

*Review*

# The informal city: assessing its scope, variants and direction in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Urban informality is taking different shapes and dimensions. Theoretically the scope and dimensions of these remain little understood. This paper examines the different dimensions that the city is shaping itself informally. A case of Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe is proved as a basis for grounding the theory. Examples cited include housing informality, self-help initiatives by the youths and street vending by different age and gender groups. It is overall argued that the informal sector operations are ever shifting, ever-configuring and worth exploring. Such a study as this one is helpful in finding medium to long-term solutions in urban Africa, as a whole.

**Keywords:** urban poverty, unemployment, informality, typology, policy alternatives, urban planning

## INTRODUCTION

Africa is haunted. The challenges facing it include, among other things unemployment and poverty (UNHABITAT 2006-7). These have not spared its modern cities. This is despite the continent's vast human and natural resource endowments (e.g. diamonds in Marange Zimbabwe; copper in Zambia; and oil in Nigeria). Indeed Africa is experiencing a resource curse (Mtisi, 2005). This is further compounded by the rapid rate of uncontrolled urbanisation as people flock to urban areas in search of employment and other opportunities. Consequently, the formal urban economy has lost glamour in favour of the informal one as actors have taken advantage of its easy of entry (cf. Chirisa, 2007; 2009; Tibaijuka, 2005). With respect to Zimbabwe, despite efforts directed towards cleaning urban areas of its informal activities through Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, there is an

increase in the informal sector activities (ICG 2005). In recent times, the informal sector in Zimbabwe has worn a new face as the actors have designed new adaptative strategies to counteract restrictions and evictions and by-laws imposed on them. These strategies include nocturnal vending and 'fighting fire with fire' (fighting back). Clear from this adaptation by the informal players is that the sector cannot be eradicated in its entirety. Rather policy makers should find ways to embrace and incorporate it as it is the largest employer in Sub-Sahara African cities (AAPS 2012).

This paper seeks to describe and explain the novel and somewhat latent dimensions of informality, the extent of its change, and modes of operation that informality is shaping within the urban terrain of Harare. This shall be achieved through exploration of various shapes, tactics of resistance and actors methods of disguise use by informal sector operators. The paper thus ends by identifying possible ways planning can help and a design approach to deal with

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informality. Methodologically, an analysis of secondary data including published journals, books, newspapers and manuscripts was employed. This was augmented by a series of primary data collection inter alia observation, photographing, and unstructured interviews with informal actors.

## Background

Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa are buffeted by novel challenges on a day to day basis. These challenges are widely attributed to and aggravated by the ever-increasing growth without development commonly described as 'counter-urbanisation'(cf. Kessides, 2006). Local authorities in this region are thus in a fix. Rapid urbanisation in the region is a cause of concern; its shockwaves have a nesting effect (Chirisa 2007). Most of the countries experienced a long history of colonialism which was embedded in economic dualism divided along racial lines. While the areas occupied by the whites were vibrant with necessary infrastructure, those occupied by black Africans were organised on communal grounds. This created a huge gap between the rich and the poor.

Years after colonialism, there is still the perpetuation of the colonial legislation and in some cases even draconic restrictions. In recent times there has been an invasion and succession of segregation this time around not on racial grounds but on economic grounds with the black elite class grabbing the fortunes of economic 'investments' (Chung, 2008). Perhaps we should loosely say that what is happening at a city level is a microcosm of the macrocosm that is a replica of today's world system in which cities are enmeshed in a world system characterised by asymmetric flows of information and resources and 'unequal exchange' (Hornborg, 2003). This asymmetry ascends from the local to the global scale creating uncalled for poverty and inequality (Mtisi, 2005).

Zimbabwe, at 1980, inherited a dualistic economic development. In a spirited attempt to redress colonial imbalances and antecedents, the government embarked on a socialistic mode of development through a series of policies including Growth with Equity of 1981, Transitional Development Plans and the First Five Year National Development Plans (MacGarry 1993; Chimanikire and Masunungure, 2007). This resulted in the government plunging into a huge deficit by pumping money to finance infrastructural development in rural areas to offset unevenness. The government overstayed in a political honeymoon. Due to the widening debt, the government had no option but to seek assistance from

the international agencies. In light of this context, the government adopted a treacherous and widely condemned Economic Structural Adjustment Policies ESAP in 1991(Saunders 1996). This set of policies was undergirded by a set of conditions which the government was to adopt as an entry qualification to finance (MacGarry 1993). Some of these conditions include devaluation of currency, cutting public sector spending and promotion of export led growth. This has had negative impacts whose shockwaves are still felt even now. ESAP resulted in inter alia, widespread unemployment, decline in standards of living, increase in prices of basic commodities and massive school dropouts (Saunders 1996, Mc Garry 1993 Vambe 2008).This eroded the gains brought by the post independent government as the decade after independence was full of promises (Saunders 1996). How the nation's dreams have turned into a collective nightmare remains a mystery (Vambe 2008).

The government decided to relax some of the colonial dose by adjusting the RTCPA Use Groups Regulations through Statutory Instrument (SI) 216 of 1994 (Tibaijuka 2005; Vambe 2008). Such was a move, in letter and spirit, to incorporate the informal sector activities like flea-markets, stalls, shacks and home industries by special consent. However this relaxation of the colonial dose opened the flood gates of the informal sector activities in most urban areas. Thus the informal sector became a reserve army and a seedbed of the unemployed as noted by (Gibson and Kelley 1994; cf. Chirisa, 2007; 2009). About a decade later, the sector was labelled as 'trouble causing' to the economy (Vambe 2008). Thus, in May 2005, the same Zimbabwean government that enacted SI 216 of 1994 embarked on a cleanup campaign dubbed Operation Restore Order or Operation Murambatsvina (Vambe 2008,Tibaijuka 2005). In this campaign, the government bulldozed down all the formerly permitted structures for informal activities. This has attracted severe criticism, with critics like Chirisa (2007) lamenting the action by the government as "the hen that eats her own eggs". The campaign was marked by gross human rights abuse as evidence by the spectacle of excess noted by (Vambe 2008). It was indeed a spectacle of excess as people were used to destroy their own houses. The campaign also raised the eyebrows of the civic groups with some arguing against the nomenclature saying it does not suit Murambatsvina (the one who discards filth) but Murambavanhu (the one who rejects people) from a human rights perspective (Sachikonye 2006). Murambastvina razed all illegal structures, houses extensions and vending sites some of which were licensed (Tibaijuka, 2005). This has attracted severe criticism with critics believing that the campaign was a

strategy by the then ruling party to punish the so called opposition supporters who were believed to be residing in urban areas (ICG 2005, Tibaijuka 2005). However, the government undertook a fire brigade approach through Operation Garikayi by building substandard houses for people affected by Operation Murambatsvina. This was also subjected to criticism as the houses built are substandard, and want in services, forcing Sachikonye (2006) to lament it as Operation Tamburayi (starve).

In less than a decade, after Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, the informal sector activities have resurrected, re-emerged, and even become more resistant. They are taking new shapes in scope, dimension and variations. This leaves a clear handwriting on the wall that the bulldozer was only but a temporary solution as one cannot eradicate the informal sector (cf. AAPS, 2012). As Harare stands today, it is plagued by a number of informal sector activities ranging from street vending, illegal transport operators, money changers, informal settlements, urban agricultural activities, educational informality and small enterprises. This phenomenon is orchestrated by cohorts of people flocking to the city in search for employment and related opportunities (UNHABITAT 2003; Chirisa 2007). In the face of some spirited attempts to clear the informal activities in Harare through some periodic blitzes and crackdowns, the informal actors have designed some survivalist, adaptive measures to contest with the city and law enforcement agencies.

It is against this background that this paper seeks to unravel the nature, new dimensions, scope, shape, variations and forms of resistance by the informal actor in housing, transport, and vending, putting under the microscope age and gender aspects. It shall give an air of finality by finding ways planning can help to solve the problem.

### **Rationale of the study**

While the informal sector is as old as industrialisation (Losby et al 2002), it has not received a close scrutiny especially in the context of sustainable cities. The informal sector warrants constant theoretical interrogation (Chirisa 2007, 2008). Crackdowns, clean up campaigns and raids are the main tools employed by city managers in a bid to maintain orderly and aesthetic city environments (Brown 2006). Yet the poor have their survivalist strategies for resistance (Brown 2006, Kamete 2010). Planning is defeated.

Literature on the informal sector is plenteous yet real understanding of the sector remains in obscurity. The sector continues to wear a new face each time. The term informal sector is relative to what one perceives

as formal and in this respect; it is the non conventional way of conducting business (ILO, 1990). It comprises of some small business units involved in the production and distribution of goods and services for income generation to their participants (Kavuluvulu, 1990; ILO, 1990). In Kavuluvulu's (1990) terms, the informal sector is easy to identify but difficult to conceptualize. However, in its fuzziness, an attempt to define the sector has been made by Losby et al (2002) referring to it as a series of activities occurring outside the normal regulated economy and escape financial record keeping. In this respect, operating "outside the normal" presumes abnormality of the sector. Examples of activities in the sector include street vending, illegal tuck shops, money changing, urban agriculture and commercial sex work to name but these few. A number of terms have been labelled to the sector and are used interchangeably for example, the subterranean economy (Guttmann 1977), the underground economy (Houston 1987), the black economy (Dilnot and Morris 1981), the shadow economy (Cassel and Cichy 1986), the irregular economy (Ferman and Ferman 1973). Losby et al (2002) prefer to use the term informal economy than sector. The activities are outside the national records and the economy is characterised by easy of entry, self employment, flexible hours, low skills and simple activities, low specialisation, low capital, low income, uses indigenous resources, unregulated premises and transactions not included in national records (Losby 2002, Matsebula 1996). In this study informal sector is taken to mean economic livelihood activities that include street vending operation of unregulated tuck shops, hair salons, front and back yard workshops and shades, transport informality, to name but a few, especially as they have manifested themselves in Harare and Zimbabwean urban centres. The informal sector has a high potential to contribute to meaningful development hence the growing need to create and promote informal sector activities especially its importance in employment (AAPS 2012, Matsebula, 1996). It survives without much support of the government and at times during times of harsh and hostile environment or shocks induced by restricting laws and regulations.

The sector provides a big room for school dropouts, and school leavers (ibid). This view is supported by the Classical Theory of the Informal Sector as postulated by Gibson and Kelley (1994). It envisages that when individuals find no meaningful remunerative formal employment, they plunge into informal activities "as their sole means of reproducing themselves" (ibid: 85). In this model, it is assumed that there is full employment for social and biological reasons (Gibson and Kelley 1994:86) that is everyone in a society should be committed to some productive activity of

Politicisation of city scape can also be explained by the violent resistance to town planning by-laws that restrict vending. There have been running battles between vendors and the police (Box 1).

**Box 1: Police Vendors Clash**

Police and vendors fought running battles forcing shops in the First Street Mall and Nelson Mandela to close, the stone throwing vendors smashed windowpanes of police post. The police had visited the area following the assault of a member of force by the vendors. Police Chief Superintendent Oliver Mandipaka confirmed that there are some political activists masquerading as vendors or vendors masquerading as political activists who have become so confrontational each time the police want to enforce the law. *The police were armed with teargas, canisters and rifles while patrolling, violence erupted after vendors resisted arrest and pelted the police with stones.* Mr Mandipaka noted that some vendors were hiding behind politics to engage in illegal activities. He further on pointed out that residents should not fear the law enforcing agents, but they should respect what they stand for; confrontational cannot be tolerated because we want tranquillity to prevail. Thus direct confrontation with the police is gross illegality inviting heavy handedness.

Source The Herald January 12, 2012, page 1

When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. Thus the poor who innocently pursue livelihoods suffer a lot as some vendors are masquerading as politicians and politicians masquerading as vendors.

some sort (ibid). Thus the most basic feature of this Classical model is that it views the informal sector as the “reserve army of unemployment” (Gibson and Kelley, 1994:89).

There are two main dimensions of the informal sector, the micro-economic relations and the macro-economic relations (Matsebula, 1996). Micro-economic relations are a derivative of macro-economic relations; the sector exist because of some historical forces that have operated over a long period of time to produce a new economic situation referred to as a synthesis. This new situation thus comprises existence of the urban informal sector that has taken a particular nature (ibid). In this respect, after an analysing the history of the informal sector in Zimbabwe one remains with a true imprint of harsh colonial legislation (Brown 2006) that restricted the indigenous people to undertake their livelihoods within urban areas. The removal of such restrictions with the attainment of independence in 1980 and after through statutory Instrument 216 of 1994 has opened flood gates of informal activities in Harare (Tibaijuka 2005, Chirisa 2007). The macro-economic relations between the informal sector and the rest of the economy are important. The informal sector is just but one part of or component of the overall economy. Changes in the rest of the economy transmit themselves directly or indirectly through corresponding shockwaves. This resonates with the classical theory. Matsebula (1996) nevertheless identifies some linkages between the informal sector and the whole economy. As such three schools of thought emerge form these: the complementary, the exploitative and the autonomous (Matsebula 1996). According to the complementary view, informal sector

activities and the macro-economy have a symbiotic relationship wherein changes in one sector are beneficial to the other. The exploitative view argues that macro-economic relations are parasitic in nature with dominance of position by formal and dependency by the informal sector. The latter view is reinforced by the theory of underdevelopment (De Soto 1989) and unequal exchange of space and time (Hornborg (2003). Lastly, the autonomous view maintains that the informal sector is independent to the rest of the economy. This means that the sector is not unnecessarily harassed by the government (Matsebula 1990). However this last view tends to be fallacious when one refers to Harare. In the latter, there exist a tug of war between the city authorities and the informal actors (Box 1). Kamete (2010) notes that planning, at times, relies on violence in its mastery of space and as such it is the poor who receive the bitter end of the whip.

In other circles, the existence of the informal sector is linked with the level of development of the country (Losby 2002, de Soto 1989). In this regard, the informal sector is taken as a normal natural stage in a country's stage of development hence it is associated with developing nations. This view is somewhat ambiguous because it assumes a straight jacket approach to development. It is rather simplistic as it associates the sector only with developing countries, what about informal activities in developed countries.

Three perceptions, evolutionary, involutory and residuary explain the informal sector (Matsebula, 1996). The evolutionary approach maintains that the informal sector is a 'hot bed' for industrial expansion. It consists of embryonic business units that can grow

over time into large scale production units. It is envisioned that these units will metamorphose into formal entities with time. In keeping with this thinking Kavhuluvhulu (1990) states that informal activities evolve into full scale production units. The involutory approach views informal sector activities as too fragmented and independent to such an extent that growing into a large -scale entity is perceived as a nightmare. In Harare, street traders form a distinct market among themselves. This phenomenon typifies 'vendor apathy' characterised by the crowding effect on busy streets like Copacabana. On the other hand, the residuary approach asserts that the formal sector dominates the urban space and the informal sector becomes adaptive or responsive and conditioned by the fortunes of the formal sector (Matsebula 1990). Douglass North (1955)'s Export Base Theory explains this. The residuary approach argues that the informal sector thrives on 'leftovers' from the formal sector. Contrary to this Harare's informal sector has outgrown the formal sector making it the 'major employer' of the jobless class of people in the city. It is unfortunate that the sector still receives peripheral treatment in the city as noted in a statement by City of Harare Spokesperson's statement:

[Vending] was outlawed in the CBD, the operation will not countenance attempt to legalise it, Harare is not a city of vendors, people intending to buy fruits and vegetables should do so in supermarkets. We run a city economy; we cannot have a city of vendors"

From this statement it may be loosely concluded that informality in Harare is doomed.

Studies on Harare's informal activities have focused on the sector's resilience, gender and housing (Chirisa 2007, 2009 and 2011), He studied the colonially-rooted legislation which is repressive and has been blamed for stifling the poor's innovative styles of livelihoods-oriented activities (Chirisa, 2009). Moreover, Kamete (2008; 2010) has focused on youth resistance in the city. Youths resist the spatial order by being docile, fighting fire with fire and resistance at the margins. At the moment there is rampancy in nocturnal vending which has escaped Kamete (2010). Overall, these works have been shy to proffer a design solution to the informal sector.

Summarily, it must be underscored that colonial planning was rooted in the modernistic tradition which was concerned with conscious creation of physical space through the master planning approach (WHO 1999). This approach has since been criticised for its inherent ambiguities including lack of effectiveness, archaic, elitist, out-datedness and lack of public participation. The post-modernist approach has been defined by Knox and Marston (2004) as a way of seeing the world with much emphasis on openness in

social inquiry, artistic expression, and political empowerment. It is characterised by heteropianism as compared to utopianism that modernism purports. In this context there is need to reorient planning dealing away with the traditional approaches to a more proactive, flexible, indicative planning that is intersectoral and enhances the livelihoods of the poor (WHO 1999).

### **Novel variations in urban informal sector operations in harare**

A utilitarian perspective on the urban centres especially by the poor is inevitable. In Harare, there is a concentration of informal players in the CBD with about 90% of them being youth and women. It is not by choice that they are poor. To them the urban space is fraught with opportunities that they must grab. This places the urban area an arena for clashes and battles with 'law-enforcers' (Kamete 2010). Harare's urban space is rife with street trading, micro-entrepreneurism at the margins, the informal transport activities including the (mushikashika) type of transport , rank marshalling, housing informality, informal private colleges and urban agricultural activities. These are the weapons the poor have designed against the urban penalty (UNHABITAT, 2006-7). These activities are explained in the forthcoming paragraphs.

### **Street Trading**

Street invasion has become the order of the day in Harare. The Municipal Police and the ZRP, in the spirit of bringing order to the so called sunshine city, assay periodic blitz to the vendors. Fighting fire with fire is the common feature of the day (Kamete 2010). Vendors act according to the dictates of own conscience. Basically five groups of street users in Harare are noted: motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, the green-collar vendor and the white collar vendor. Green collar and white collar vendors are those who specialise in perishable vegetables and non consumables like pirated disks respectively. The two last groups are considered as 'illegitimate'. In this sense they do not have a legal stature as they are not recognised by urban by-laws. However, over the past five years or so the two groups have consolidated power within the urban space. The worst scenario about them is their crowding out of the pedestrians from pavements.

This can be explained by the vendor spatial confinement which can be explained from two angles. The first is the occupation of districts like the financial, upmarket, downtown districts that are objects of sensation and perception as noted by (Taylor 1999).

Picture 2a and b: vendors invading pavements at Westgate Complex



Source: *Fieldwork* (2012)

throats, in terms of control and management of the urban space. These vested interests range from the local authority, the politicians and informal actors. Planning in this respect is said to use power in its mastery of space (Brown 2006, Kamete 2010). However in Harare, the opposite tends to be true as political interests exude their self claimed aura of authority in the resistance and mastery of space to an extent of overpowering the local planning authorities. This can be explained by ferocious Chipangano group of Mbare suburb. Chipangano is a militia group aligned to Zanu PF and has been instrumental in violent clashes with the MDC T run Local authorities (The Standard, 29 January- 4 February 2012). An example is the recent blocking of a \$5 million Bill and Melinda Gates funded Housing project in Mbare and stopping of the proposed \$1million project for the construction of a filling station and a food court (The Standard, 29 January- February 4 2012). Chipangano's explanation was the need to have a 51% share in the former and in the latter project; they wanted to use the space for flea market stalls (ibid). In this regard Harare has become an arena of contest as these militia groups have assumed power to control the urban space.

### **Informality in the Transport Sub-sector**

Transport woes in today Harare range from congestion, pollution and shortages. This has opened the flood gates of the informal transport actors commonly known as 'mushikashika' which means an

aggressive approach to transport shortages characterised by hitch hiking any mode of transport. These modes include "pikidhas" pick ups, lorries and private cars. This resonates with the classical model of the informal sector which states that when the formal sector shrinks, the informal sector expands (Gibson and Kelley 1994). Commuters have developed incidental informal bus stops as exemplified by corner Samora Machel and Chinhoyi Street. Shortage of public transport is further on exacerbated by recent police blitzes on kombis giving room to 'vulture-like' transporters who hike fares as much as US \$1 and \$2 for long distance suburbs and towns like Chitungwiza and Norton. This is also explained by the weather conditions that day or also whether or not it is on the holidays.

Both the mushikashika type of transporters, formal and semi-formal transport operators have become inefficient in terms of travel time and routing. In the city there now exists the BMW "euphoria" wherein police with BMW cars have embarked on a beast-like nationwide crackdown marauding on all transport operators to enforce operational permits and other regulations. This has induced drastic change of roots as Kombi drivers run away from the so called BMW. Reckless driving is common. Kombi drivers change routes and make uncalled for u-turns. They also flash each other to detect of police presence along the routes, asking oncoming kombis "kurisei" (how is the road you are coming from). The u-turn approach is an abrupt change of direction characterised by over-speeding. Such reaction jeopardise passengers.

Rank marshalling is a common variant of transport informality. A number of youths have invaded most ranks claiming ownership. Places with such, in the CBD include Corner Mbuya Nehanda and Jason Moyo Street, Fourth Street and Copacabana. These rank marshals are responsible in creating an artificial shortage by forcing Kombis to charge high fares to maximise on their returns instead of the normal R5. They have been evicted from areas they were operating with the coming of the Easipark management deal between the City of Harare and the South African company Easihold. This deal has been subjected to a heated debate with arguments ranging from rationality and mere emotional outburst. Youths and indigenous people have argued against the tender procedure by the MDC T run City of Harare in giving a foreign company the parking management mandate at the expense of indigenous companies (CHRA 2012). The parking management deal stated in 2009 and is set to last for four years (The Zimbabwe Reporter 1 April 2012). It is only two years down the line that the deal is facing severe pressure from the Zanu Pf aligned group Upfumi Kuvadiki meaning (resources to the young). In a statement, Upfumi Kuvadiki spokesperson Alison Darikayi said “we will take over the parking bays, we will tell the city of Harare when we have done so...” (The Zimbabwean Reporter 1 April 2012) This clearly shows disempowerment of the Local Authority with youths invading parking bays arguing that a South African Company is milking our country's parking business (Ibid). These activities are supported by the ongoing Economic Empowerment Act spearheaded by the Zanu PF Youth indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Minister, Saviour Kasukuwere. More so Upfumi Kuvadiki's moves gain mileage from the support by the Zanu PF minister of Local Government Rural and Urban Development Dr Chombo who has sour relationships with the MDC T Harare City Councillors. This resembles politicisation of the management of urban areas rendering it an arena of contest as argued by (Brown 2006).

### **Theatrical Informality**

Informal actors in Harare have left no stone unturned in their quest for livelihoods within the urban terrain. Public open spaces have been subjected to invasion by the innovative unemployed youths and adults. Some perform different arts including song, dance, drama and Caricature displays. Informality in the art industry has been one major 'employer of people'.

With players running informal recording studios and indication of a leaking bucket within the art industry a phenomenon that has crippled the sector for long. Members of the apostolic sect would ecstatically sing songs attracting an audience who would in turn donate some money directly or buying their recorded discs.

### **Informality at the Margins**

We argue that spatially, informality is not only confined within the Central Business District. It manifests itself by bursting at the city's seams. Kamete (2010) referred to this phenomenon as resistance at the margins. It is a form of informal sector resistance to spatial order by changing the scope and operations including side road vending, maize cob roasting, and occupation of pavements for Suburban shopping centres like Westgate shopping centre (see Plates 2a and b).

One vendor at Westgate shopping centre had this to say:

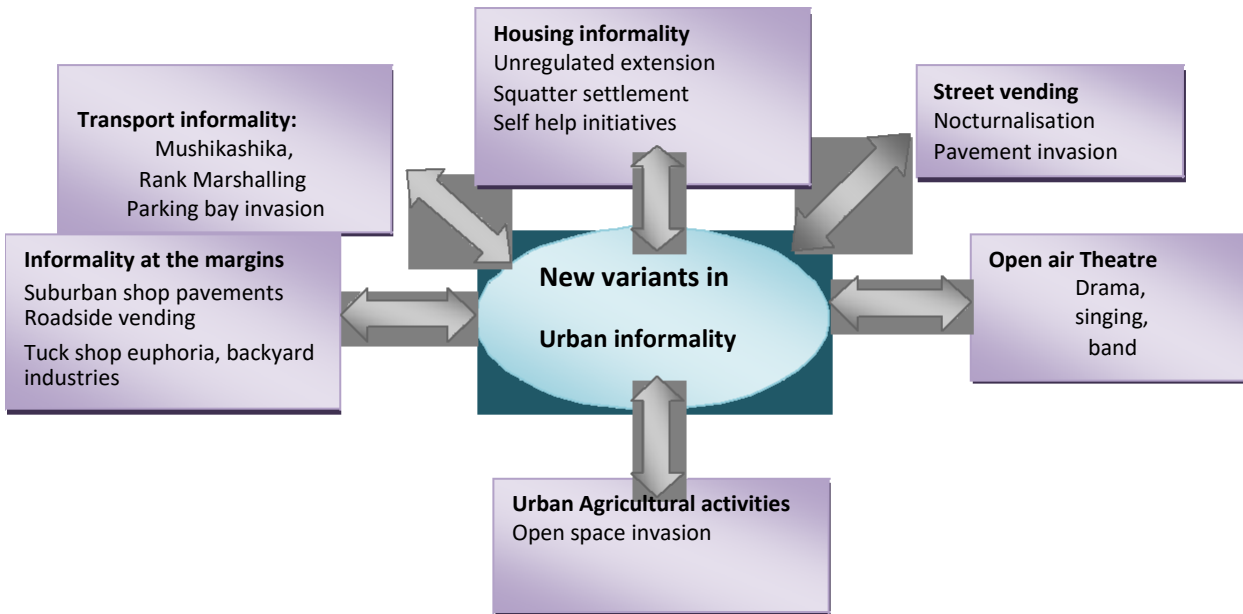
vhendarakaoma, kuti ribvepano vhenda rinotoda masoja chaiwo, nokuti mapurisa eKanzuru ne ZRP haanadhiri (a vendor is stubborn, for it to vacate here will need some soldiers as the Council and ZRP are of no effect).

It bears a clear imprint of some corrupt activities by the latter groups as they solicit bribe in their self enriching spree induced by lawlessness in Zimbabwe. The use of soldiers in dealing with urban challenges spells a fear paradigm that reigned during the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina (Chirisa 2007). It was a militaristic approach to clean urban areas of its filth (Tibaijuka 2005).

Furthermore, resistance at the margins can be understood with respect to ongoing “tuck shop euphoria” in high density residential areas like Dzivaresekwa, Kuwadzana and Glenview among other high density residential suburbs. These illegal structures including private colleges, hair salons, and backyard cottages were once destroyed during OM in 2005 but surprisingly, they are resurging in other dimensions. The dimensions that illegal structures are taking at the margins include use of less expensive materials like wood, asbestos, plastic and iron sheets in their construction. This wave has become fashionable to an extent that one can safely conclude that the visible hand has failed to provide adequate schools, employment and deal with the informal sector. Thus the bulldozer has proven not to be a wherewithal for the informal sector.

other players selling pirated discs. This bears a clear

**Figure 2: Variants of Informality in Harare: A Synopsis**



**Can planning help?**

As already noted urban informality has become a twenty 21st century urbanisation reality in most Sub-Saharan Africa. As such, policies should be directed as much as possible to embracing the phenomenon as cities have nowhere to run but to face the reality. The first stage and most important way that planning can abate the challenges associated with growing informal activities in cities is a paradigm shift of planning from its colonial origins to a more pragmatic home grown, inclusive urban design approach (AAPS 2012). Due to the nesting effect that urban challenges come (Chirisa 2007), a holistic approach to planning that integrates choice of every citizen is required. This can be achieved by:

- the enhancement of community participation in the making of decision at all stages
- encourage a sense of ownership, public awareness in the process on urban management
- coordination between national plans and local plans
- integration of urban and economic planning
- enshrine Agenda 21 in Urban Planning and Management

From a long term perspective, there are some policies that need to be adopted and adapted to ensure the overall sustainability of the urban fabric (AAPS 2012). Brown (2006) advocated for a rights based approach to urban management that meets the poor's

right to work, live, exist and survive within the contested spaces. This can be achieved by good governance which has been described by (ACPD 2006) as a source from which all rivers flows.

Design can serve as an effective, proactive wherewithal to current urban challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. This can include:

- Designating site for vending, urban agriculture under power lines, levying agricultural activities on land not ready for development.
- Incentivising the shuttle system or public transport
- Pedestrianisation of streets, designating other streets for vending.
- Mixed use development planning communities with a whole range of opportunities in housing, employment and ancillary facilities within neighbourhoods.
- Densifying development like the condominium housing schemes in Ethiopia.

**CONCLUSION**

The world is fast urbanising as such, sub-Saharan cities will continue to face novel challenges in the planning and management of urban life. This has altered the poor's behaviour and conduct of their livelihoods.



Despite some myopic controversial operations against informality, the bulldozer has proven not to be an effective wherewithal to informality and associated challenges. It has emerged that the urban informal sector comprises multifarious activities and actors in it have a tool kit of strategies they employ to defend and be resilient in their livelihoods. Since urban challenges are complex, with a nesting effect a rights based approach, participation of the marginalised groups at all stages of planning is required in conjunction with appropriate design.

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