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Geographies of urban dominance: The politics of Harare's periphery

JoAnn McGregor ¹ and Kudzai Chatiza ²

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¹ School of Global Studies, University of Sussex

Email correspondence: J.mcgregor@sussex.ac.uk

² Development Governance Institute (DEGI), Harare, Zimbabwe

Email correspondence: kudzai@mweb.co.zw

ISBN: 978-1-912593-80-4

email: esid@manchester.ac.uk

Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre (ESID)

Global Development Institute, School of Environment, Education and Development,
The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK

www.effective-states.org

Abstract

This paper examines how Zimbabwe's ruling party ZANU(PF) sought to dominate Harare from 2000 onwards, when the city's voters turned to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The ruling party's quest for control was embedded in broader changes to the state, marked by countrywide repression of the political opposition and civic organisations, securitised state institutions, and a shift into patronage and systemic corruption, in a context of repeated economic crises and infrastructural decay. ZANU(PF) deployed a mix of 'repressive' and 'generative' strategies but these have been notably unsuccessful in winning back urban votes overall.

The ruling party's 'generative' patronage in this solidly opposition-supporting capital hinged on controlling land and new settlements on the periphery, together with dominance of central markets and opportunities for vending. Simultaneously, the powers of the Ministry Responsible for Local Government were used to undermine the city's council, destabilise its finances and restrict its spatial governance. Land reform and land occupations, justified nationwide as a continuation of the liberation struggle, shaped the city's expansion in distinctive ways. The paper makes two contributions to broader conceptual debates over political dominance in urban contexts. First, it advocates a geographical approach that differentiates specific urban spaces, rather than treating capital cities as monolithic. Second, it calls for attention to the qualities of political dominance and change over time. This means looking beyond top-down strategies of co-optation or coercion and open forms of protest politics to explore authority and political manoeuvres within dominated locales.

Keywords: political dominance, citizen agency, land reform, peri-urban, resettlement, occupations, African cities, Harare, Zimbabwe.

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Introduction

Harare has been a solidly opposition-supporting city from the year 2000. The ruling party's quest for dominance over the past two decades has thus failed in the capital, as voters have repeatedly returned opposition MPs and councillors. Here we examine the strategies that have characterised ZANU(PF)'s quest to dominate Harare, focusing on the politics of urban spaces where there was some success, namely new settlements on the city periphery. The emergence of ruling party dominated city-edge settlements needs to be situated in ZANU(PF)'s broader nationwide repression and shift into patronage politics, which had a significant populist redistributive element, including through land reform and land occupations. Occupations were fuelled by unmet urban housing demand by the homeless and other urbanites mobilising themselves to take advantage of politicised opportunities for access to land.

The paper makes two contributions to broader debates on the politics of urban dominance. First, it calls for a geographical approach to capital cities, rather than presenting them as monolithic. This draws attention to how, in opposition-supporting cities, where the ruling party has failed to dominate overall, it can nonetheless control certain spaces – in the Harare case, peripheral lands, new settlements and central markets. Thinking spatially about urban dominance demands attention to how centralised ruling party/state institutions relate to authority and contestation within these specific sites. We extend Zimbabwean debates over urban land and land reform (Muchadenyika and Williams 2017, Muchadenyika 2015, 2020, Mbiba 2017a, 2017b, Chirisa et al. 2014, 2015, Kamete 2007, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2018; on the countryside Chamunogwa 2019, 2020, Marongwe 2009, 2011, Scoones 2010, Cliffe et al. 2011, Mudimu et al. 2020, Mujere 2011). We do so by examining the history of new politicised settlements on the urban periphery. As broader urban scholarship attests, messy legal and bureaucratic formalities matter, even when honoured only in their breach, as they shape practices of claim-making and authority (Sawyer 2014, Lund 2006). A permissive policy framework and partisan interests underpinned the emergence of ZANU(PF) 'land barons' and ruling party committees acting as territorial authorities on the city edge. The stand-off between state bodies, none of which wanted responsibility for the costs of servicing new settlements, created a regulatory gap and perpetuated the ruling party's *de facto* territorial powers, allowing residents' protracted insecurity to be exploited to party political ends. Yet this strategy had limits: as settlements grew, endured and densified, their sheer scale increasingly mitigated against the prospect of wholesale demolition, while residents' unrelenting pressure influenced prospects for recognition and greater tenure security.

Second, and related to the above, the chapter calls for attention to the quality of party-political domination, lest the term itself imply undue fixity, solidity or stability. In Harare, even in those spaces where ZANU(PF) can be said to dominate, this domination is far from total. Performances of ZANU(PF) support were often hollow, the party has faced overt challenges as well as being riven by internal factional struggles. Political dominance can be slowly chipped away from the bottom up through tactics of clientelist

engagement on the part of ordinary residents living in these spaces, who treat displays of party support simply as survival and a potential route to home-owning. We argue that approaches to political dominance should look beyond top-down elite and institutional strategies, to examine their interaction with grassroots manoeuvres. Thus, rather than working with the concepts of co-option or coercive distribution, we explore local-level authority and political manoeuvres within party-dominated locales. This grants some agency and autonomy to the residents of these spaces, even within overbearing, lop-sided power relationships. The convergent interests of patron and client, which work to co-constitute dominance, mask important differences in outlook that can create political change. In the cases we discuss, most residents opted for clientelist tactics simply to live and gain homes, which Caldeira casts as 'transversal' interests in property (Caldeira 2017). Elsewhere, we have argued that these tactics can be conceptualised as offering a path out of dependency towards citizenship and rights (McGregor and Chatiza 2020). Indeed, such manoeuvres are well documented in literatures on urban citizenship, occupations and building (Bayat 2000, Holston 2008, 2009, Chatterjee 2004, Mitlin 2014; Banks et al. 2020). Understanding how urban dominance hinges on interactions with residents shows the limits of an authoritarian 'tool kit' approach (Cheeseman and Klaas 2018), as the latter does not provide insight into politics and historical change. These interactions reveal urban politics to be more than simply a dialectic between control and protest. They shed light on manoeuvres that are dispersed through the practices of everyday living and building, which influence the capacity for political dominance to be reproduced (or not) over time.

We draw on findings from research conducted in 2016-17.¹ In our previous work, we examined the role of central party/state policies and political calculations that produced what we characterised as a form of urban frontier politics (McGregor and Chatiza 2019). We also examined how grassroots party committees and urban residents sought to navigate ZANU(PF) authorities in these spaces, not only by articulating but also contesting and undermining the 'partisan citizenship' promoted by the ruling party (McGregor and Chatiza 2020). Here we bring these insights into dialogue by exploring ZANU(PF)'s strategies for dominance, and the quality of dominance in contested spaces, taking the cases of Hatcliffe Extension, Epworth Ward 7 and New Park. We show how party-political patronage and dominance over new settlements emerged variously: through state land allocations and through land occupations. In our first case, political dominance was produced through layers of top-down central state interventions – via resettlement schemes and formal allocations to cooperatives. The other two cases originated in land occupations without formal bureaucratic involvement: Epworth ward 7 was the largest single occupation in the Harare region, sometimes seen as a successful case of 'bottom-up' regularisation, while New Park was a failed occupation, whose inhabitants were evicted.

¹ The research included interviews with officials, councillors, grassroots ruling party committees and residents' organisations. We focused on three informal settlements (Hopley, Hatcliffe Extension and Epworth Ward 7), conducting focus groups, oral histories and a survey of 500 residents, but also did interviews in other places, including New Park. The survey and oral histories were conducted by a team of researchers from DEGI and Dialogue on Shelter/The Federation.

First, however, we revisit early independence, when the ruling party dominated the city more broadly, and discuss how this citywide dominance was eroded and increasingly spatially limited.

Historical trajectories: Harare and Zimbabwe politics 1980-2020

Harare after independence: State planning and adjustment 1980-97

After winning Zimbabwe's first democratic elections in 1980, ZANU(PF) enjoyed mass popular support in Harare and much of the country, with the notable exception of Matabeleland, which supported the opposition party ZAPU. ZANU(PF)'s political dominance was expressed through the institutions of a strong technocratic state, through the party's own structures and its capacity to monopolise the liberation legacy. Strategies for urban dominance in Harare and elsewhere hinged on policies to dismantle racial segregation and a commitment to redistribute to the black majority, relying on the strength of the inherited legal-bureaucratic architecture of urban control and planners to achieve this.

Indeed, Zimbabwe is renowned among scholars for having one of the continent's most stringent and well-institutionalised urban planning bureaucracies, which was a Rhodesian inheritance. In the first decade of independence, the challenges of providing urban housing for the city's workers and new rural migrants were met by significant redistributive initiatives, including house purchase schemes for African civil servants, upgrading in the high density suburbs, new building programmes, site and service schemes and legal changes to benefit tenants (Mutwiza-Mangiza 1991, Rakodi 1995, Potts 2011, Muchadenyika 2020). The home ownership scheme, initiated in 1979, allowed tenants in council and state housing to buy their homes at discounted prices, or if they had lived in them for 25 years, to get them for free: this offloaded 90 percent of municipal/state housing, but also cut off a stream of finance for services (Rakodi and Withers 1995, Muchadenyika 2020). Standards for new housing were too high for the poor, and new investment in housing was insufficient to meet demand, so overcrowding, lodging and the building of illegal backyard structures that commenced with an influx during the liberation war continued thereafter (Patel and Adams 1981). Unusually, however, the capital had no substantial unregulated settlements: most that did form were demolished (Auret 1995). There was a strong sense of Zimbabwean exceptionalism among officials, planners, scholars and middle-class publics, who all felt that wider debates over slums, informality and patron-clientelism were largely irrelevant to Harare. Although recent research shows the slum-free tag to be inaccurate, the scale was nonetheless minor in the first decade after independence, and very small compared to other African cities (Chatiza and Mpfu 2014).

Beyond state institutions and planned initiatives, the ruling party also dominated urban arenas of association and mobilisation. ZANU(PF)'s nationalist alliance initially incorporated and subsumed the trade unions, student and women's movements, churches and residents' organisations (Raftopoulos 2006, Raftopoulos and Phimister 1997, Raftopoulos and Sachikonye 2001). ZANU(PF)'s popularity in the capital helped

to mask the party/state's repressive capacity, the full force of which was felt from the outset in Matabeleland and the Midlands, however, where the military campaign against a small number of 'dissidents' provided the justification for the Fifth Brigade of the army, police and the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) to ruthlessly crush ZAPU through abductions and large-scale massacres of civilians. This state violence ended only when ZAPU leaders signed a Unity deal in 1987 and the opposition was incorporated into ZANU(PF) (CCJP and LRF 1997, Alexander et al. 2000). Yet nationwide there were other forms of rights violations, including repeated urban removals. Zimbabwe's powerful CIO was important to ZANU(PF) powers from the outset. State investment in urban infrastructure, though significant, was inadequate given the city's growth: for the Harare region, a case in point was the repeated postponement of water development – notwithstanding predictions in 1989 that supplies would run out by the turn of the century.

By the end of the 1980s, this nationalist alliance and the commitment to state-led development frayed in a context of economic decline and the enforced adoption of structural adjustment. The 1990s were shaped by the devastating effects of adjustment, familiar from other African contexts (Mlambo 1997, Bond 1998, Bond and Manyanya 2003). Housing waiting lists grew, as did the number of backyard urban dwellers. Retrenchments led to an expansion of informal livelihoods as the urban poor and middle classes struggled to make ends meet. Demolition and denial continued to mark city planners' approach to informality. New informal settlements that emerged were repeatedly bulldozed and their inhabitants relocated to securitised camps on the city edge. NGOs grew in influence, and an urban cooperative movement flourished to fill the ever-growing gaps in state provision of housing and services (Chitekwe-Biti and Mitlin 2001, Chitekwe-Biti 2009). Over the course of the 1990s, the party lost its hegemony over the city's wider socio-political movements – trade unions, students and war veterans emerged as stringent critics of neoliberalism, of the ruling party's authoritarian tendencies, corruption and a lack of accountability. Disaffection spread among the urban educated classes as well as workers and the unemployed. Urban politics came to be marked by strikes and protest, and there were a series of small new urban-based parties, none of which had a mass base (Raftopoulos and Phimister 1997; Dorman 2016).

Economic decline was becoming freefall by the end of the 1990s. The social movements that had been mobilising outside the ruling party coalesced around constitutional reforms. They built a broad-based alliance combining trade unions, human rights organisations, churches, students, women's and residents' movements. Activist urban residents' associations expanded in Harare in both elite and high-density suburbs, making connections between 'urban' and 'national' politics. They pushed for accountable urban governance in the light of gross corruption on the part of the ZANU(PF)-dominated Harare Council, failing services and inadequate housing (Kamete 2009b, Musekiwa and Chatiza 2015). In 1999, these political movements combined to form a new opposition party – the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which had its roots in the capital but also had nationwide reach, and hence posed a serious threat to ZANU(PF) (Raftopoulos 2009, Dorman 2016, 2016a). The

MDC's formation and grounding in movements with mass popular support marked the end of ZANU(PF)'s dominance of the capital. It heralded an era of political polarisation, including among civil society organisations, as ZANU(PF) invested in its own counterparts, so cities typically developed rival ZANU (PF)- and MDC-aligned residents' associations (Musekiwa and Chatiza 2015). At the same time, the ruling party also used the Ministry responsible for Local Government² to tighten its grip on the city.

Zimbabwe's 'crisis' decade 1998-2008

The interlinked national and urban crises deepened as ZANU(PF)'s political dominance was challenged, provoking far-reaching changes to the state, and the mix of 'repressive' and 'generative' strategies that the broader *Cities and Dominance* project aims to understand (see Goodfellow and Jackson 2020). The shift is often said to begin with ZANU(PF)'s deal with war veterans for pension payouts in 1997 (Hammar et al. 2003, 2013, Raftopoulos 2009; Kriger 2003). This co-opted a potent, hitherto critical interest group, turning them into powerful allies, but did so at the cost of economic freefall. War veterans were symbolically important in ZANU(PF)'s return to liberation rhetoric and they had become vocal critics of the party's performance, particularly over the land issue. The main veterans' organisation – the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association – became a key player in the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, formalised in 2000 to redistribute prime agricultural land from white commercial farmers to black Africans. Land redistribution became the ruling party's key 'generative' strategy, alongside indigenisation and increasing use of patronage. Nonetheless, the MDC demonstrated its electoral clout by defeating ZANU(PF) in a constitutional referendum in early 2000. The hotly contested parliamentary and local elections in 2000 and presidential elections in 2002 took place amidst intense state violence. Strategies against the MDC and its allies involved a barrage of repressive legislation, increased surveillance by the Central Intelligence Office (CIO) and use of detention alongside the deployment of party-aligned militia and torture bases. ZANU(PF)'s support shrank dramatically and its heartland became rural (Raftopoulos 2009, Hammar et al. 2013).

Harare thus became an embattled MDC stronghold, with an MDC council. City politics were shaped by ZANU(PF)'s strategies of subversion (not unlike other authoritarian African countries where cities are opposition-supporting (Resnick 2014a, 2014b; Muwanga et al 2020)). To regain urban control, ZANU(PF) recentralised through the Ministry responsible for Local Government, taking powers away from elected mayors and councils (Chatiza 2010, McGregor 2013).³ State ministries and municipalities were

² We use this formulation as a shorthand. The Ministry responsible for Local Government has undergone repeated name changes reflecting shifting functions. After independence it also took on public works and construction before shedding this and taking on rural development and resettlement. Rural responsibilities, housing and public works have moved in and out of its portfolio.

³ We use this formulation as a shorthand. The Ministry responsible for Local Government has undergone repeated name changes reflecting shifting functions. After independence it also took on public works and construction before shedding this and taking on rural development

securitised as the CIO threatened and ousted officials and councillors who were actively MDC. From 2002 to 2008 the City of Harare was run through an appointed Commission (Kamete 2009b, 2013). This recentralisation hinged on legislation from the Rhodesian era – the Urban Councils Act in particular – which gave the Minister responsible for Local Government overweening powers and became a target for reform by residents' groups campaigning for accountability and civic rights in urban governance (Chatiza 2010, Kamete 2009, McGregor 2013). At the same time, the ruling party also developed parallel structures of control in the periphery and central markets, supported by state security.

The ruling party's strategy towards the city's opposition-voting neighbourhoods was characterised by a politics of neglect and punishment – infrastructure decayed, overcrowding in backyard shacks increased, homelessness and housing lists extended. This neglect was moralised as Mugabe elevated the countryside as patriotic heartland (Raftopoulos 2004). Demolitions and eviction had long been a central tool of planning, and in 2005, Operation Clean the Filth took forward this tradition but on an extraordinary and unprecedented scale. Housing deemed to break planning law was demolished – including markets and backyard shacks, but also concrete buildings that were a lifetime's investment, including some where residents had valid leases (Potts 2006, Kamete 2009). Nationwide, 700,000 people lost livelihoods and/or homes; many lifelong Harare residents were dumped in rural areas, where they had never lived and had no means of support, and large camps of homeless and destitute emerged on the city edge (Tibaijuka 2005; Potts 2006). Planners were commandeered into legitimising the operation (Kamete 2007, 2009), which became a turning point in official attitudes and practice.

Although some planners continued to cleave to authoritarian modernist planning ideals, subsequent years have been characterised by a moratorium on large-scale demolitions, and a shift towards in situ slum upgrading and regularisation. It was no longer possible to maintain that the city lacked informal settlements. They had burgeoned in a shifting policy context that had lowered standards to make housing affordable for the poor, and allowed 'parallel development', so that people could inhabit stands before servicing.⁴ Bulldozing them *en masse* through Operation Clean the Filth provoked an international outcry that dented the ruling party's international reputation, while its devastating legacy endures in the politics of the periphery today. The losses people sustained, and the state's willingness to use force on such a scale, were central to residents' decisions to engage in clientelist tactics and displays of support for ZANU(PF). In its wake, there was some state investment into military-led resettlement and building programmes, most notably Operation Stay Well in 2006-07. But this was totally inadequate and as hyperinflation spiralled, everything informalised and the city's health and water infrastructure collapsed (Jones 2010a 2010b, Chigudu 2020). The peak of this episode of crisis was marked by the extreme violence of the 2008

and resettlement. Rural responsibilities, housing and public works have moved in and out of its portfolio.

⁴ These included Circular No. 70 of 2004, which aimed to make housing affordable (Government of Zimbabwe 2005).

parliamentary and presidential elections and a devastating cholera epidemic. In the elections, ZANU(PF) lost to the MDC parties⁵ in both the parliamentary and presidential elections, and the follow-on presidential run-off was so marred by party/state violence against the MDC that legitimacy could only be restored through a power-sharing arrangement.

Power-sharing, factionalism and renewed crisis: 2009-2020

ZANU(PF)'s quest to re-establish political dominance took place in the context of the negotiated Global Political Agreement that laid the basis for a lopsided Inclusive Government (2009-2013). Power was skewed in ZANU(PF)'s favour, as it retained control over the security arms of the state and several other key ministries, including those responsible for Lands and Local Government (Chatiza 2010; IDAZIM 2010). MDC negotiators had not appreciated the strategic importance of the Ministry responsible for Local Government during the negotiations (McGregor 2013). ZANU(PF) used the Ministry of Local Government's powers to continue to control and subvert the City. Over this period, peri-urban land occupations in Harare escalated, becoming a competitive 'stampede' in the run-up to the 2013 elections, as both parties sought to win urban votes through offers of land and housing (Muchadenyika 2015, 2020, Muchadenyika and Williams 2017). ZANU(PF) had the clear advantage, as it controlled more land – particularly on the city edge.

Within the core of Harare, ZANU(PF) continued to undermine the authority of the MDC-led municipality and treated civil society organisations as extensions of the political opposition (Dorman 2016; EU 2014). Urban residents' associations lost their social movement, activist character in a context of ongoing repression, and divisions over professionalisation, donor-funding and corruption (Pasirayi in progress). There were many ways the city's authority was subverted by both the Minister responsible for Local Government and other ruling party-controlled forces. ZANU(PF) continued to invest in parallel structures to control key spaces and resources, using the militia, Chipangano, which had policed vending in the city's central markets in Mbare from the early 2000s. Chipangano was allowed to take over the City of Harare district office building for Mbare – Carter House – and continued to surveil and police access along partisan lines, with backing from the CIO (McGregor 2013, Maringira and Gukurume 2020, Mutongwizo 2014). This mattered because of the partisan terms of vendors' access to spaces that were key to livelihoods and also the revenue stream the markets should have provided to the City. ZANU(PF) control displaced the city's revenue collection from Mbare, further undermining municipal finances already distorted by inflated executive pay, contributing to its inability to provide services and to rate-payer resistance. On the eve of the 2013 elections, Harare was owed USD400 million by ratepayers, which was written off by the Minister responsible for Local Government, incapacitating the in-coming MDC council (Chatiza et al. 2013, City of Harare 2018).

⁵ The MDC party split in 2005. Harare supported the bigger of the two groups, known as MDC-T, headed by Morgan Tsvangirai. After Tsvangirai's death, the party splintered, with the biggest grouping for the 2018 elections being the MDC-Alliance (MDC-A).

New peri-urban settlements were also subject to surveillance by the party structures and youth. ZANU(PF)'s interests in territorial control were both political and financial, as revenue streams from land sales and rents were diverted from the city into party coffers and politicians' pockets. Some settlements became 'no go' areas for the MDC and opposition-aligned civics as well as city officials (McGregor 2013, McGregor and Chatiza 2019). During this period, the extent of ZANU(PF) elite accumulation based on urban land within the city borders became clear, through a land audit by the MDC-T council. The audit documented illegal deals and pointed a finger directly at the Minister responsible for Local Government, Ignatius Chombo, a network of ZANU(PF)-linked businessmen and companies during the period that the city was run by a Commission (City of Harare, 2010). One of the positive outcomes of power-sharing was the new 2013 constitution, though the profound changes to local government it promised have not been implemented (Chatiza 2016).

The relative stability of the power-sharing period ended with ZANU(PF)'s electoral victory in 2013. Harare remained overwhelmingly opposition supporting, but the significant inroads that ZANU(PF) did make were linked to constituencies of *de facto* ruling party dominance – the central market area and new peripheral settlements (McGregor 2013, McGregor and Chatiza 2019, Muchadenyika 2020). ZANU(PF) thus increased its number of councillors in Harare from one to five (of 46), and its MPs from one to three.

After 2013, urban policy was marked by a drive to regularise informal settlements (McGregor and Chatiza 2019). This was not about ending patronage, rather it was about bringing it back under state bureaucratic control; moreover, it was embroiled in the party's internal disputes. The drive to formalise occurred at a juncture when factionalism within ZANU(PF) over succession and future leadership after President Mugabe became increasingly all-encompassing. Internal rivalry had already led to the assassination in 2011 of Col Mujuru, who had been an important figure not only nationally, but also in Harare provincial politics and among sections of the urban grassroots: his networks included MPs responsible for Harare constituencies with sizeable informal settlements and Chipangano. But from 2013, the two main factions were those loyal to the then First Lady, Grace Mugabe, known as 'G40', versus Emerson Mnangagwa's grouping, known as 'Lacoste'.⁶ A new crop of G40-linked ZANU(PF) MPs in Harare came to dominate the urban periphery, replacing the previous cohort of politicians allied to Col Mujuru, and Chipangano's leaders were publicly beaten up.

This factionalism mattered for urban policy and politics, as the new Minister responsible for Local Government, Saviour Kasukuwere, was a key player in G40, so ministerial initiatives were interpreted as factional. The series of peri-urban land audits that were commissioned by the Ministry and Joint Operations Command during this

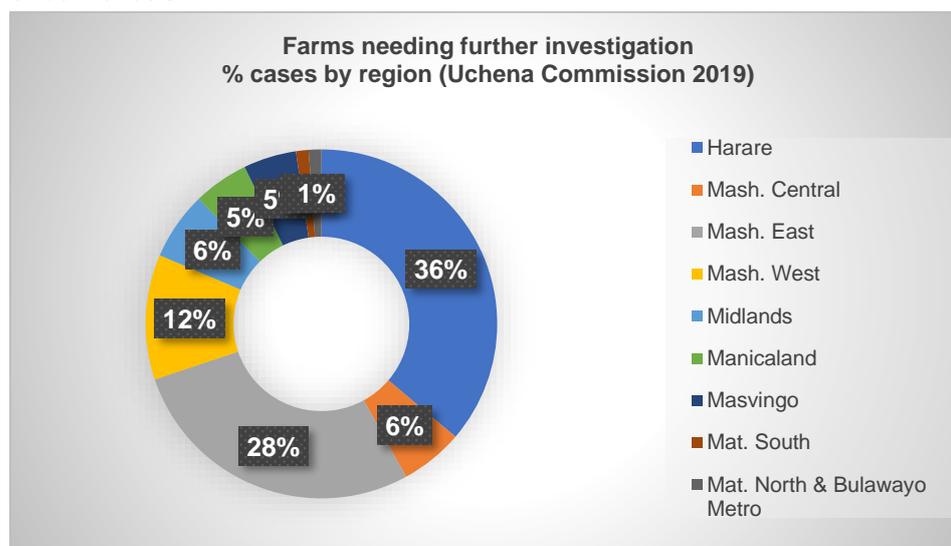
⁶ G40 or Generation 40 included many younger politicians who were too young to have liberation war credentials; Mnangagwa's faction gained the nickname 'Lacoste' from the sportswear's crocodile insignia, because Mnangagwa's nickname was 'crocodile'.

period legitimised a new role for the central state through the Urban Development Corporation (UDCORP) and brought sections of the periphery back under bureaucratic regulation. They also laid the basis for prosecuting individual 'barons' aligned to other factions. G40's influence was, however, brought to an abrupt end by the army-led coup in 2017 that installed President Emerson Mnangagwa.

Immediately following the coup, leading G40 figures were arrested on treason and corruption charges, and some fled into exile, including the Minister responsible for Local Government, Saviour Kasukuwere, while his predecessor, Ignatius Chombo, was detained and tortured. President Mnangagwa's victory in the 2018 elections was facilitated by the fragmentation of the MDC opposition parties, the largest grouping of which fought the elections as the MDC-Alliance (MDC-A) and won Harare. This reversed some of the previous ZANU(PF) gains in the capital, but also blurred the past political polarisation somewhat, as the MDC-A allied with the remnants of the G40 faction in Harare. The election was remarkable in the light of previous campaigns, in that surveillance of Harare's new peripheral settlements was relaxed and the opposition was allowed to campaign therein openly.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa's regime has been marked by strong continuities in repression and patronage from the Mugabe era. The militarisation of the state has become more apparent than ever, while populist redistributive policies have been de-emphasised. Pronouncements on devolution have not altered central ministerial powers. The politics of urban land audits as a route to selectively purge political opponents has also continued. The 2019 national Commission of Inquiry into the sale of state land in and around urban areas since 2005 (see Figure 1) concluded that the state had not collected USD3 billion, or 90 percent of the intrinsic land value for land distributed (Government of Zimbabwe 2019). Many of the cases of farms 'needing

Figure 1: Commission of Inquiry into sale of state land in and around urban areas



Source: Computed from Uchena Commission (Government of Zimbabwe (2019)).

further investigation' were concentrated in Harare (i.e. 156 farms or 36 percent of the total number of farms redistributed), as well as in adjacent Mashonaland provinces. This Commission has not been made public; instead, municipalities, including City of Harare, have themselves become a focus of investigations of corruption over land (Muchadenyika 2020).

This Commission of Inquiry and a new spate of corruption investigations have not ended elite accumulation through urban land, politically orchestrated land occupations and partisan allocations to ZANU(PF) interest groups. Corruption has continued blatantly through business cartels, nepotistic awarding of government contracts and particular 'troughs' of state funds, such as agricultural inputs in command agriculture, or the contracts for the response to COVID-19. At the time of writing, ZANU (PF) legitimacy was once again at an all-time low. In Harare (as elsewhere in the country), abductions and torture of MDC MPs and youth leaders occurred in both high density and new peri-urban settlements. COVID-19-related restrictions contributed to justifications for mass arrests and the heightened presence of police and army on the streets. All this was in the context of a renewed hyper-inflationary spiral, and critical water and food shortages.

This brief narrative of interlinked national and Harare city politics has already made some reference to land reform as a key 'generative' dimension of ZANU(PF) strategy between 2000 and 2020. Below, we discuss peri-urban contexts in further depth, before examining the contested qualities of partisan dominance of these new settlements.

Land reform and the Harare periphery

City edges began to be affected by ZANU(PF)-sanctioned land occupations from the late 1990s, then by formal allocations through the Fast Track Land Reform Programme from 2000. Occupations and allocations of former white-owned farms through land reform and the accompanying ideology of the ongoing liberation struggle have been centrally important in allowing ZANU(PF) to dominate the urban periphery.

There are many similarities in the politics of rural and peri-urban land reform. The new land committees overseeing land allocation in all contexts were ZANU(PF) dominated: Harare's Provincial Committee on peri-urban settlement comprised two members of ZANU-PF Harare Provincial structures, two CIO members, one member of the Zimbabwe Republic Police and one member of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (Marongwe 2009: 280). Beneficiaries in all contexts were told by politicians that the land was a conditional 'gift' of the ruling party that necessitated repeated performances of party loyalty (Zamchiya 2013). The aim was to tie recipients into a relation of dependency and party labour, and to undermine opposition-led urban councils. Some occupations were spearheaded by war veterans, including the largest in Harare's vicinity (discussed below). Others were led by party youth and encouraged by ZANU(PF) MPs, councillors, or other members of the ZANU(PF) provincial and district structures. In all contexts, occupiers legitimised their claims by forming party

structures plus grassroots 'development committees' to seek recognition from the state (Chaumba et al. 2003, Chamunogwa 2019, 2020). In rural contexts, traditionalist claims and chiefly politics were sometimes important (Fontein 2009, Mujere 2011), which was not the case in peri-urban contexts, except where communal lands abutted cities (see MLG 2013). Occupations and allocations allowed for mixed interest groups and their politics was complex (Chamunogwa 2019, 2020; Scoones et al. 2010).

Notwithstanding these similarities, there are important differences between rural and peri-urban contexts. Obviously, much peri-urban land was to be developed as housing. The pace of 'orderly' city expansion had been too slow to accommodate demand and was already over-run by 2000 (Marongwe et al. 2011). High land values meant ready incomes could be made from subdivisions, sales and property development, as well as from rent. Cooperative policies for housing and servicing were particularly important in shaping the form that ZANU(PF) authorities took in peri-urban areas – ZANU(PF) 'land barons' based their claims to legitimate authority on their formal status as leaders of the cooperatives charged with developing these lands, not only on their party credentials. The law was permissive towards predatory rent collection by cooperative leaders, subdivisions and illegal sales (Muchadenyika 2020). 'Barons' encouraged occupations with promises of land and housing development, charged membership fees and development levies, often delivering no improvement (Chirisa et al. 2014, 2015, Muchadenyika 2015, Muchadenyika and Williams 2017, McGregor and Chatiza 2019).

The politics of bureaucratic processes in these new peri-urban settlements diverged from rural contexts in other ways too. New settlements needed to be incorporated into MDC-run municipalities, through a cumbersome process marked by bottlenecks and protracted delays (Chaeruka and Munzwa 2009). This process of incorporation was infused with and blocked by partisan political calculations. Although rural and urban councils were sidelined in the process of allocating lands, in the countryside the new resettlement lands were relatively quickly absorbed within rural district administrations, so the period of what Chamunogwa calls 'partisan authority' was relatively brief, lasting only two years (Chamunogwa 2019, 2020). Yet in peri-urban Harare, this process was long drawn-out and subject to an institutional stand-off. Where settlements were formally handed over to the city by the Ministry for Local Government, the city often refused to accept this responsibility, arguing that the land values that should have funded servicing had been syphoned off by ZANU(PF). As a result, 'barons' and party structures continued to act as *de facto* authorities for long drawn-out periods (see McGregor and Chatiza 2019).

New peri-urban settlements were also shaped profoundly by specifically urban central state interventions. Many of the largest new peri-urban settlements had their origins in the military-led building programme, Operation Stay Well (2007), which was supposed to create homes for those displaced by the demolitions, though allocations were shaped by patronage. The lands planned and allocated under this scheme were then overlain by ZANU(PF)-led occupations, subdivisions, sales and cooperative

allocations. As there was no bureaucratic oversight, *de facto* the authorities in these areas became the ZANU(PF) committees.

Through these processes, ZANU(PF) controlled the periphery for a protracted period. There is a debate as to whether this was deliberate or simply lack of capacity. Our view is that while there was clearly a lack of capacity, party politics prevented a resolution. Technocrats within both the Ministry and city reinforced this view, arguing that 'political interference' was key to understanding the workings of state institutions, dysfunctional relations among them, the powers of the 'barons' and the irresolvability of the regulatory and servicing gaps. A senior official described many barons as 'untouchable'⁷ The Ministry responsible for Local Government failed to prosecute the notorious barons of Caledonia farm: one alone – Nelson Mandizvidza – had made \$3m, through his positions as chairperson of the Union of Cooperatives and chairman of Caledonia and Eastview Development Consortium. The barons' powers hinged on the permissive legal framework, a compromised judiciary, party political standing as well as on their capacity to mobilise grassroots support and votes. The CEO of the Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) argued that lack of regulation was: '...mostly an elections issue... If there was no politics, the government values the aesthetic concept of the city and would have demolished all these structures'.⁸

The effects of ZANU(PF) dominance undermined the rights-based urban social movements that had grown in influence over the 1990s. Activist residents' organisations, such as CHRA and the Harare Residents' Trust (HRT), were physically banned from these spaces, and residents subjected to surveillance and political victimisation. HRT explained 'If they [ZANU(PF)] want to take over a stand, so you are just accused of belonging to the opposition or not attending [ZANU(PF)] meetings ...'.⁹ In Kamete's (2018) analysis, the ZANU(PF) structures within informal settlements acted as 'petty sovereigns', with powers to evict and punish, supported by the CIO. Other organisations, such as Dialogue on Shelter and the Federation of Homeless peoples, had opted for engagement with the ruling party, but they too were sidelined in these spaces: they described 'political occupations and ... the new method of land allocations as very detrimental to the Federation'.¹⁰

Notwithstanding ZANU(PF) dominance and the political and economic benefits to the party of perpetuating insecure settlements, there has nonetheless been a trajectory towards consolidation in some. The MLG's top-down drive to survey and re-register land holdings through the Urban Development Corporation (UDCORP) pushed some settlements towards greater security, while others achieved recognition through 'bottom-up' processes. There is thus more to the political history of these settlements than a simple story of elite accumulation and exploitation of the urban poor for rent and

⁷ MLG official, 7 April 2017, cited in McGregor and Chatiza (2019)).

⁸ CEO, CHRA, 12 April 2017.

⁹ Director, HRT 12 April 2017.

¹⁰ Interview, Dialogue/Federation, 13 April 2017.

votes. Below we look at these processes of consolidation, discussing the insights they provide into the qualities of political dominance.

Qualities of dominance: The politics of clientelism and consolidation

The notion of 'dominance' can imply a misleading solidity or fixity. We argue it is necessary to understand the qualities of political dominance, by analysing relations of power, authority and life within dominated spaces and trajectories of change. Explaining change demands attention to the views and practices of residents as well as the top-down calculations prioritised in the concepts of 'co-option' and 'coercive distribution' (see also Goodfellow and Jackman 2020:22-23).

The shift towards recognition of some peripheral settlements has occurred partly through their size and passage of time. One state official remarked: 'it is easier to evict when a settlement first appears, not 10 or 15 years later when people have built homes and it has grown – then the logic is to regularise'.¹¹ But this can belie a more complex and contested history, and there is nothing automatic, linear or universal about such processes of recognition.

Below we take three specific examples of ZANU-PF-dominated settlements on the periphery to illustrate diverse pathways to consolidation or displacement, which we use to discuss variable qualities of dominance. We compare: 1) a former resettlement scheme and cooperative area regularised from the top down by UDCORP in Hatcliffe Extension; 2) the city's largest single land occupation formalised in a 'bottom-up' manner through a ZANU(PF)-aligned development committee in Epworth Ward 7; and 3) the case of a failed land occupation, moved to make way for elite housing, army and government buildings in New Park. For other cases, see McGregor and Chatiza (2019, 2020), and for detailed planning history, see Muchadenyika (2020). Together these cases provide insight into the varied, shifting and contested qualities of ZANU(PF) dominance of the urban periphery.

It is important to reiterate how the city's history of evictions and violence linger across new informal settlements. In our survey of 500 residents in three of the largest informal settlements, 24 percent of respondents said they had personally been victims of violence, 52 percent had witnessed violence and 83 percent said they felt unsafe where they lived. A large proportion had personal experience of eviction: 41 percent had been evicted once or more (mostly in 2005), some people had been evicted up to six times and many older residents had been circulating the holding camps of the Harare periphery since the early 1990s.¹² Yet residents have not been pure victims or passive in shaping the forms that local authority has taken. 'Survival' underpins many decisions to perform party support and uphold ZANU(PF) political dominance. Occupations have also been infused with an opportunistic moralising logic through the notion of '*garawadya*' (lit. 'better to stay/live having eaten'), implying it is foolish not to

¹¹ Interview, former CEO Epworth Local Board, April 2017.

¹² Differences between the locations were not significant (discussed further in McGregor and Chatiza 2020).

seize an opportunity. But residents have also found means to undermine partisan privilege by invoking the party's own history of developmentalism and collective grassroots interests in land rights, recognition and services. Support for party dominance was hollow: the civic mobilisations of the 1990s have left their mark in residents' ideas and understandings of themselves as rights-bearing citizens, which have been suppressed rather than eliminated in these settlements (McGregor and Chatiza 2020). Moreover, ZANU(PF) internal factionalism, the renewed hyperinflationary spiral, and a heightened army and police presence have also been grounds for disillusion at the grassroots. Bureaucratic incorporation and tenure security may thus undermine the party's capacity to continue to dominate the city's periphery.

Layers of central state intervention: Hatcliffe Extension, Harare North

The case of Hatcliffe Extension shows how ZANU(PF) political dominance has been shaped by successive layers of central state land allocations (rather than by the party directly, as in our other two cases). We draw on interviews with members of Dialogue on Shelter/Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation, plus a land audit, to show residents' manoeuvres and the contestation. The settlement's history is messy because of the layers of formal allocation and re-allocation through resettlement projects and cooperatives, in addition to occupations, and because it spans the boundary between the city and three different rural councils (Goromonzi, Zvimba and Mazowe). But it has similarities to other large new peripheral settlements on Harare's borders shaped by 'top-down' interventions by the Ministry responsible for Local Government.¹³

The settlement began in 1993 as a temporary holding camp for evictees (moved from other camps),¹⁴ which became a flagship site for NGOs working with the homeless. Dialogue on Shelter and the Federation of Homeless People chose to work there because of the potentially empowering effects of transforming such a stigmatised settlement into a place of secure home-owning.¹⁵ In 2000, the Ministry responsible for Local Government allocated plots and individual leases to those in the camp, responding to residents' self-organisation through Dialogue and the Federation. Residents decided to occupy their stands in 2001-02 before servicing, due to rumours of the land being double-allocated to soldiers who had served in the Congo. They organised through the ZANU(PF) District Coordinating Committee (DCC), despite the MDC having a significant history of support among them. Residents decided to build because they had leases.

Yet, Hatcliffe Extension was flattened in Operation Clean the Filth in 2005: 3,200 homes were destroyed by the army, rendering more than 12,000 people homeless, including the ZANU(PF) district committee. Shadreck Tondori, a ZANU(PF) district executive and activist with Dialogue on Shelter, narrated how he personally had

¹³ See the discussion of Caledonia farm in McGregor and Chatiza (2019) and Muchadenyika (2020).

¹⁴ Including Churu farm, Porta farm and Dzivarawekwa Extension.

¹⁵ Interview, Dialogue/Federation 13 April 2017.

invested his entire retrenchment package into his home, built with '13 new pieces of asbestos [roofing], timber, cement, and 22,000 bricks'.¹⁶ The residents were scattered: some were taken to holding camps in other parts of the city periphery or dumped in rural areas. Those with leases contested their eviction through the High Court, assisted by Dialogue and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. But they lost. The High Court ruled that the government, as issuer of the leases, had the right to remove them at any time. Among the displaced, the demolitions were widely understood as an act of punishment by the defeated Harare North ZANU(PF) MP, Nyasha Chikwinya, who lost to the MDC's Trudy Stevenson in the 2005 elections.¹⁷ Chikwinya is alleged to have personally encouraged the evictions and to have berated residents for their disloyalty. Chikwinya went on to be Minister responsible for Women's Affairs and to hold a rural ZANU(PF) seat elsewhere, though she continued to play a part in local politics, due to her claims to land.

The next phase of the settlement's history was shaped by a new layer of state land allocations through Operation Live Well in 2006-07. Some of the original lease-holding families were included, but sections were also distributed to ZANU(PF) clients, including members of the police, soldiers and property developers. Some parts of Hatcliffe Extension were allocated to cooperatives and Hon. Chikwinya herself secured a farm.

During the 2008 elections, Hatcliffe Extension experienced severe violence linked to ZANU(PF) militia bases used to try to coerce votes through abductions, beating and torture. ZANU(PF) won in the rural constituencies (that incorporate part of the settlement), but lost again in Harare North. In 2010 the Hatcliffe Extension militia bases were used to abduct and murder the wife of MDC's councillor, Chiroto, who was acting mayor of Harare.

The settlement then informalised during the power-sharing period, as cooperative leaders, ZANU(PF) politicians and councillors sold and subdivided land and led occupations within both the resettlement area and cooperative sections. Tondori described renewing his activism with ZANU(PF) in 2010 'for survival – not because we love them'. Efforts to lobby for services through a non-aligned development committee were unsuccessful and it became defunct as members were deterred by the detention of activists.¹⁸ ZANU(PF)'s victory in Harare North in 2013 was widely attributed to the party's powers to allocate land and housing, and this brought in a new MP seen by some as sympathetic to the quest for services and tenure security, as he himself had grown up in the camp.

The cooperative sections of Hatcliffe Extension (Acorn Farm, Glen Forest and St Augustine's) were wracked by internal ZANU(PF) in-fighting, typical of the 'frontier' politics of other parts of the Harare periphery (McGregor and Chatiza 2019). An audit

¹⁶ Tondori 17 and 18 September 2017.

¹⁷ Focus group, 17 November 2016.

¹⁸ Focus group, Hatcliffe Extension, 17 November 2016.

of Harare North cooperatives in 2015 commissioned by the Ministry responsible for Local Government detailed a long list of illegal practices. In Acorn farm, five cooperatives responsible for development on 2000 plots had been involved in 'misappropriation and maladministration', and some had two sets of rival executives involved in illegal sales, resulting in 'double and multiple allocation of stands', plus there had been 'victimisation of some members by the executive'. In Glen Forest, Hon. Chikwinya was in dispute with Mafuyana cooperative: there had been double allocations and 'political interference, violence and intimidation of cooperators'. The audit concluded:

'All the housing coops in Harare North failed to register meaningful development from 2005 ... there is rampant illegal sale of stands, un-procedural dismissal of members and repossession of stands to an extent that even some who have already developed their houses are evicted ...' (MLG 2015).

Disputes among some cooperatives were still with the courts at the time of writing. Following the coup, Minister Chikwinya faced losing her land through corruption charges, as she was part of the G40 faction.

The regularisation of Hatcliffe Extension in 2016 by the Ministry responsible for Local Government through UDCORP entailed re-surveying and re-allocating plots and leases. This encouraged residents to invest and some sections of the settlement now have bigger homes than many older high-density suburbs, while services have also improved. Yet many poorer residents still felt insecure: they had been told repeatedly 'this area is not for the likes of you'.¹⁹ Those who had personal experience of homes being bulldozed notwithstanding valid leases doubted whether their new documents conferred security. Nonetheless, UDCORP's re-ordering, despite its lack of transparency and concerns of partisan favouritism, plus building and servicing, gave the settlement a very different feel from the earlier informal 'camp', and ended at least some of the battles in the cooperative areas. This recognition undermined party-political leverage over votes, and in 2018 Harare North voters returned an MDC-A MP (though rural constituencies incorporating part of the settlement remained ZANU(PF)).

The messy trajectory of this settlement, where ZANU(PF) dominance was shaped by repeated layers of central state intervention through resettlement schemes, cooperatives and top down regularisation, is typical of many new informal settlements on the former farms of the Harare periphery. Our next two cases are very different, however, as they originated in large-scale land occupations.

'Bottom up' regularisation: Epworth Ward 7

The recognition of Epworth Ward 7 occurred through a different process and with little bureaucratic involvement. For around 20 years, this settlement remained under the control of district-level ZANU(PF) structures and an interlinked development

¹⁹ Focus group, 7 November 2016.

committee. The settlement is the largest single land occupation in the Harare region, and at the time of writing was home to circa 80,000 people and 20,000 leaseholders on surveyed plots, registered at Epworth Local Board. Although ZANU(PF) politicians have been heavily involved as patrons, the grassroots party structures held out against allocations to cooperatives. At the time of the research, this settlement was upheld by officials and planners as a 'successful grassroots regularisation' and possible model for other peri-urban areas (see also Muchadenyika 2020:183). Here we draw on interviews with the development committee and Epworth Local Board officers to explore the qualities of ZANU(PF) political dominance, conflict and change as the settlement consolidated.

Epworth is Harare's oldest informal settlement. It originated during the liberation war in the 1970s as a settlement of war displaced who had sought sanctuary on land belonging to the Methodist church (for a detailed history, see Muchadenyika 2020, Chirisa and Muhomba 2013, Chitekwe-Biti et al. 2012). In 1983, the land was ceded to the state and it continued to grow, notwithstanding a sequence of demolitions and evictions. Despite being close to the city centre, the city of Harare refused to accept responsibility, so it gained its own local board in 1986, and wards 1-6 were regularised *in situ* over the 1990s, with the assistance of Dialogue on Shelter and the Federation (Chitekwe-Biti et al. 2012). Ward 7 is the newest section of Epworth, located on what was the grazing land of 'original' Epworth residents. It is also known as '*Magada*' – squatted (lit. 'those who have sat'): the occupiers were former tenants in other parts of Epworth and outsiders who bought plots illegally from 'originals'. In the context of the politicisation of land in the late 1990s, the *magada* organised themselves into ZANU(PF) grassroots structures, including a group of war veterans among them. They were supported by heavyweight ZANU(PF) patrons, including Amos Midzi. Midzi was a Politburo member who had a position in the Harare provincial structures, and later went on to be Minister for Energy, then Mines and was part of Col. Mujuru's network, with strong connections to Chipangano militia. Another patron was retired Lieutenant Nyanhongo, a Central Committee member, who was elected MP (for Harare South) in 2008, and had a position on the provincial party structures.

The Epworth Local Board (ELB) tried repeatedly to evict the '*magada*', even appealing directly to ZANU(PF) to allow this. Indeed, the former CEO of ELB recalled how when he joined council in 2004:

'there were heaps and heaps of evictions orders in the files. But the politics meant the Board couldn't evict. I saw a letter written from the former secretary of the Board requesting ZANU(PF) to allow ELB to evict people, despite gaining a court [eviction] order, they still had to request authority from the party. Politics had taken over...'²⁰

²⁰ Interview former CEO, ELB 4 April 2017.

Occupiers benefited from MPs' lobbying, while the MPs could use the occupiers as a pool of supporters to build their political careers. From the perspective of the local board:

'People allocated land by politicians didn't have security, so the structures were temporary, and politics also preyed on the insecurity. Politicians kept bringing people in there from the mid-1990s to now, those people fuelled their power. The Board cannot evict even with a court order'.²¹

During Operation Clean the Filth in 2005, Ward 7 was spared. Members of Ward 7 ZANU(PF) structures credit President Mugabe's personal intervention, though it may have escaped simply by virtue of size, meaning it was last on the list to be demolished, by which time the UN special envoy had visited and the Operation was halted amidst international outcry.²² Whatever the reason, the settlement was allowed to persist and mushroomed in size, as those affected by the demolitions in other parts of town sought refuge and land from the Epworth Ward 7 ZANU(PF) structures. Dialogue and the Federation began to work with the Epworth local board, University of Zimbabwe planning students and the Department of Physical Planning to regularise this *magada* section, using satellite imagery to map and enumerate households (Chitetwe-Biti et al. 2012, Muchadenyika 2020:183).

In 2008, Epworth was wracked with violence, as the main part of Epworth had a history of MDC support, and it was only in Ward 7 *magada* that residents supported ZANU(PF). ZANU(PF) established militia bases, both in Epworth itself and in neighbouring Harare South, which were used for abductions, beatings and torture to try to coerce ZANU(PF) support. The bases were said to be controlled by Midzi and Nyanhongo (Anatomy of Terror 2011, cited in Kriger 2012:18-20). This violence persisted in Epworth during the Inclusive Government (Kriger 2012). The senior politicians were said to have been motivated by losses to the MDC (Midzi ran unsuccessfully against the MDC for Harare mayor in 2002, and lost the city's Mbare seat to MDC in 2005 (Kriger 2012), as well as by the need to actively demonstrate grassroots support in their rivalrous bid for governor of Harare Province in 2011 (Kriger 2012).

The local ZANU(PF) party structures continued to allocate land to newcomers during the period of the Inclusive Government, acting as *de facto* authorities. Dialogue and the Federation found it increasingly difficult to maintain their own grassroots structure in Ward 7, and by the time of our research, their committees were not active, as the ZANU(PF)-aligned development committee dominated and captured the process of grassroots regularisation. The party-aligned committee was in sole charge of resolving disputes over plot borders and multiple claims, leading to accusations of politically motivated decisions from an alternative residents' association linked with the network

²¹ interview, former CEO ELB 4 April 2017.

²² CEO ELB, 4 April 2017.

of Harare-wide rights-based civics.²³ ERDA could not maintain an open presence in Ward 7 and accused the ZANU(PF)-aligned committee of 'partisan tyranny', evictions and violence against non-ZANU(PF) supporters. The effects of grassroots ZANU(PF) demonstrations at the local board offices and interventions by senior politicians were, however, beneficial to residents collectively, as they lowered surveyors' fees. Moreover, MDC supporters were far from totally expelled from the settlement: the Epworth Ward 7 MDC district and youth executive members echoed accusations of partisanship and violence, but also secured stands for themselves and a broader network of covert supporters.²⁴ We witnessed people celebrating as they received their new home numbers from the local board. The development committee was proud of its achievement and of the improved services, including a school.

Though local party officials continued to express gratitude to ZANU(PF) in public, many admitted disillusion to us when interviewed anonymously. The ZANU(PF) elite factional politics and grassroots history of violence contributed to this. The factionalism led to successive changes in the MPs with whom local party activists worked most closely as patrons, and many feared reprisals for links to MPs now out of favour. Factional battles also affected councillors. Several ZANU–PF district officials in Epworth described politics as 'dirty', dangerous and contemptuous of those at the grassroots. They emphasised their disengagement with politics, other than the quest for development and services. One narrated how it could be used to achieve properly planned development, which was a moral good in itself:

'So, the stand I am occupying, I didn't buy it I don't want to lie to you. I was given by the party ... Now that we are inside stands, we can start doing proper house plans. Before this, we were just settled as the party youths. Now the place is serviced and pegged ... I try to avoid high-level politics – the only thing that you can be involved in is something that points directly to you ... otherwise you can be getting yourself into a situation where you can get killed.'²⁵

The trajectory of Epworth Ward 7 can undoubtedly show the agency of grassroots settlers and how regularisation can be done in situ for large numbers without mass demolitions. Dialogue and the Federation demonstrated to officials that planning could be rendered flexible, also drawing on experience from other African contexts. Yet the partisan allocation and violence resulting from capture by ZANU(PF) makes it more difficult to advocate as a model than if completed transparently, as initiated by Dialogue and the Federation working closely with ELB. More than one local ZANU(PF) activist expressed how the 'struggle for this place and some of the things we did along the way cannot be said'.²⁶ For our purposes here, however, the settlement's consolidation under local ZANU(PF) control over two decades nonetheless demonstrates a trajectory towards enhanced security and residents' own clientelist manoeuvres in achieving this.

²³ Epworth Residents Development Association (ERDA), interview 11 April 2017.

²⁴ interview, Epworth Ward 7 MDC officers and youth, 22 November 2016.

²⁵ Interview 3, Epworth Ward 7, 10 October 2017.

²⁶ interview 1, Epworth Ward 7, 12 October 2017.

A failed occupation: New Park

It is important to end with a failed occupation, to make the point that there is no guaranteed trajectory towards regularisation and recognition for all settlements in the ZANU(PF)-dominated periphery. Occupations have been a risky strategy, particularly so on the edge of elite neighbourhoods of Harare that are attractive sites for new up-market developments. In such locations, the urban poor who participated in occupations have been displaced by a new round of property owners and treated as disposable by former patrons. The case of the remnants of a land occupation camped in shacks in New Park, while the infrastructure for elite housing was laid out around them, captures so strongly the sense of being used, which we heard across the city periphery, not only from 'ordinary' families, but also grassroots party structures. We draw here on interviews with a group of quasi-destitute residents living on the North-western Harare periphery/Zvimba District, who were the remnants of a sizeable land occupation from 2000 to 2001, encouraged by the former ZANU(PF) politician, Patrick Zhuwao, and others, including the late David Karimanzira. Zhuwao was MP for Zvimba East, held various ministerial positions, including Minister responsible for Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment, later Public Service, was a Politburo member and G40 kingpin expelled after the coup. Karimanzira had a long career in the party, and from 2005 to 2011 served as resident minister and governor of Harare Province.

The occupiers we interviewed were grassroots party activists and saw Zhuwao as their patron: they felt they had 'helped him climb' through their support in the land occupations, before being discarded.²⁷ Some had been among the first group of occupiers, involved in the process of helping to evict a former white farm-owner. The area more broadly had become populated by retrenched local brickfield-workers staking plots alongside rural people, who joined in. The occupiers formed themselves into a ZANU(PF) district committee and cooperative, through which they claimed to have leases. The land was, however, strategic and later earmarked for an elite suburb close to the New City, where new buildings are planned for national government and state institutions, including parliament.

During Operation Clean the Filth in 2005, occupiers' homes were demolished. Five thousand families were rendered homeless in this section of the Northwest Harare periphery, our group claimed, their number having been enumerated in UN investigations in the aftermath of the Operation. Some of the homeless were resettled in other parts of the periphery at Whitecliff, as part of Operation Stay Well, and others had gone back to rural homes, but our interlocutors were among those left out of the resettlement with nowhere to go. They were living in homes built from the rubble of housing destroyed in 2005, knowing they clearly had no future in the location. They had survived initially with blankets from IOM and food from Christian Care, and over the subsequent 12 years had been working for a neighbouring group of war veterans, whose land claims seemed more secure. Across the lands being developed in this

²⁷ Group interview, New Park 21 November 2016.

section of the city's borderlands, there were other clusters of poor families trying to survive on piecework and vending, including former farmworkers, former employees of the defunct brickfields, other former occupiers and victims of the demolitions (see also Dialogue on Shelter 2014).

The three groups of private developers putting in infrastructure around them were working for the City of Harare and Zvimba Rural District Council: at the time of our visit, roads had been tarmacked and plots for up-market housing marked out, with cement foundations being laid. Family groups were being evicted gradually – our group said the previous week, their neighbours in an adjacent plot had been thrown out and were now living on a nearby riverbank. They recounted their long history of lobbying offices: when they visited Zvimba District offices for help, they were referred to Harare, and in Harare were referred back to Zvimba. At one point, they had been offered land in Zvimba to move to, but could not afford the charges for the leases, which were \$2000 per plot. They had pleaded in vain to be able to pay in instalments, but were not deemed suitable, as they lacked secure livelihoods. They had also tried to seek out their former ZANU(PF) patrons, hoping for assistance as recompense for their work for the party, but their capacity to make any contact had been drastically eroded after the deaths of their former ZANU(PF) district chair and cooperative leader, as well as his deputy. Their most recent attempt had been with the Harare provincial administrator, who had referred them to the Minister responsible for Home Affairs/ZANU(PF) Secretary for Administration. But they felt they had 'exhausted all avenues of negotiation', indeed they were desperate. Given the extent of building, eviction was likely a matter of weeks away. One explained:

'If you are choked for a long time you will end up saying "let him do whatever he wants". That's the position we are in now, for us to overcome this person using power – we can't because there is need for money and we don't have the money. For any next move I need to take, I need money, but I don't have money. You know we are so desperate to such an extent that in our hearts we saying in your coming maybe you will say we will build you houses somewhere.'²⁸

Our own attempt to follow up with City of Harare regarding their plight showed the officials knew about their case, reiterating the view that they were not responsible and referring us to Zvimba. These grassroots occupiers were abandoned so starkly by politicians, partly because their occupation was on the historically wealthier side of town in a strategic location characterised by a concentration of developers.

Conclusion

What do these settlements' 20-year trajectories towards consolidation or continued precarity and displacement tell us about the history, practices and qualities of ZANU(PF) dominance of Harare's periphery? How can they add to debates over how to conceptualise political dominance in relation to capital cities?

²⁸ New Park, group interview, 21 November 2016.

The mechanisms of ZANU(PF) domination of land and new settlements on Harare's periphery since the late 1990s differ substantially from early independence, when the ruling party can be said to have dominated the capital more broadly and enjoyed popular support in the city. The qualities of its political dominance of the capital have altered over time. Then, the party/state worked to deliver on its redistributive promises through a professional state planning and local government apparatus that was authoritarian and centralised, but was not notably corrupt, planners were not compromised by overwhelming securitised political pressures and the accompanying threats and enticements. Planning processes were slow and standards of housing were too high, but the urban poor in new settlements did not fall into an institutional stand-off that was irresolvable, due to partisan interests, or factional politics. The state's repressive, militarised capacities were experienced mostly elsewhere than in the capital. But the interlinked national and urban 'crises' marked an important shift as city politics was polarised between MDC-aligned civic and political movements, and the ruling party's counter-mobilisations. State institutions themselves transformed to become part of a patronage politics enmeshed in complex ways with the party's own centralised structures. ZANU(PF)'s strategies have been shaped by a politics of state institutional control and elite accumulation, as well as a politics of opportunism, including at the grassroots. But the party has also treated the urban majority, including its own lower echelons, as usable and disposable, at times reducing people to desperate, survivalist calculations. Attempts to coerce or entice the city's voters back have failed, other than in specific spaces that the party controlled, often as a result of land reform and party-led occupations.

Most components of the authoritarian 'tool kit' have been applied in the city as a whole over the last two decades, as within the periphery itself, but the 'generative' politics of land and the party's partisan patriotism have marked the city's borderlands in distinctive ways. We argued, however, that understanding the party's top-down co-optive and coercive-distributive measures does not fully capture local political dynamics in these city-edge spaces. This is because residents themselves have been more active in trying to shape processes and local authorities than top-down formulations convey, notwithstanding highly skewed power relations. In some instances, the sheer scale of life accommodated in the settlements itself became a factor in their recognition. We showed the grassroots tactical or 'tangential' manoeuvres involved in clientelist strategies, which had in some cases delivered greater security and recognition for land holdings. We also argued that rights-based civic activism had been suppressed, rather than eliminated, and continued to inform grassroots ideas and practices that envisaged home-owning and tenure security as routes to greater political freedom and an end to partisan dominance based on threats of eviction.

In relation to the themes of the broader project on *Cities and Dominance*, we used the Harare case study to make two broader arguments. First, we made the case for a spatial approach to cities and political dominance. Rather than following the usual approach of focusing primarily on deal-making between politicians and interest groups, such as youth, vendors or informal transport operatives, we instead examined the

ruling party's capacity to control specific city spaces and related resources – notably land on the periphery. This capacity hinged both on controlling state institutions responsible for formal allocations, and on the parallel structures of the party itself and party-aligned militia and CIO. Second, we argued that it is important to understand the qualities of political dominance in these spaces – particularly its contested qualities – and change over time. This meant understanding how power and authority works at the grassroots and discussing contours of struggle that can be overlooked if the focus is on overt verbal dissent and protest. Clientelist manoeuvres through which residents have organised themselves into local party authorities have been encouraged and used by politicians as part of a partisan architecture of surveillance, coercion and reward. But residents were motivated to mobilise themselves and perform support simply for survival or through tactical calculations as to how best to secure homes, services and recognition. Locally constituted party authority has been a means through which ZANU(PF) has achieved political support in an otherwise opposition-supporting city. But, as these local party authorities were used by residents as a route towards home-owning, their tactics to consolidate rights in the settlements may also be a path through which the ruling party's leverage for domination is undermined.

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Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre (ESID)

Global Development Institute, School of Environment, Education and Development,
The University of Manchester, Oxford Road,
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