Challenges in Urban Development Control and Housing Provision: A Case of Epworth, Chitungwiza and Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This paper explains the development control challenges related to housing development experienced by selected urban local authorities in Zimbabwe. The housing market demand has been soaring over the decade in the cities and towns and the government capacity to provide housing has dwindled rendering the provision of housing to housing cooperatives. Urban local authorities in the country, including Harare has a number of housing cooperatives created by low-income home-seekers. This development has led to mixed results some genuinely providing low-cost housing to the communities while other cooperatives leadership duped home seekers to purchase land on undesignated areas such as wetlands. Purposive sampling was used in areas where development control challenges are experienced. A sample size of 15 informants was selected from the various stakeholders. The interview guide and observation were used as instruments. It was established that urban local authorities are facing development control challenges in the urban housing provision as there is a mismatch between the demand for housing and their provision. Stakeholder engagement among the various stakeholders is recommended. Policy review in the incorporation of informal urban settlements into the mainstream urban planning through effective stakeholder participation within urban councils is recommended.

Keywords: Development control, Informal settlements, Local authority

Introduction

This paper explains and attempts to offer suggestions to addressing development control challenges related to housing development experienced by selected urban local authorities in Zimbabwe including Epworth, Chitungwiza and Harare. Urban local governments have a responsibility of ensuring development control within their areas of jurisdiction as enshrined in the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15. Section 199 of the Urban Councils Act outlines that "subject to this section, a council shall have a duty to do all things necessary to ensure that the conditions of the establishment of any township within the council area and the conditions of title to any land in the council area are properly observed and, without derogation from the generality of the foregoing may, for such purposes, inter alia (a) without compensation, cause any building wilfully erected in contravention of any such condition to be demolished and recover from any person responsible for the contravention the expenses incurred by the council in connection with such demolition;(b) prohibit the use of any building or land which contravenes any such among other provisions". Currently urban local governments are charged with ensuring that they control development within their jurisdictional areas particularly on the built environment or land development thereto. Urban local authorities that have faced development control challenges in Zimbabwe include Epworth, Chitungwiza and Ruwa. In this case Chirisa (2011) in the Epworth case argues that since the late1970s it has attracted a large number of poor homeless people. Numbers have grown from about 20 000 people in 1980 to 123 250 by 2002 and presently the local board has lost count, but rough estimates put the population at around 500 000.

This development has resulted in the growing numbers of informal settlements rendering the development control thrust of subnational governments somewhat difficult to manage.

Development control seems to have been overtaken by the housing developments within their localities. The estimated number of informal settlements in Epworth in 2010 was about 30000 families are staying in informal settlements (Ibid p17). In the Harare Sithole and Goredema (2013) on the sprouting of undesignated settlements on wetlands argued that numerous wetlands that can be identified in and around Harare have since been converted into stands, most notable being the Monavale wetland where houses now stand, the Belvedere wetland by the National Sports Stadium where construction of a multi-purpose centre (hotel and wholesale) was recently completed, while a school was built on the Ashdown Park wetlands among other wetlands from the above discussion. Development control has emerged as a topical and critical issue vis-a-vis the current urban housing delivery system as there is a growing mismatch between the demand for housing and their provision by the various urban local authorities including Harare, Epworth and Chitungwiza. These challenges have hindered urban planning procedures and processes thereby making council operations challenging or virtually impossible. An understanding of the anatomy of the challenges and solutions to the identified challenges is critical in ensuring a smooth and efficient housing service delivery system.

This paper is organised under the following sections background and context of the study, literature review, study methods, results and discussion as well as conclusions.

Background and Context of the Study

The occupation of undesignated land for housing by some individuals and housing cooperatives in Harare, Epworth and Chitungwiza has led to demolitions of properties by urban local governments and central government in order to "restore order" (hereinafter referring to development control and control of the built and non-built environment). This has always been the prerogative of urban local governments as enshrined in Section 199 of the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15. The Act compels urban local governments to control township developments within their localities. When demolishing illegal structures, local authorities will be exercising their development control and land stewardship function as the houses will have been allegedly built on undesignated places. The restoration of order is meant to ensure regulation and orderly implementation of plans within the various areas. In a survey conducted by Sithole and Choguya

(2013) they argued and concluded that, despite environmental policies and laws for the protection of the wetlands, Harare City Council continues to allow urban development to encroach on wetlands because local government legislations out muscle the Environmental Management Act Chapter 20:27. However the above happens whilst those responsible for the protection of wetlands will be pointing fingers at each other instead of coming up with a lasting solution to this predicament. This situation has culminated in policy implementation discord between the various government agencies in this case Harare City Council and the Environmental Management Agency. Similarly, Mutembedzi (2012) in the Kadoma City Council case noted that low cost housing is no longer the first priority in allocating housing land in Kadoma resulting in overcrowding and the use of informal land access methods as alternatives. This development concurs with studies by Chirisa (2013) on housing and informal settlements that the issues of informal settlements and informal access to land seem to be a countrywide development that is occurring in major urban cities in Zimbabwe.

Because of the demolitions, the inhabitants and their household property are left in the open as Section 199 of the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) compels councils "to take appropriate action including demolition of properties built on undesignated land and leaving household properties in the open resulting in them being damaged and some housing cooperative management not honouring their obligations of providing authentic housing stands on designated land for housing". In this vein, government implements its development control authority on any development as prescribed in the enabling legislations such as the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 while on the other hand property rights as prescribed in terms of Section 71(1-3) of the 2013 Zimbabwean Constitution which states that any person has a right to property in whatsoever form subject to section 72 of the same are ignored. However, Mutembedzi (2012) further acknowledges that issues of land and the role government plays in allocating, acquiring or permitting land to be developed are very complex. In this scenario both the local authorities (LAs) and the government play important roles in managing land to meet the different demands on land in the cities.

The demand for low-income housing has been soaring over the decade in the cities and towns and the government capacity to provide housing has dwindled rendering the provision of housing to housing cooperatives (Mubvami and Musandu-Nyamayaro, 2004). Urban local authorities in the country, including Epworth, Chitungwiza and Harare house a number of housing cooperatives created by low-income home-seekers. This development has led to mixed results some genuinely providing low-cost housing to the communities on designated land while other cooperatives' leadership duped home seekers to purchase land on undesignated areas such as wetlands. In concurrence with the above statement, Chirisa, Gaza and Bandauko (2014) have noted that sometimes, politicians lead the homeless into acquiring unapproved pieces of land for occupation. When laws are subsequently enforced, the people are found wanting. This happened before Operation Murambatsvina in 2005. The evocation of the law resulted in houses being destroyed completely, with no compensation at all. The prevalence of political expedience by some politicians over purely administrative decisions has resulted in ordinary citizens bearing the brunt of development control laws and processes which at times result in the complete demolition of the properties being occupied by people in undesignated places. Mubvami and Nyamayaro-Musandu (2004) argue that there is a strong feeling among housing practitioners in Zimbabwe that the current statutory framework for land acquisition for urban development is inadequate and poses a serious constraint to plot delivery hence the prevalence of informal settlements. The occupation of undesignated land for housing by some housing cooperatives have led to demolitions of properties by urban local governments and central government authorities in order to "restore order" within the area exercising their development control and land stewardship function as the houses are allegedly built on undesignated places. Needless to note that the purpose of this paper is to explain development control challenges related to housing provision and in the process proffer solutions to the development control challenges in the selected urban areas in Zimbabwe.

Literature Review

In this section key concepts underpinning this study are articulated. The rationale of this section is to critically appraise the various key issues underpinning the study and gather more information on the subject. These key issues unpacked in this section include housing issues informal settlements, development control, mandates of local authorities and issues related to place stewardship. There is direct interconnectedness between these various components of the study considering that the issues of housing form the bedrock of the study whilst taking cognisance of the fact that there is an assessment of development control in the three areas of study namely Epworth, Ruwa and Harare. Subnational governments have a statutory mandate enshrined in the Urban Councils Act and the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act to ensure development control within their localities while place stewardship has been a complex issue which needs further insights to address the issue of land custodianship. In this regard these concepts are further explored in the forthcoming paragraphs. Place Stewardship and the Mandates of Local Authorities

Stewardship refers to "the careful and responsible management of the well-being of the population" and in the most general terms as "the very essence of good government" (Travis et al, 2002). Overall, it is the responsibility of government to fund and provide most interventions but certain tasks may be delegated to other actors. The contextual generic view of place stewardship relates to the custodians of land including local government, housing cooperatives, home seekers and parastatals who have a stake in housing and housing development. The interaction amongst the various stakeholders is critical in the housing sphere and as such determines the state of affairs in the development of housing within their jurisdictions. The acquiring authority which in this case is the government (central or local) have the overall control over land allocation in liaison with other stakeholders mentioned herein. From this view the issues of stewardship are vested in the incumbent government. According to NEP (2004) stewardship has an aspect of protection, hence taking responsibility for our choices.

In essence the issue of place stewardship is critical in regulating and maintaining some order in the management and utilization of a particular place by the people. In related developments Chirisa (2013) argues that place stewardship can mean the creation of a common space for operation hence the application for institutional pluralism. This assertion suggests that it is a scenario of bringing together otherwise divergent views and actors towards a common purpose premised upon the functionality thrust. In the same manner McKinney (2004) argues that place stewardship implies stakeholders being at the forefront of determining their own destiny. With this argument in mind Chirisa (2014) reiterates that failure to acknowledge the views and aspirations and

interests and values expressed by various stakeholders' means futility in the creation of sustainable peri-urban environments. Focusing on urban environments Belfast Planning Division (2014) argues that urban stewardship is a term used to describe the care for our urban environment. It encompasses activities broadly termed as maintenance and management, as well as other means by which people and organisations can change their urban places for the better. The good stewardship of a park, for example, may include the cutting of grass, the picking of litter or the holding of formal and informal events as a creative means of sustaining these places. Local governments are charged with a variety of responsibilities as enshrined in the Constitution as well as the subsidiary legislation (Chakaipa, 2010). In the Zimbabwean context, these mandates are bestowed from the legislative and constitutional provisions respectively. In the former these provisions are provided for by the various Acts of Parliament and provisions in the Zimbabwean Constitution. Mushamba (2010) on powers of local governments or local authorities noted that the key categories of local government functions in development include forward planning, funding, governance and regulatory functions. In this view the first two and the last functions all embrace the issues of development control within the local authorities' jurisdictional areas. In essence local authorities' arte charges with development control within their localities. These functions which the local authorities are charged with are enshrined in three principal pieces of legislation i.e. Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15, Rural District Councils Act Chapter 29:13 and the Regional Town and Country Planning Act Chapter 29:12. Needless to note, that the functions are either permissive or mandatory. The permissive functions are those functions that the local authority may or may not practise but the mandatory functions are a must exercise for local authorities in areas within their jurisdiction. In the same manner Chakaipa (2010) argues that the Second Schedule of the Urban Councils Act 29:15 outlines the powers of the urban councils and contains 54 functions covering an array of activities including service provision, financial management and development control within their localities.

Development control

Local authorities in Zimbabwe have powers bestowed upon them by the Act to control development (Part IV, RTCPA 1976) (Wekwete, 1989). The meaning of development relates primarily to the use of land and the build¬ings or structures thereof. In practice any person wishing to carry out 'development' must first obtain a permit from the local planning authority in the area. This includes change of use of land or building, deposit of refuse or waste material, erecting or displaying signs or advertisements on land or external part of buildings etc. The idea behind development control is hinged upon free enterprise economy and it is the prerogative of the state to undertake the various development control activities in the public interest. Moreover Wekwete (1989) further highlights Town Planning would curb the unregulated use of land, speculation on land and regulate infrastructure and building developments.

Indeed development control occupies the major part of what is called planning law. In the same manner it has been further argued that development control powers for local authorities include powers for enforcement where an authority considers that there is legal development taking place, powers for granting orders for preservation of buildings of special architectural merit or historic interest, powers to remove or demolish or alter existing buildings or discontinue to modify uses, and powers to preserve trees and woodlands. In contrast Fogg (1985) on issues of development control argues that planning powers, particularly of local authorities, are largely regulatory in character and do not, except to a limited degree, enable them to undertake or secure positive development. A planning scheme secures that, if development takes place, it shall take place only in certain ways; it does not secure that in any particular way other than the view and dictates of the planning authority.

Generally the concept of development control had been confined or restricted to the built environment yet there are other spheres of non-built environments that should be taken into consideration. Siong (2008) in the Canadian experience argues that Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act makes the development plan central to the development control decision making process. In essence it requires that when making key determination under the planning Acts regard shall be made to the development plan. Due determination shall be made according to the plan unless material consideration indicates otherwise. This development suggests that the development plan is central to the development control thrust of local governments.
Housing Provision and the Housing Issue

The housing issue in the Zimbabwean scenario has been approached differently by various scholars including, Chirisa, Gaza and Bandauko (2014); Mutembedzi (2012), LEDRIZ (2012), Mubvami and Nyamayaro-Musandu (2003) take into cognisance the varying dimensions that they intended to tackle. However, the housing issue can be traced back to the colonial times which had and still have some impacts on the current arrangements and developments within the Zimbabwean urban housing system (LEDRIZ, 2010). In this view, Moyo (2014) argues that during the colonial era blacks were only allowed in the urban areas on a temporary basis and this was enforced legally through the Land Apportionment Act (Number 30 of 1930) which divided the country into African (black) and European (White) areas. In practice blacks were obliged by circumstances to come to town only to work and then later retire to their rural homes. This development perpetuated the dual enclave system where the urban areas were meant for the whites and the rural areas were meant for the blacks (LEDRIZ, 2010).

Chirisa (2013) concurs with the above views arguing that during the colonial times in a number of countries particularly in Asia, Africa and the Pacific separate spatialised developments between the whites and other races was emphasized much to the detriment of sustainable human settlement practices and this left a legacy of divided settlement patterns which has influenced residents' behaviour in emergent metropolitan regions. Mutembedzi (2012) argues that access to housing land is at the centre of solutions that can resolve the housing problem in most third world cities, and increasingly so in Zimbabwe. In this view, improved access to land by the low-income earners would act as the panacea to the current housing challenges that are being faced by the generality of the low-income population in Zimbabwe currently. It is further contended that research has shown that land because of its scarcity and high cost is the major obstacle to the adequate provision of affordable urban housing in developing countries. This stems from the use of poor and inappropriate frameworks for the allocation of urban housing land which work against efforts by the poor to access low cost housing (Ibid p14). The United Nations (2005) suggests that the transition to majority rule in 1980 saw the lifting of decades of racial restrictions to the "Right to the City". This statement implies that the right to the city before independence in 1980 was a prerogative of the minority few whites whilst the black majority was restricted to the rural areas and the ushering in of independence to Zimbabwe in 1980 liberalized land occupation and rural-urban population movement resulting in the influx of people in the urban areas. In contrast Chirisa (2013) argues that though citizens have a right to the city that means more responsibility coupled with the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and trust and other governance principles and aspirations. In concurrence with the former argument Ngwerume (2013) argues that Zimbabweans have endured the problem of decent housing in urban areas ever since the colonial times when most of the urban spaces were 'reserved' for the white race. The urban population of Zimbabwe rose rapidly from 23% in 1982 to 30% by the early 1990s. Needless to say typical of many developing countries, can be described as the "challenge of rapid urbanization" whereby people migrating to urban areas improve their livelihoods in terms of income opportunities and access to social services, while cities, as economic units, witness impoverishment. Moreover in the case of Kadoma City Council Mutembedzi (2012) outlines that low cost housing is no longer the first priority in allocating housing land resulting in overcrowding and the use of informal land access methods as alternatives.

Dealing with Informal Settlements

Informal settlements are those kind of settlements that are not sanctioned by the allocating authorities who in this case are councils and other statutory bodies responsible for managing the land (Mubvami and Nyamayaro-Musandu, 2003). These statutory bodies referred herein include government ministries responsible for allocation of land. Gutsa and Choguya (2013) argue that rapid rural-urban migration in search for better living conditions and work has been related to the rise of squatter settlements. Here the problem of squatting is related to housing shortages caused by rapid urban growth which is not accompanied by equal growth in the provision of housing facilities. This was the case with Zanzibar as in as much as a number of factors had contributed to the rise of squatter settlements,   urbanisation was singled out as having played a leading role due to the natural growth rate of urban population outpacing the availability of formal accommodation choices.

Similarly, Mutizwa-Mangiza and Rakodi (1990) argue that it fluctuated markedly, increasing during the late 1970s with the influx of refugees from war-torn rural areas. In this argument Housing has varied from temporary shacks to houses built by household or hired labour for owner-occupation and some renting to some larger-scale construction of rooms for rent in Epworth. It is acknowledged that though the informal settlements are viewed as unauthorized settlements they existed in both the pre and post-independent Zimbabwe.

Methodology

Data collection was done between February and March 2016 and was largely qualitative as it sought the experiences of the various parties who are key actors in the provision of housing as well as those who are affected by development control measures that are instituted within their localities. The qualitative inquiry was adopted as it gave the researcher the opportunity to interact with the natural setting (Gutsa and Choguya, 2013). Qualitative research is a multi-method approach based upon social realities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In this view the emergence of informal settlements is indeed a socio–economic reality prevailing in most urban local governments as a result of the rural–urban influx within these communities and hence the need for the adoption of a qualitative paradigm in undertaking the research.

The population of the study included local government officials, residents' association representatives, and Ministry of Local Government officials among others. A 10 % sampling frame was adopted by the researcher. Purposive sampling was used in areas where development control challenges are experienced in Harare, Epworth and Chitungwiza and the areas and actors who have specific designations in organisations that were to be visited by the researcher. This was done by drawing a list of participant organisations and that is where the sample was deduced. A sample size of 15 informants were selected from local authorities officials, central government representatives, stewards, housing cooperatives representatives, academics among other stakeholders. Purposive sampling was used to select the areas to be visited within the urban local governments and the key organisations to be visited by the researcher. In collecting data the interview guide and observation were used as instruments in undertaking the research.

Results

The study established that urban local authorities are facing development control challenges in the urban housing provision as there is a mismatch between demand for housing and provision. The results for the various thematic areas are depicted in the following paragraphs.

The housing issue

The issues of housing from the various study participants and key informants differed in ways of interpretation of the challenges that are being faced in the provision of housing to the urban dwellers with specific focus on low-income housing within the various areas including Epworth, Harare and Chitungwiza. In this regard there were several responses that were proffered as to why these said subnational governments are facing housing challenges within their localities and are depicted by Table1.

Table 1: Reasons for existing housing Challenges in Urban Settlements (N=15)

Reasons for Existing Housing Challenges	Frequency	Percentage %
Increased – Rural and Urban Migration	5	33,34
Restrictive Urban Colonial Legacy	1	6,67
Shortage of Land for Housing	3	20
Low-income Levels of the Population	2	13,33
Lack of Access to Housing Finance	5	33,34
Politicisation of Housing Issues	3	20

Source: Fieldwork (2016)

From the above presentation it can be realised that from the fieldwork there are several reasons that were presented by the various study participants and key informants that were interviewed by the researcher. In this view it can be realised that lack of housing, housing finance and increased rural–urban migration have been topical in contributing towards housing challenges being experienced in the urban areas with a percentage frequency of about 33, 34% while lack of housing land and the politicisation of housing issues have also been presented to be contributing to the current housing challenges and development control implementation bottlenecks currently being experienced. In this view it can be realised that limited access to housing land by

most urban councils is a major inhibiting factor.

Problems have also been observed where the majority of peri-urban land is being administered under the jurisdiction of Rural District Councils let alone state land under the jurisdiction of the central government. In the same manner Chirisa, Gaza and Bandauko (2014) as depicted argued that sometimes, politicians lead the homeless into acquiring unapproved pieces of the land for occupation. This development has been experienced in areas like Chitungwiza Unit O, L and NOP Extension and Epworth's Chipukuto suburbs and the current Harare Airport Road where politicians parcelled out land undesignated for housing and this resulted in some suburbs demolished while other councils tried to mainstream the illegal housing units in the formal housing channels through paying land development levy and a penalty for constructing in undesignated land such as in the case in Chitungwiza.

However it is important to note that these developments have direct impacts on the service delivery capacities of councils in respect of key services such as refuse collection, sewerage reticulation, road network, and water provision. Another interesting development that has emerged over the last six years is the issue of Land Barons. These are politically powerful individuals who claim stewardship of large tracts of land and the beneficiaries bestow esteemed respect to these individuals and they are politically powerful and block even efforts of urban councils to regularize the urban housing and even render the urban development thrust impossible as councils have "no access" to these areas. Restrictions are as a result of the presence of militant groups of the youth who literally block any efforts by councils to discharge their mandates in terms of the enabling legislation. One respondent noted that Politicians use their political muscle to allocate people everywhere even where the land is not suitable like wetlands and it's difficult to institute development control.

From this argument it can be seen that councils are left in very difficult positions of trying to balance purely administrative decisions and political meddling in housing issues that councils are legally mandated to oversee and superintend over their implementation and discharge of various services.
In addition the other issue under housing provision of note is that in some scenarios there is unavailability of maps, layout plans they are missing or not available which means it is difficult that some councils to ascertain developments and council land within the various areas. This development would result in failure by some councils to account the number of housing units with their areas hence mapping service delivery and development planning very difficult culminating in the council's failures to efficiently provide services to the heterogeneous citizenry. Another respondent argued that in issues of housing they are key issues that need to be taken into perspective and these include that the housing challenges that we are currently facing are as result of the notion that the population has outgrown the capacities of the available infrastructure in terms of housing units, sewer provision and even traffic flow. The other challenge of housing that was established during fieldwork included the issues of changing residential housing areas into commercial areas hence worsening an already high housing demand in the various areas. This is linked to the skewed colonial planning style which never envisaged the current growth of population around the central business districts which are currently overcrowded resulting from unprecedented growth.

Informal settlements

One key informant argues that an informal settlement is anything like a shackle, tin house or another formal house built under brick or otherwise that is not recognized by council and therefor informal and illegal and these can be found in Epworth and Chitungwiza and other surrounding areas. Another respondent noted that in some councils there are no layout plans and it's difficult to trace where exactly the illegal settlers are located and in the process depriving councils of millions of dollars in lost revenue. In essence a Mika et al (2006) note that one of the major sources of local authority financing is property tax which forms the backbone of council finances. In the scenario where some properties are not accounted for then councils are prone to face operational challenges since the major source of finance is not accounting for the majority of properties in its area of jurisdiction then it becomes difficult for councils to realize maximum revenue collection within their areas of jurisdiction. Another respondent was of the view that informal settlements in areas such as Epworth hover around 15000 and they consist of two types of settlements namely, the illegal settlements that are built on suitable land and those settlements that are built on unsuitable land. Moreover about 40% of the study participants and key informants noted that in Chitungwiza Municipality for instance there are over 9000 illegal settlements which are not part of the council formal land allocations but championed by land

barons who claim title and ownership of land whilst in its crudest sense they seldom own land as land is not under their jurisdiction. Such situations resultantly put urban councils in dire financial positions as there will be no meaningful incomes realised from the properties within the council's localities. It is imperative to note that a contributing factor that has exacerbated the illegal grabbing of land by the various land barons is the shortage of land for housing purposes against a backdrop of an ever increasing urban population. With this assertion in mind other study participants and key informants about 34% argued that there is urgent need for the realignment of local government legislation with the 2013 Zimbabwean Constitution so as to ensure clarity and harmony between the Supreme law (Constitution) and the subsidiary local government legislation.

Mandates of local authorities

Subnational governments in the Zimbabwean context have two types of functions namely permissive and mandatory functions or mandates as prescribed in the First and Second Schedule of the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15. Permissive functions are those functions that council may or may not practise and mandatory functions are these functions that the councils in whatsoever circumstances should ensure that they religiously adhere to and must perform. These functions or mandates as Mushamba (2010) puts across can be categorised into the following sections development, forward planning, financial, governance and regulatory functions.

In terms of housing provision from the fieldwork about 50% of the study participants and key informants concur that councils should account for properties with their boundaries. In other words councils must have working instruments such as the valuation rolls and housing databases in order to come up with an up-to-date billing system which accounts for the majority of the properties with the council area. A section of the study participants and key informants about 33, 34% argued that councils' core mandate includes planning roles as well as the provision of services and infrastructure including but not limited to water provision, road maintenance and housing provision. In terms of planning for housing provision there is need for stakeholder engagement between councils, central government, housing cooperatives and residents associations in order to come up with a common ground for operation and a sustainable way forward within their various communities. This development as some study participants and key informants argue will go a long way in demystifying council operations and increase the willingness of the illegal occupants of council land to pay land development levy to council which will be used in infrastructural development within the areas.

Place stewardship

The issues of place stewardship have been approached with different views from various stakeholders. In this view it can be realised that about 30 % of the study participants and key informants in the in depth interviews particularly those study participants and key informants drawn from local authorities argued that place stewardship is the prerogative of the central and local government with other non-state actors assuming supportive roles in the management matrix of development within their localities. However a section of the study participants and key informants about 45 % concurred that there is need for the multi stakeholder approach in the determination of any locality or place with particular focus on the ownership and the management of the built and non-built environment. As some study participants and key informants rightly put it that though some properties are illegal settlements they are not necessarily informal settlements since they meet the councils' building by laws and within land development sites. They are built on suitable land but not allocated by the responsible authorities in this case the councils and the central government.

In the same vein 15, 65% of the study participants and key informants noted that there is need to strike a balance between the allocating authorities and the other stakeholders in order to reach a common position and consensus amongst stakeholders as there are many stakeholders that are involved in peri–urban housing within the areas that were visited by the researcher in Chitungwiza, Epworth and Harare. These stakeholders include residents associations, cooperative members, and political parties' leaders. The involvement of these various stakeholders will go a long way in harmonising relations and clarifying positions in so far as the provision of low-income housing with the various urban local governments is concerned. This argument concurs with Chirisa (2013) who noted that the case of Ruwa and Epworth revealed that they are many players and actors in the housing and habitat sector and they are various descriptions that can be used to classify the actors among them method of land acquisition and focus and mode of operation.

Development control

Development control has been understood and interpreted differently by the various study participants and key informants but the crux of agreement among the various parties was that in land use and development there must be some form of control to ensure that order and sanity prevails within their localities. In the case of Chitungwiza one respondent argued that the allocation of housing stands was being done through politicians and councillors being the most culprits allocating land illegally and even parcelling out wetlands not suitable for construction. This development has rendered development control difficult to institute within the various suburbs. In addition about 60 % of the study participants and key informants noted that the staffing levels in the planning departments of councils which are very low in light of developments that are taking place on the ground. In addition due to financial constraints there is limited coverage by the responsible authorities with the council hence failure to effectively monitor the developments within the local areas. Another respondent argued that development control and place stewardship are complex phenomena which need an in depth analysis and understanding. In this vein there are several unplanned settlements including Epworth, Chitungwiza and Harare and these informal settlements and squatter camps have posed serious planning challenges to most councils and the urban development control thrust is seriously compromised.

The other issues that are compromising development control which were presented by 40% of the study participants and key informants include the issues of shortage of competent manpower in the planning divisions of council as the critical and experienced staff in the planning department are shunning most councils due to non-payment of remuneration to their staff hence brain drain to greener pastures leaving the planning departments with a weak planning department within the councils. This renders the development control thrust of the councils impossible as there is no adequate manpower to effectively discharge the development control agenda. Another hindering issue in the exercise of development control activities within most councils in Zimbabwe as depicted by over 60% of the study participants and key informants is that of politicisation of the land issues particularly peri-urban land. In this view politicians parcel out land to illegal settlers without council approval and in some instances deploy militant political gangs and council have no access to these areas. Consequently development control becomes difficult and impractical hence council's development control authority is eroded rendering the authority over land and land use to the politicians who does not have planning expertise thereby further perpetuating the development control plight of urban councils in the provision of housing within their areas of jurisdiction. Perspectives from the residents' associations concurred with a response rate of over 85% that there is need for a holistic and multi-stakeholder participatory approach to development control in order to bring sanity to the cities facing development control in housing provision with their localities.

Discussion of Results

From the results given above, councils both urban and rural have a legal mandate of ensuring development within their areas of jurisdiction is controlled within their localities. These mandates to ensure development control within their areas of jurisdiction are enshrined in the First and Second Schedules of the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15. However as Chirisa (2013) noted building in the peri-urban areas tried to circumvent the planning processes and planning law and the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order was meant to stop peri-urban housing developments that had not followed the planning requirements. This scenario as depicted in the above findings from the fieldwork was replicated in the various urban councils in the last three to four years where properties which had not followed the planning requirements in Harare and Chitungwiza and housing units of over 1600 units were demolished (Herald, 7 June 2015).

In another development it can be realised that issues of development control and stewardship if dealt with in isolation can be very complex. This concurs with Gutsa and Choguya (2013) views that rapid urbanization and urban growth in Harare have led to the construction of housing units and other buildings to cater for the needs of the growing population whilst the availability of arable land has spontaneously declined. There is need for a holistic and multi stakeholder approach which brings together various stakeholders and develop a working framework that will be owned by those various stakeholders who include the council, government ministries, cooperatives and residents associations in order to iron out differences. In this view Mushamba (2012) argues that local governments also have the responsibility of protecting wetlands since they perform an environmental management function hence performing the stewardship function. Such a strategy inculcates

confidence building, mutual trust and consensus among the various stakeholders which in turn lead to minimisation of conflicts and misunderstandings among them This development may enable the formation of a comprehensive framework broadly chatting the way forward in balancing the demand for housing and their provision amongst the various stakeholders and reaching consensus on the best policy options to take in order to address the low-income housing and development control challenges that are being faced by the generality of the urban councils in Zimbabwe. This arrangement will go a long way in rebuilding the councils and governments capacities to undertake the land stewardship and development control roles that in the last decade have not effectively discharged as a result of human resources and financial constraints as well as socio-politico and economic challenges that they have been facing over the last 6-10 years in their operational frameworks in the housing provision, access and management of land within their areas of jurisdiction. In the same vein Sithole and Goredema (2013) bemoans in one case that the City of Harare has turned a blind eye on the environmental consequences of building in wetlands concurrently stands are still being allocated and developed in low lying areas whilst population pressure and high demand for arable land continues to undermine marshlands status and functions Needless to note that councils in the provision of low-income housing did not consult widely the various constituencies including cooperatives and residents associations on the way forward and there is now need to take on board the various stakeholders that are concerned.

In the same manner politicisation of the land issue by various political parties both in council and in government has been a driving force behind the emergence of both informal and illegal settlements in the identified areas of Harare, Epworth and Chitungwiza. To this end Gutsa and Choguya (2013) argue that the aftermath of Operation Murambatsvina was as a result of harsh approach by ZANU PF to "fix" the urban electorate that had voted for the opposition in the 2005 general elections. However this view is widely disputed by various scholars including Bratton and Masunungure (2006) who argues that the Murambatsvina operation was non-selective on partisan lines but targeted any illegal settlement without focusing on the political dispensation hence affecting people across the political divide. However though the Murambatsvina era was instituted a remodelled kind of political interference is being practised in the identified urban local authorities where politicians illegally parcel out land to the unsuspecting recipients in the form of housing cooperatives Takashinga Housing Cooperative in Epworth and United We Stand Housing Cooperative in Chitungwiza where cooperatives are inclined to certain political party structures and members. This development has manifested into rampant illegal housing developments and settlements in council areas hence making the development control thrust difficult for both central and local governments. This then shrouds the notion of place stewardship in confusion, causing unnecessary power struggles on who controls what piece of land and why? This development created a serious land administration-political and socio-economic complex triad which requires an all-inclusive approach by the various stakeholders to find common ground and the way forward to address the current low-income housing demand.

Chirisa (2010) argues that the state of housing and habitat in the peri-urban settlement of Epworth shows that the poor tend to be less of good stewards than the better-off, because when people adequate financial as well as other resources they often have little choice, but to take what they can from the environment to meet their needs without consideration for the future. It should be exercised to deal with the haphazard housing provision which must be made more orderly, organised and participatory. This concurs well with the observation of Chirisa (2013) who argues that peri-urban and urban are contested zones riddled with a number of conflicts and conflict management helps to build trust among the urban dwellers themselves and the authorities which will go a long way in minimising conflict among the various stakeholders. This development creates a platform for sustainable future engagement between the various stakeholders towards the effective provision of low-income housing within the various localities.

Moreover key instruments that are supposed to aid council employees in carrying out development control activities such as layout plans, housing databases and others must be availed unlike in the current scenario where such important development control are non-existent. To this end councils and central government must put effective and working operational frameworks in place to ensure robust council institutional systems that allow development control to effectively take place within the various subnational governments. This enables local authorities to champion an orderly and sustainable low-income housing system which creates a balance between demand for low-income housing and its provision.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that there is need for a holistic approach to housing provision, development control and place stewardship within the urban housing development framework. A more robust approach from the fieldwork undertakings as well as scholarship revolving around areas of urban housing in Zimbabwe and beyond point to the notion that a multi-stakeholder approach to the housing is critical if conflicts are to be reduced between the land allocating and management authorities (central and local government) and non-state actors (housing cooperatives, residents associations, ordinary citizens and other players). In the same vein it was agreed by the majority about 65% of the study participants and key informants that councils as the closest tier of government at the local level has the prerogative of accounting for all the properties within their areas of jurisdiction.

Local authorities should ensure that they update their valuation rolls and their housing databases in order to come up with an up-to-date billing mechanism in order to ensure maximisation of revenue collection including property tax which forms the backbone of local government financing. This in turn improves service delivery rendered to the heterogeneous citizenry. These basic services include but not limited to road maintenance and construction, water provision, housing development among other public services.

Stakeholder engagement among the various stakeholders i.e. central government, local government, residents associations, real estate companies and housing cooperatives is recommended. This will enable the various parties to find common ground of operation and a sustainable way forward within their various communities. In this view this development will go a long way in demystifying council operations and increase the willingness of occupants of land to pay for the occupied land which in turn be used for developing the areas In addition policy review in the incorporation of informal urban settlements into the mainstream urban planning through participatory development planning which is an all-inclusive and mutually agreed process by various parties on land use and planning between the central government, local authorities, housing cooperatives and the citizens and development within urban councils is recommended. This will also take into account policies that are meant to deal with the topical global warming issue which requires properly managed and environmental friendly programmes and projects.

Furthermore, there is need for the central government to take serious commitment in the realignment of laws with the Zimbabwean Constitution Amendment Number 20 of 2013 on issues of land use, local government administration, environmental management and planning to ensure that there is no policy discord among the various stakeholders including government line ministries. This enables councils to curb the "invasion" of land by other stakeholders without following proper land use processes. Similarly another critical role that the central government has to play is the provision of land to councils for housing purposes in order to regulate demand for housing within the various local authorities.

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