission did not think twice when it came to labelling the poor as a nuisance and a liability and adopting appropriate hard-line responses. Vendors were harassed, markets were destroyed, user charges increased at will and services suspended without hesitation.

Yet even this new administration could be made to change. As noted above, the commission decided to apply the law in the case of illegal structures. It destroyed over 500 structures in one day and decided to continue the blitz till the place had been cleaned up (ACHR, 2001). The intervention of central government and indigenous pressure groups brought an about-turn as the commission grudgingly relaxed its tough stance. Abandoning destruction as a response, the authorities turned to the regularisation and legalisation of tuck shops (*Daily*

News, 5 May 2001). A different strategy was adopted with respect to backyard shacks. While agreeing to stop the destruction, the authorities refused to regularise and legalise the structures. The best they could do was to declare an uneasy truce.

At the same time the beneficiaries who saw through the reasons for the relaxations and the truce practically sneered at the favourable gesture by intensifying their illegal activities, knowing full well that a vote-seeking central administration would protect them. The nature of the central-local relationships was to the advantage of the poor as was the changing political and socio-economic circumstances.

But this was not to last. The same central administration realised that the city's poor were increasingly becoming a political liability as they became disaffected with the deteriorating living conditions, which they squarely blamed on government's incompetence and/or corruption. The 2000 parliamentary election sent a clear signal that the HDRAs, like the rest of Harare, were turning their attention to an alternative political dispensation. They wanted new governors. In response, central government changed its attitude from a paternalistic one to one of retribution (*Daily Telegraph* 30 March 2001).

In addition to strict law enforcement, central government went on to systematically disenfranchise urban voters, among them many poor people, by introducing new electoral laws and citizenship laws. Furthermore, to reduce the impact of the damage the poor might cause polling stations were reduced by 30 per cent. As if this were not enough, the 2001 election was made more complex, since it was a tripartite election with the presidential, council and mayoral elections being held simultaneously. At the end of the voting period, more than a quarter of a million voters, most of them from HDRAs, failed to cast their vote (ZVNEWS, 2002). The state's protégés had become its chief liability and government had had to change the way it dealt with the people who themselves had changed the way they dealt with their governors. This dramatic change in perception, attitude and response took place within two short years.

The preceding analysis illustrates how personalities, moods, multiple perceptions, choices, changing circumstances and central-local relationships interact, resulting in the governance terrain being extremely fluid. It is a fluidity that is evident among both those who govern and those who are governed. As shown in the discussion, there are no permanent alliances or positions in this terrain. Only the interests are permanent. And these interests appear to focus primarily on the self, with the other party being viewed as nothing more than an aid or even a pawn. The discussion shows that far from being victims of the game and willing tools, the poor are as much a part of the game as those tasked with ruling them.

9. Conclusion: Governing the Poor in Harare

While this discourse can in no way be described as exhaustive, hopefully it has brought out the complexities inherent in governing the poor in Harare. The fact that perceptions matter and that responses have a perceptual base introduces a whole new dimension to the understanding of urban governance and the forging of relationships and partnerships in that governance. That urban governance is a messy reality has been confirmed in this paper. So has the contention that power exists within and outside government at its various levels. The influence exerted by the poor in the design and implementation of responses and the laws and regulations through which the official responses are expressed in Harare have been chronicled. It has also been illustrated that the poor, through various activities, alliances and counter-responses exert immense influence over whether certain decisions are implemented or not. The cases of involuntary non-enforcement of policies, laws, rules and regulations by the institutions of governance bear testimony to this observation.

The poor are thus becoming increasingly important players in governance, despite the reality that the system essentially remains closed to them (see Kamete, 2001). Although kept outside the system, they have shown an almost uncanny ability to direct the flow of events and processes, sometimes in extremely disruptive ways. The various, and sometimes conflicting perceptions held by those who rule over them afford the poor the opportunity to surreptitiously intrude into the system of governance through guerrilla-style participation. They burst in, get or do what they want, and withdraw into the back-ground. This brings into serious question the popular designation of the poor as powerless and voiceless (see World Bank, 2001).

The case of Harare shows that this group may be excluded from mainstream socio-economic and political processes, but they somehow find a voice and exercise some power in a way that reverberates through the system. The governors are forced to literally follow one step behind as they figure out how to deal with their constituency (see below). In most cases it is the poor who set the pace by influencing the perceptions, which in turn influence the design of responses. Helped by the prevailing environment, the poor can also dictate the nature of the enforcement of those responses. Obviously, there is no greater demonstration of power and a voice than this.

The governance terrain in Harare can be said to have several loci of power, some within and some outside government. One of those loci is the unclaimed locus existing within and controlled by the poor. It is seen and felt but is never

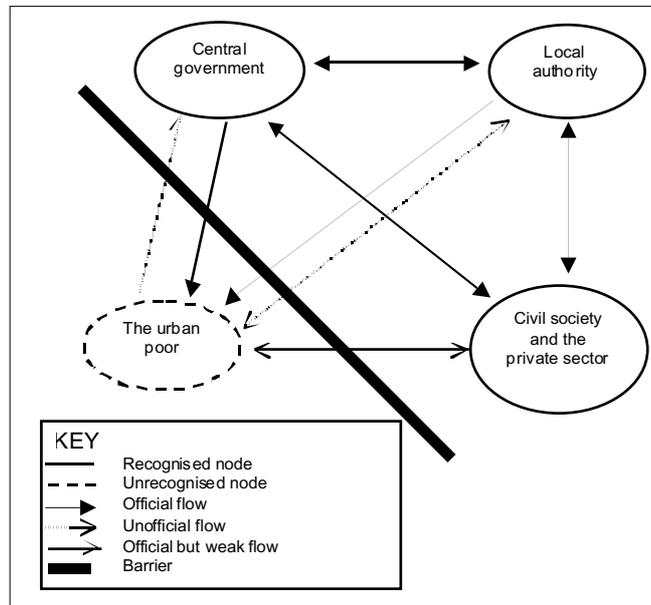
officially taken on board. Figure 8 captures the loci, the relationships between them and the position of the power in these power nodes.

While the system of governance fully recognises the existence of and promotes interaction among the four loci of power (central government, the local authority, civil society and the private sector) the poor as a group are not officially regarded as a power node, hence the lack of official interaction with them. The only formal and regular interaction with the poor is done by civil society and the private sector. Even this cannot be regarded as strong, especially where the private sector is concerned. The only detectable flow between public authorities and the poor comes in the form of a unidirectional movement of instructions, laws and regulations, as well as imposition of decisions. This practice is perhaps rooted in the perception that the poor are helpless, in the sense of not being fully equipped and capable of functioning in the urban system. By extension, this may be taken to mean that they are incapable of properly relating to others.

Be that as it may, the poor regularly find a way of participating in the various interactions among the partners (see Figure 8). Thus, whereas in an official sense the poor can be said to be objects of governance and mere decision takers, the truth may be far more complex than this simplistic presentation. The thinking that governors are the custodians of all power and unilaterally dictate the pulse of governance may be regarded in this new light as mythical to some degree. The rulers are not as invincible and independent as is often presented or as they would like to imagine. They can be and have been forced into making settlements. Evidence of this can be found in the many concessions granted to the poor (see above) and where the law-enforcement exercise has been paralysed (see Kamete, 2001) because the poor refuse to budge and the rulers are simply afraid of the consequences of acting in a volatile environment. This in a way is power, however we may classify and qualify it.

One thing that emerges from this study is that the terrain of urban governance in Harare is charged with “particles” that may not be regarded as conducive to good governance. It is to be expected that the relationships among the stakeholders have nothing to do with philanthropy, as each stakeholder group seeks to satisfy its own needs. This collective selfishness is not unique to Harare. What is unique is that where the poor are concerned the atmosphere is charged with mutual suspicion, disdain and a lack of confidence in the other party. This is evident in the way the institutions of governance formulate their perceptions as well as craft and design their responses. This, as shown in the foregoing section, is a unilateral exercise. On the other hand the poor devise their own counter-responses with the primary feeling that they are struggling for survival in a hostile environment. If this means playing along with some official requirements, the poor are prepared to do so. They are also prepared to “play dirty” if the need arises. Circumventing the local authority and appealing directly to central government or the international community are some of the strategies that the

Figure 8: *The loci of power in Harare*



poor are prepared to use if they feel threatened (ACHR, 2001; Daily News, 5 October 2001). They are also prepared to take to the streets or even go on the rampage.

The discourse suggests that the act of governing the poor in Harare is dominated by defensive tactics from both poor and the governors. The frequent conflicts and tensions on the governance platform can best be described as an arena where reaction is the premier strategy. There appears to be no attack, nor is there a proactive approach from either party. The institutions of governance are constantly reacting to what the poor are perceived to be or are doing. In other words, the rulers are always on the defensive to the state and activities of the poor. A look at the responses as analysed in the preceding sections demonstrates that far from being masters of their own destinies in dealing with the poor, the rulers are in many ways forced to acknowledge the presence and deeds of the poor and behave in ways that suggest that they lack the initiative. The laws, regulations and other responses framed so far prove this.

The poor on the other hand are constantly on the defensive principally for survival. Their days are spent trying to fit into the environment created by the governors, who themselves craft the environment as a response to their perceptions about the environment created by the poor. The reaction of the poor consists of defending their survival front. It is made up of counter-responses to the many responses that the public authorities have put in place to preserve the city

in the face of perceived threats from the poor. Even when the poor appear to be on the attack, such as when they take to the streets, they are in fact reacting to what they perceive to be an attack emanating from the authorities.

What makes these defensive attitudes so difficult to break is the absence of meaningful interaction between the two groups. Interaction in the minds of those in power consists of communicating threats, advice, laws, instructions and decisions to the poor. For those governed, communication is nothing more than the transmission of petitions, disgruntlement and anger. As a result, the parties do not fully understand each other, let alone fathom what the other is up to. Locked in their own little worlds, the parties can do no more than speculate and defend their territories, however they define them. If governing the poor in Harare is a war, then it is a war where all the belligerents are on the defensive.

A lot can be done to improve the state of governance in Harare, especially the relationship between the poor and those who govern them. However, the first urgent action is the need to redress the deformities in the system of governance. The inherent volatility, unpredictability and fluidity, coupled with the lack of initiative and the absence of a proactive strategy on the part of both parties have resulted in a tension-ridden and severely flawed terrain.

Granted, there is nothing wrong with perceptions. Each party is entitled to its views about the other. But there is no reason to be locked in one's little world when it comes to framing and crafting responses, especially if the other party is expected to feel the response, let alone cooperate in realising whatever objective the response is supposed to achieve. Unilateral action in framing responses and implementing them may be the genesis of all the deformities detailed in this discussion. It gives birth to resentment, suspicion and ultimately, rebellion. As noted, if the poor cannot find their way into the system of governance through normal channels, they always find a way even if it means causing a few disruptions.

The responsibility for addressing the deformities in the system lies largely with the governors. They are primarily responsible for creating the mess: they hold the keys to the overdue democratisation of the institutions and are in a way much more formally organised than the poor. They also have the resources. They have managed to create partnerships with the private sector and civil society: they can surely do the same with the poor, if only they would test their perceptions, democratise their responses and open up their eyes and ears to the counter-responses before they get out of hand, as they often have done in the past. Once the deformities in the system are addressed, governing the poor will become less irksome and generate fewer tribulations than the chaotic and charged scene that currently prevails.

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