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Fencing Harare: Of Complex Dynamics Surrounding the Peri-urbanisation Process in Zimbabwe

RINDAI MADYA¹

Abstract

Peri-urbanisation has become a global phenomenon that manifests more in the developing world. It is defined as a process where peri-urban areas found on the outskirts of cities become more urban, be it in economic, physical or social terms. In middle-income countries, peri-urbanisation has been often stimulated by foreign investment, industrial developments and government services, but in poor countries, it has been pushed by the outward expansion of residential areas with inadequate services. The article examines trends and transformations taking place in the peri-urban areas of Harare City. It establishes that the Harare peri-urban interface is undergoing tremendous environmental, social and economic transformations. There are great changes in land-use, land value, settlement density and population growth. Local authorities have developed a tendency of allowing both illegal and legal developments to take place near Harare's fringes. This has led to unregulated peri-urban land development near Harare's boundary as its neighbours are fencing in the capital city of Zimbabwe, causing urban structures to expand horizontally around the city's boundary. The emerging peri-urban development does not respect planning norms and principles that are very crucial in urban land development. These peri-urban developments have configured Harare's peri-urban landscape.

Keywords:, land-use, rural-urban fringe, policy, management

INTRODUCTION

Rapid and unguided urbanisation causes the growth of the peri-urban environment and these environments the world over are undergoing rapid changes in their land-uses with significant development implications (Kimengsi *et al.*, 2017). Peri-urbanisation has become a

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global phenomenon that manifests more in the developing world. Peri-urbanisation is defined as a process where rural areas found on the outskirts of cities become more urban be it in economic, physical or social terms. In middle-income countries, peri-urbanisation has been often stimulated by foreign investment, industrial developments and government services but in poor countries, it has been pushed by the outward expansion of residential areas with inadequate services. This unguided nature and rapid peri-urbanisation of cities in developing countries are increasingly raising concern over the sustainability of these cities (Chirisa *et al.*, 2016; Lupala, 2016; Ingwani, 2019). In the developed world, the peri-urban is an area of social and economic change and spatial restructuring, while in most developing countries, it often represents a zone of chaotic urbanisation, leading to sprawl. Urban fringe dynamics are used to elucidate the changes taking place at urban boundaries and are characterised by a mixture of urban and rural characteristics. In developing countries, they are normally depicted by infrastructure backlogs and rapid environmental degradation. (Kimengsi *et al.*, 2017). Chirisa *et al.* (2016) argue that a peri-urban area is a zone of contestation on the conflicting values and interests of different population groups and institutions that have a stake in the area. Harare has faced rapid peri-urbanisation as a result of its nearby authorities who have allowed urban developments to take place around the City's boundary (*ibid.*). This contribution examines the emerging complex dynamic changes that are taking place in Harare's peri-urban and analyses its key drivers and impacts on the City and its environment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Peri-urban is a land-use dynamic, functioning as a divide between city and countryside. Thus it refers to the urban fringes and the geographic edges of cities. Peri-urban is the dynamic, diverse and disordered, space-intensive and non-contiguous transitional zone between rural and urban (Kimengsi *et al.*, 2017). Lupala (2016) defined peri-urbanisation as the process within the phenomenon of urban sprawl that has spatial costs of threatened sustainable use of space. It is the expansion of the urban area into its peri-urban, causing huge changes in landuse patterns on the urban fringes (*ibid.*). Peri-urbanisation is characterised by a systematic shift from agricultural to residential, commercial and other land-uses. So, it

means changing the rural land-use to urban land-use as the rural environment is transformed and adjusted into urban life. Thus, the continued horizontal expansion of cities takes place at the expense of rich agricultural hinterlands and the depletion of natural resources that surround the urban areas. As the urban areas expand outwards, they do so by depleting rural resources. This type of urbanisation ends with a conflict between natural resource conservation initiatives and human activities (Lupala, 2016; Kimengsi *et al.*, 2017).

Peri-urban zones have become conflict regions where urban and rural functions compete for land and other resources. Resources in peri-urban areas are relatively cheaper and have less stringent development conditions as compared to those in inner cities. Peri-urban areas have to attract benefits that pull more people, especially the poor to the urban fringes. In developing countries, peri-urban is a zone of poverty and displacement. Lupala (2016) highlights that urban fringes have livelihood opportunities that allow the settling population to exploit adjacent resources such as forest products, minerals and water. They, therefore, pose a challenge on how to balance planning for urban expansion and resource conservation. This is so because patterns of peri-urban growth rarely follow the laid down land-use regulations and this has led in some cases the development of slums in the urban fringes (Kimengsi *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, peri-urbanisation is a product of rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation where planning standards and land-use guidance systems are virtually non-existent. Dynamism in peri-urban zones is depicted by changing local economic, social and political characteristics that include rising land values, mixed land-uses and population growth (*ibid.*). Pradato *et al.* (2020) hint that the dynamic of urban growth makes a continuous transformation in the peri-urban areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A consequence of rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation is the growth of the peri-urban environment. Peri-urban zones the world over are undergoing rapid changes in their land-use, with significant development implications. The dynamic land-use changes in peri-urban zones in the developed world are often characterised by planned and unplanned developments. The emergence of peri-urban development has become a global phenomenal challenge of spatial planning (Hartmann and Dannenberg, 2018). Urban sprawl has

increasingly become a global common phenomenon. Once associated with the developed countries of North America and Australia, it is now occurring in cities all over the world. This has contributed to rapid peri-urbanisation in most countries worldwide (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Urbanisation patterns in Europe since the 1950s have resulted in a swath of low-density discontinuous development, commonly called peri-urban areas. These zones are characterised by a mixed rural-urban character, are highly dynamic and are expected to continue growing rapidly in the next decades. In Europe, peri-urbanisation is one of the greatest pervasive processes of land-use change, with strong impacts on both the environment and quality of life (Nilsson *et al.*, 2013; Shaw *et al.*, 2020). Peri-urban areas are growing rapidly across Europe and are expanding due to a combination of population growth and the outward spread of urban activities. The regions with the largest share of peri-urban land-use and generally the highest rates of peri-urban growth include London, Munich, Paris and Hamburg. The expansion of peri-urban areas in Europe is a manifestation of a multifaceted web of social, economic and technological changes. Peri-urbanisation in European countries reflects the drive towards lower density, lower costs locations and the search for a quality environment (Piorr *et al.*, 2010).

European peri-urban zones are generally characterised by the rapid economic change that results from relocation of firms and related jobs from urban centres. Most importantly, peri-urban regions are becoming loci for metropolitan functions including knowledge-intensive industrial and advanced service sector activities. In Europe, the peri-urban is seen as a place to make higher returns at lower risk than urban areas by many actors such as landowners, developers, investors and entrepreneurs (Piorr *et al.*, 2010) Peri-urban zones in many Eastern European cities have seen massive in-migration of people and functions. The peri-urban areas have become a major destination for most young and well-to-do residents as well as a target for investments in housing and infrastructure. The development of these suburbs is dominated by private stakeholders that have led to uneven and unregulated development resulting in societal inequalities. (Brade and Smigiel, 2012)

Asian capitals have been expanding rapidly, thereby introducing urban features on city boundaries. This has led to important changes in the socio-economic and socio-spatial characteristics in the metropolitan fringes. In India and the developing world, the situation is rather different from the peri-urban developments in the developed world. Far from housing the elite, the peri-urban zones in developing countries often function as a fragmented zone of poverty, dumping grounds for displaced slum-dwellers or affordable ports of entry for poor rural migrants. The dynamic periphery of Delhi shows that rich and poor settlers are spatially separated and this has led to a pattern of segregation in India's major metropolitan cities as the poor are pushed to the fringes. Unfortunately, India's urban poor have been dumped on the periphery, without any provision of basic urban amenities. The urban poor who migrated to the fringes of Delhi, did not get basic sanitary and environmental provisions. However, in other peri-urban zones, infrastructure is available, though sometimes privatised (Dupont, 2005).

India faces rapid peri-urbanisation and great challenges to manage these sprawling, spatially fragmented and socially uneven developments on urban boundaries. In India, natural population increase, economic growth and rural-to-urban migration result in rapid urbanisation and a dynamic change of peri-urban zones. Its peri-urban zones consist of formal and informal, planned and unplanned and legal and illegal developments. The planned development is reserved mostly for a minority, while most of India's new urban and peri-urban residents depend on informal developments that are regularly sub-standard settlements. The City of Faridabad in India has faced rapid peri-urban growth and has experienced scattered urban development and rapid agricultural land loss. Peri-urban areas in Faridabad are characterised by a huge change in land-uses from rural to urban (Wolff, 2021).

Peri-urban zones in developing countries have been conceptualised as highly dynamic sites branded by a mixture of socioeconomic structures, land-uses and functions. In many African cities, the peri-urban area is on demand for residential purposes, as well as for informal trade activities. Considering this, the achievement of sustainable development in these areas remains complex due to overwhelming urbanisation and city sprawl (Nuhu, 2019).

Urbanisation in Africa has generally been more rapid and chaotic than in Europe with challenges of regulation, land administration and infrastructural development. Urban growth that spreads into peri-urban areas is a crucial driver of unsustainable development and in Sub-Saharan Africa, local governments face difficulties in monitoring and addressing urban expansion. Highly dynamic peri-urban areas, particularly in the Global South, face many problems that include land degradation and lack of infrastructure and ownership conflicts (Mandere *et al.*, 2010; Wolff *et al.*, 2021). Peri-urban areas in Africa are spurned as places of possible disaster outbreaks in terms of disease epidemics and other social hazards due to the general lack of planning and institutional integration which commonly translates into illegal development, land fragmentation and social exclusion (Chirisa *et al.*, 2016).

The process of peri-urbanisation in Africa, is informal and driven by the efforts of the poor to secure cheap land in peri-urban land. Peri-urban developments on the continent are spreading out at an alarming pace and have proved difficult to manage. It has led to the emergence of informal settlements which current planning and regulatory frameworks are failing to address effectively. These peri-urban settlements are often disconnected from the main urban fabric and lack transport infrastructure. The failure to effectively plan and manage the expansion of urban areas has led to grave resilience challenges that include inadequate amenities, housing affordability, traffic congestion and environmental degradation (UN-Habitat, 2020).

In Tanzania, peri-urbanisation in large urban centres, including Dar es Salaam, is contributing significantly to the disappearance of nearby forests, resulting in the diminishing of the ecosystem. Peri-urban land governance in Tanzania is shaped by different actors originating from their authority, power and interest that create a complex relationship that affects the land governance process. Weak urban land governance has negative impacts on cities' growth as it leads to encroachment on public spaces, insecure land tenure and violation of local community land rights (Lupala, 2016; Nunu, 2019). In many African cities, weak urban land governance drives the urban poor and less privileged to live under the constant threat of eviction. Inhabitants in these peri-urban zones experience gender inequality

and have a poor economic status that hinders both women and the poor from accessing urban land (Lupala, 2016).

Peri-urban areas in Ethiopia are characterised by unauthorised land transactions dominated by conflicts related to access and control of the land. Both informal and formal developments are found in Ethiopian peri-urban areas. Most peri-urban informal settlements around Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Bahir Dar and Assosa were built without urban utilities and there are conflicts between urban administrators and illegal settlers. Both the elite and the poor actively took part in the informal land transactions, albeit for different reasons. The elite are after large peri-urban plots, while the poor need only affordable shelter in the peri-urban areas. Most importantly, the poor occupy the largest portion of the Ethiopian peri-urban zone and they built substandard houses with insufficient social services and infrastructure. The ever increasing demand for peri-urban land in the country has made the value of land increase and this has attracted multifaceted actors on the peri-urban land market. Unfortunately, these different and many actors have intensified land-use disputes between different institutions and actors (Tesfaunegn, 2017).

RESULTS

Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, has faced rapid peri-urbanisation, resulting in massive informal and formal developments around the city's boundary. Harare is experiencing immense uncontrolled peri-urbanisation and the trend characterises what is taking place in many other African cities. Peri-urbanisation is an unavoidable reality in Africa (Chirisa, 2013). The rapid sprawl of Harare in recent decades has led to the "metropolitanisation" of the capital city, a development that is threatening the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of the region. The metropolitan area of Harare is expanding into nearby provinces such as Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Mashonaland West. This has led Greater Harare to sprawl into adjoining commercial farms and outlying communal land areas (Chirisa *et al.*, 2016).

Harare has been sprawling on its own although local authorities have contributed to the rapid peri-urban disaster by allowing both formal and informal developments close to the Harare boundary. For

instance, Mugumbate and Nyoni (2016) observed that Zvimba rural has urban suburbs cutting edges with Harare's boundary and these include developments in Mt Hampden, Sandton, Whitecliff and Rydale Ridge. Harare is surrounded by both formal and informal peri-urban settlements and these include Ruwa, Epworth, Goromonzi and Zvimba. Chirisa (2013) highlights that Ruwa and Epworth are located some 23 and nine kilometres, respectively, from the city centre of Harare. Ruwa is an 'elitist' settlement established as a growth point and its development has been controlled by town planning standards while Epworth evolved organically, hence an informal settlement (*ibid.*).

Most peri-urban areas around Harare's boundary are neglected settlement spaces where inhabitants improvise to access urban services. The elite allocate undeveloped land to the unsuspecting poor homeless citizens under their political banner. Unfortunately, these politicians are good only at parcelling out undeveloped land and leave the peri-urban residents in a state of desperation where they are promised services that are never delivered. These marginalised peri-urban settlers are left without basic amenities, leading to socio-spatial and economic segregation, contrary to the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda (Matamanda, 2020).

Domboshava is a peri-urban landscape situated 20 kilometres northeast of Harare in the Goromonzi Rural District, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. Domboshava is rapidly expanding horizontally towards Harare's boundary and is accruing more urban populations as a result of incessant land transactions between residents of local tribal descent and migrants. This has led to the alteration of settlement patterns and settlement density due to an increased number of migrants settling in this communal area. Domboshava's peri-urban landscape has faced both formal and informal, legal and illegal developments. Unfortunately, the Domboshava peri-urban is characterised by illegal parceling out of land, creating an informal settlement on Harare's fringes. The land-use in Domboshava has changed from that of a typical rural settlement (where homesteads are scattered) to more closely settled homesteads (that are overcrowded and messy). The settlement is now far from being rural as it comprises both modern and traditional

houses. There is a lot of land degradation owing to the extraction of sand and quarry for construction purposes. Wetlands, grazing areas, forests, arable land and watersheds have been turned into residential spaces (Ingwani, 2019).

The Zvimba Rural District Council (RDC) boundary starts on the western fringes of Harare and the council now has urban suburbs cutting edges with Harare's boundary. The RDC is offering residential stands in its Sandton Park suburb near Nyabira, as well as plots in the Rainham area. There is a great deal of urban development on Harare's fringes, including the new parliament building that is located in Mt Hampden. Chirisa *et al.* (2014) highlights that Whitecliffe is one of the peri-urban development that is located on the boundary of Harare and Zvimba. Whitecliffe is an informal settlement that exhibits apparent housing developmental chaos and it houses Operation Garikayi/Hhalani Kuhle houses. The Operation Garikai/Hlalani houses were built by the government without water, sewer and related utilities in place (*ibid.*). The reality of the peri-urban area is a quagmire of risks as the houses were built without basic amenities and the land has not been formally acquired. This has made the Whitecliff residents build temporary structures as they fear eviction and demolition. There is no security of tenure and the residents live in fear (*ibid.*).

In Zimbabwe, residential development in the peri-urban zones creates shifts in livelihood strategies for local families that depend on peasant farming. The established livelihood in peri-urban areas is under siege and no longer holds. This held water in Harare's peri-urban where a vast amount of arable land has been lost to urban development. Inhabitants of the peri-urban landscape have developed survival strategies for basic existence (Ingwani, 2019). Land transactions and informal activities are some of the vital livelihood strategies that are very common in Harare peri-urban areas. The proximity of peri-urban areas to the City of Harare means that peri-urban inhabitants can easily tap into urban services offered by the city (Chirisa *et al.*, 2016). This is placing a lot of pressure on service providers. Loss of land for agriculture promotes street vending and most of these Harare peri-urban residents flood the Harare Central Business Districts (CBD) with illegal for vending. Illegal vendors come as far as Domboshava and Zvimba to sell their wares in

Harare where demand is high. Although they are not under the administration of the City of Harare, they want the city fathers to provide them with urban services. Harare is under pressure of supporting many dependants due to negligence by their respective local authorities. Most importantly, the issue of nearby local authorities who are allowing development near Harare's boundary, is a calculative move to tap benefits from Harare.

The Harare peri-urban landscape is surviving without proper basic amenities such as water and sewer. Chirisa *et al.* (2016) postulate that to cope, some peri-urban residents have to sink boreholes, while others dig wells on their homesteads to draw water for domestic use. Some have raised water tanks to allow water to flow into their houses using gravity, while others have windmills for pumping groundwater. Most residents use Blair toilets and, unfortunately, these toilets are positioned too close to their wells. There is a lack of adequate social services as argued by Chirisa *et al.* (2014; 2016) who lamented that the lack of inadequate education and health facilities in peri-urban areas poses a problem for the residents. Whitecliffe has one government primary school and a secondary school to service the settlement. This has promoted the sprouting of unregistered schools that lack vital ancillary services such as children's playgrounds. The only shops in Whitecliffe are found at Whitehouse and residents travel to Harare for goods they cannot get at Whitehouse (*ibid.*). Access to agricultural land is now limited as Harare's peri-urban areas have been lost to urban development and this has led to vast environmental challenges. Large-scale agriculture has vanished and substituted by small-scale cultivation. Subsistence agriculture has replaced commercial agriculture, causing food insecurity in these peri-urban zones (Ingwani, 2019). Wolff *et al.* (2021) has emphasized that the limited availability of agricultural space in peri-urban zones is critical considering its function as a food production area.

DISCUSSION

Many low-income and poor households are failing to afford the more expensive life in the City of Harare, hence are forced to relocate to peri-urban areas where housing provision is either free or relatively cheap. Chirisa (2013) has lamented that some of the migrants who come to stay in Epworth are from Harare. Therefore, the expensive life in Harare and the lack of affordable housing are pushing people

from Harare to search for ‘greener pastures’ in Harare’s peri-urban landscape. Most peri-urban zones lack sufficient urban amenities except for cheap land. These inhabitants will always come to Harare to enjoy other urban services. Hence, as long as peri-urbanisation on Harare’s fringes continues to rise, the Harare City Council will always be under pressure from peri-urban inhabitants (*ibid.*).

Peri-urban areas of Zimbabwe are experiencing rapid population growth as a result of circular migration, from the urban areas as well as within the peri-urban zone. Three types of households are common in these peri-urban areas and these are the indigenes, migrants and migrant lodgers. Livelihoods in these peri-urban zones are also shifting away from pure agriculture to other survival strategies such as informal trading. Many Harare peri-urban residents work and trade in Harare, while they live in nearby peri-urban areas. Harare is playing a significant role in the rural-urban linkages in terms of provision of markets for agricultural products such as tomatoes and vegetables, and other produce. There is a lot of movement of peri-urban residents to Harare as they straddle the rural-urban divide to access other services such as health, banking and retail that are normally absent in their communities (Ingwani, 2019).

There is no enforcement of zoning and building standards on most parts of Harare’s city edge resulting in the contest of informal urbanisation in these peri-urban areas. Study results show that rapid peri-urbanisation on Harare’s boundary is driving urban expansion with unregulated development, leading to challenges in regulation, control and monitoring of developments (Chirisa, 2010). Chirisa *et al.* (2014; 2016) lamented that the Magada slum, a peri-urban settlement in Epworth, is an assemblage with poor urban amenities and the urban designs in the area do not respect any planning standards and regulations. Access to roads and public transport is limited, not only by availability but also by quality (*ibid.*). Most Harare’s peri-urban settlements are precarious in the sphere of environmental health as they are built without essential infrastructure, specifically water and sanitation (Chirisa *et al.*, 2016). A major worry of squatters in the Harare peri-urban area is tenure insecurity which makes them reluctant to invest in the improvement of their dwellings (Chavhunduka, 2018) as they fear eviction.

The location of the new parliament building by the Government of Zimbabwe in Zvimba RDC is at the edge of the Harare boundary (Matabvu, 2016). The central government has contributed to the fencing in Harare and the parliament is speculated to attract more urban developments around Harare's boundary. Like any other peri-urban zone, the land close to the new parliament building has increased in its value. This is in line with existing literature as noted by Ingwani (2019) who observed that the land market located in the immediate surroundings of the Harare boundary has become more lucrative for investors, land barons and developers as a hub of development.

The urban poor who settle in Harare's urban fringe are encroaching illegally on wasteland and nearby farms where policing is minimal and local authorities are less vigilant. However, most residents occupying land in Harare's peri-urban zones, have weak tenure status and thus are not secure in their tenure as they depend on political patronage and bribery to relevant officials. Unfortunately, their land ownership often remains unclear and most residents have become illegal settlers. The peri-urban landscape near the Harare boundary is characterised by conflicts and a high level of corruption as land can be sold more than once to multiple owners leading to double allocations and resulting in shifting property boundaries and conflicts of ownership. The scale and magnitude of land corruption are high in Harare peri-urban as organised criminal syndicates have created and promoted a plethora of challenges in peri-urban land governance. There are many illegal acquisition, change of land-use and allocation of peri-urban land without following procedures as laid down in the governing Zimbabwean legislation (Matamanda, 2020; Ingwani, 2019; Chavhunduka, 2018).

Zimbabweans desire to own property rather than rent, leading to the demand for urban land rising. Lodging and renting in Zimbabwe is portrayed as a picture that one is lacking in innovativeness to remove oneself from being homeless and poor. There is a societal status that comes from being a homeowner in urban Zimbabwe, hence everyone strives to own a house at all costs. However not all people can afford to buy land in Harare, the poor cannot afford the prevailing market prices, hence are forced to look for alternative land in the peri-urban zones (Chirisa and Mutsindikwa, 2012). This has unfortunately led to

the sprouting of informal peri-urban housing developments on Harare's boundaries. This is in line with existing literature as argued by Wolff *et al.* (2021) who laments that the main reason for rapid peri-urbanisation is that urban dwellers move to more remote peri-urban areas because of cheaper land prices and desire to own property instead of renting.

Aesthetic value has been disregarded. Instead, the peri-urban zone is now consists of a mixture of modern and old traditional rural houses. There is no uniformity of design as residents can do whatever they afford. Peri-urban migrants who buy large residential spaces, construct up-market houses while dwelling units for tribal members have a traditional outlook and are often dilapidated. This, unfortunately, demarcates the rich and the poor inhabitants, thereby widening the gap between the elite and the poor. To cope with these inequalities, some tribal inhabitants invest in building modern houses as a way of improving their social conditions thereby disrupting distortions and class distinctions that emanate from mixed settlements (Ingwani, 2019).

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Harare's peri-urban area is largely growing unmonitored and without adequate urban planning. The situation has been worsened by neighbouring local authorities who are allowing urban development to take place very close to Harare's boundary. The Harare peri-urban zone requires attention and Harare City fathers are under enormous pressure. Both planned and unplanned urban developments have depleted agricultural land and replaced it with massive residential developments. The peri-urban land is under exploitation by land barons, private developers, politicians and the elites. These actors are driven by self-interest and political expediency at the expense of peri-urban dwellers. The study recommends sustainable development of the Harare peri-urban area to limit transformation of open spaces. There is need for innovative integrated planning to address multi-functionality in the peri-urban zone and to make Harare peri-urban inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable. It is, therefore, imperative for policy-makers to promote environmental sustainability in all peri-urban developments and ensure adequate amenities in these environments.

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