

Chapter 15

From a Pre-colonial DZimbabwe Capital to a Colonial Fort and Beyond: Understanding Masvingo City's Governance Traditions and Growth Patterns



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Abstract Zimbabwe's urban history and governance traditions are not fully told without Masvingo's story. The city's rich and unique governance and growth stories draw on its proximity to Great Zimbabwe and related tourism assets, being the oldest urban settlement and having hosted the first colonial Fort and the socio-economic structure of its hinterland. Unfortunately, Masvingo City's political, social, and economic importance in Zimbabwe is often inadequately understood. This denies Zimbabwe's urban planning and governance some critical lessons. Drawing on the literature, key informant interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) sessions, and a household survey targeting Old Mucheke and Victoria Ranch households, this paper discusses lessons based on the city's governance and spatial growth. Characterising the city's colonial and post-colonial urbanisation and local governance processes surfaces lessons for urban Zimbabwe and other parts of Southern Africa. The uniqueness of the city's policies and strategies from the perspectives of urban sustainability and resilience is revealed. Its distinct transition and impacts on urban policy, both in need of further inquiry, are partially illuminated.

Keywords Urban growth · Political economy · Urban planning · Urban vulnerability

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15.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to surface the comparative advantage that Masvingo City has in terms of contributing to urban development and management in Zimbabwe and beyond. The city has a pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial importance that does not appear to have been sufficiently utilised for shaping urban policy and practice. Established in 1890 as Fort Victoria by the Pioneer Column with the actual Fort built in 1891, Masvingo became a municipality in 1953 and a city in 2002. It is the oldest and fifth-largest urban settlement in Zimbabwe with a population of 90,286 (ZIMSTAT 2022). The city is a distribution and commercial centre serving a total provincial population of 1.6 million, 10.8% of Zimbabwe's 2022 population. Great Zimbabwe (Dzimbabwe), a city built of dry-stone walls spreading from atop a hill to the valley below, is only 20 km from Masvingo City. Built in the eleventh century, it is part of 300 other similar sites in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the city's pre-colonial network with which it was linked.

Masvingo's social and political economy is connected to rural agriculture (mainly irrigated sugar, dryland crops, and livestock production), tourism, and mining. As a provincial capital, government services also play an important role in driving the city's growth. The City of Masvingo (1992) noted that it was increasingly recognised as a decentralisation centre that would benefit from projects being implemented in the province. Tourism anchored on the Great Zimbabwe Monument (ancient city) and Lake Mutirikwi Recreational Park also drive the city's economy (see Fig. 15.1 below). Further, the completion of Tokwe-Mukosi Dam south of the city will also boost the industry.

The city's strategic location on the junction of two major roads connecting it to Mutare to the East, Harare to the North, Bulawayo to the West, and Beit Bridge to the South also serves the city well, reinforcing its status as a distribution hub of southeastern Zimbabwe. Post-2000, urban housing demand from rural public sector



Fig. 15.1 Masvingo City's immediate environs. (Source: City of Masvingo (1991: 51, Map 11))

employees and urban lodgers helped drive the city's growth at a time when its industries collapsed. An additional post-independence driver of city growth was the establishment of a tertiary institution in 1999, the Masvingo Degree Awarding Program of the University of Zimbabwe, which became Masvingo State University in 2002 and Great Zimbabwe University in 2007 (Great Zimbabwe University 2022). The University has multiple campuses in the city and the nearby Mashava town. The universities have added to the student population from the three teachers' training colleges of Bondolfi, Morgenster, and Masvingo. These three institutions (Catholic, Dutch Reformed, and state, respectively), all in the city within 30 km of it, already placed demand on the city in terms of education services. As such, students, faculty members, and education-related businesses make a significant contribution to the city's economy.

However, the above strategic and locational advantages do not seem to have sufficiently overcome meso- and macro-economic factors, draining the city's growth potential. The 1980 Draft Master Plan and the 1992 Master Plan (City of Masvingo 1991, 1992) detailed some of the key challenges to the planned growth of Masvingo: (i) rigid development control in the town centre and industrial and low-density housing areas based on the 1956 Outline Plan and 1970s Town Planning Schemes (see Fig. 15.2); (ii) a pressure on land uses and infrastructure arising from population growth, (iii) a shortage of accommodation, particularly in Mucheke; (iv) a city centre developing along only two axes, leaving considerable land undeveloped; and (v) the absence of a distinct economic base, forcing reliance on shallow service industry, and stretched public utilities (Government of Zimbabwe 1980). The city's first post-independence spatial planning framework was adopted by Council on 30

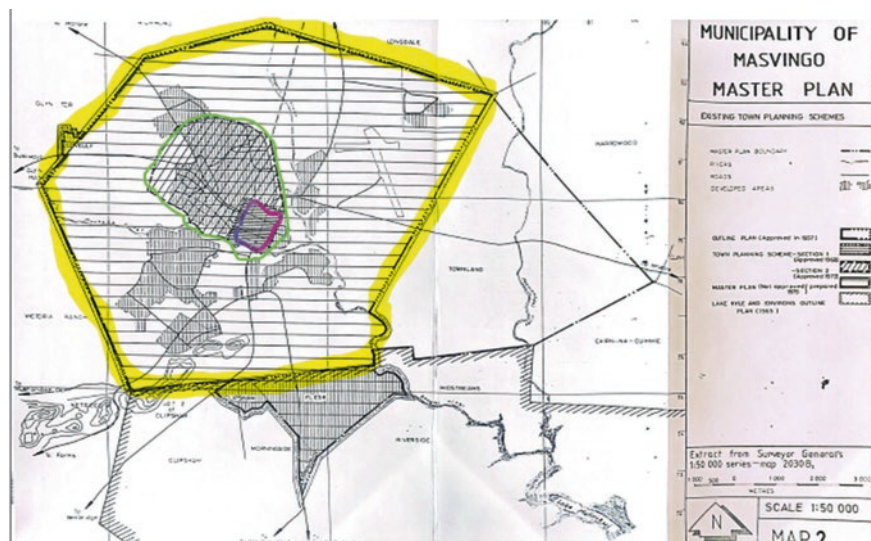


Fig. 15.2 Masvingo City outline plan and town planning schemes. (Source: City of Masvingo (1991:7))

November 1992, approved by the Minister responsible for local government on 4 October 1993, and became operative soon thereafter. The Written Statement for the 1992 Master Plan highlighted that the city had not benefited from industrial decentralisation and raised the issue of previous Town Planning Schemes having rigidly limited city centre development (City of Masvingo 1992). It remains the first and till now only approved post-independent Master Plan for the city.

The area with a yellow-shaded boundary is what the 1956 Outline Plan (approved in 1957) focused on, with the hatched areas being the developed parts of the town. The '1970s schemes' were largely two: one approved in 1968 (shaded red) and the other in 1972 (shaded green). The 1957 boundary was also used for preparing the 1979 Master Plan, which was, however, not approved.

A broader context for the city's importance following early independence and the application of the Growth Centre Strategy, rural development, and other developments used to justify the emphasis of the city as a provincial centre. Yet a 2012 attempt to prepare a Master Plan highlighted some of the same challenges identified in the two previous Master Plans. This suggests that the city's development as a secondary urban area may have lacked a grounded framing and adequate national support. These macro-level strategic gaps reflect how secondary city experiences inadequately inform urban development and management in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the SADC region. Capitals' experiences dominate policy debates and, inevitably, urban development and policy frameworks. In Zimbabwe's case, urban development policy remains a key gap that the government has long recognised (Government of Zimbabwe 2020) (Fig. 15.3).

15.2 Conceptual Framework and Methodology

There are three spatial characteristics used to define secondary cities. These are regional, metropolitan, and corridor. These are illustrated in Fig. 15.4.

Secondary cities are often referred to as mid-sized or intermediary cities. They are not mere copies of metropolises but full or stand-alone urban centres. Ammann and Sanogo (2017) argue that the urban development of secondary cities is often compared to, and ultimately determined by, the exterior, which pertains to primate cities. The external contribution and transformations produced must be re-appropriated, reconfigured, and reinvested according to the logic of a pre-existing and locally constructed urbanity (Githira et al. 2020). Though cities may have prolific overlapping interconnections, they remain distinctive regarding how they should be classified and developed. This distinctiveness of cities is critical if properly utilised to guide urban development. However, this is often overshadowed by the development trajectories and political economies of primary cities (McGregor and Chatiza 2020).

It is important to look at cities based on their wider cultural, economic, political, and social landscape relevance. By simply focusing on size, the national and regional contributions of secondary cities become difficult to grasp and their functions

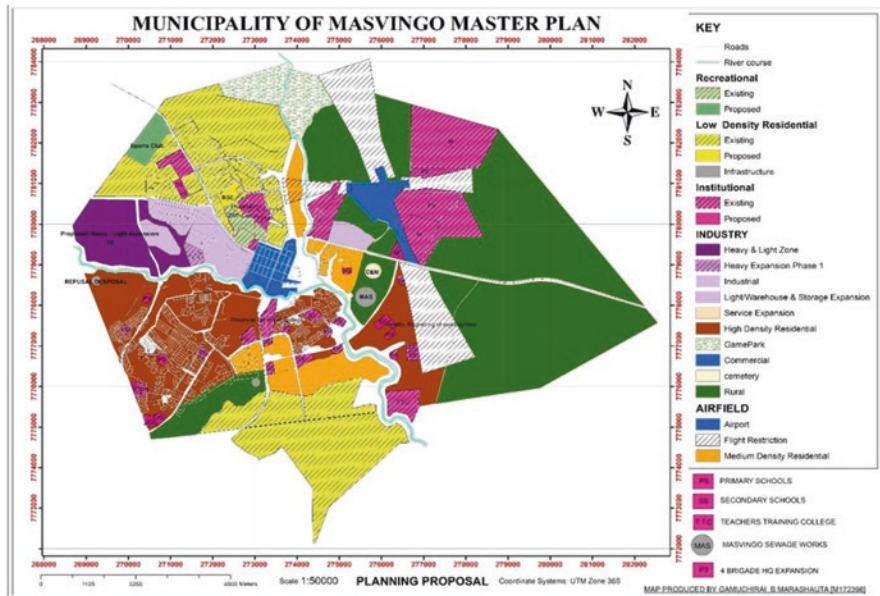


Fig. 15.3 Masvingo City master plan. (Source: City of Masvingo (2022))

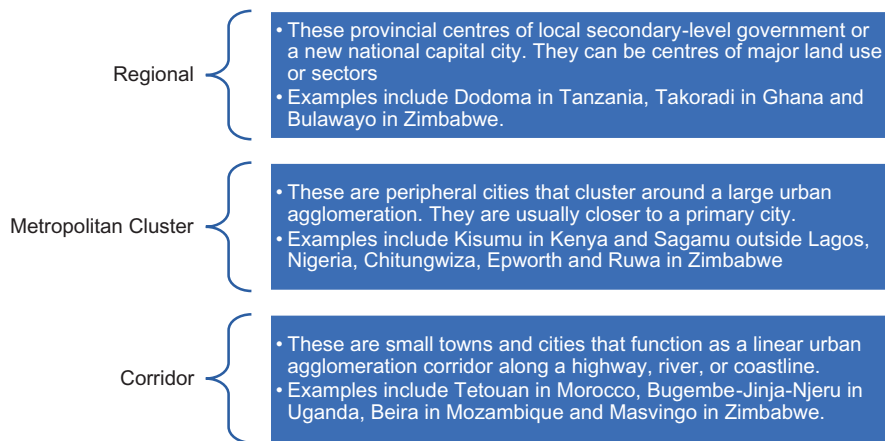


Fig. 15.4 Spatial characteristics of secondary cities. (Source: Adapted from ADB and Cities Alliance (2019))

continue to be underutilised (Cities Alliance 2015). Several studies, particularly in Africa, have focused more on megacities, ignoring the relevance and impact of secondary cities (Ammann and Sanogo 2017; ADB and Cities Alliance 2019). It can also be said that primate cities have overshadowing impacts over all other urban centres within a country. When compared to their metropolitan counterparts, secondary cities seem to be primarily characterised by what they lack in comparison

(Unsel 2017). This narrative needs to be changed by looking at secondary cities based on their performance and potential. This will influence efforts towards utilising the existing potential of secondary cities (Unsel 2017). The Brundtland Commission (1987: 197) argued that ‘a city’s prospects...depend critically on its place within the urban system, national and international’.

Many secondary cities struggle to raise capital and attract investments needed to build infrastructure, welcome productive enterprises needed to create dynamic economies, and have vibrant communities enjoying improved livelihoods and accessing jobs (Cities Alliance 2015). Increasingly, economic geography shapes the functions of these cities, rather than actual area or population size. The importance of function critically shapes urban policy, planning, and development than it has in the past (Ammann and Sanogo 2017). This has important implications for urban managers, officials, and policymakers of secondary cities on how they plan and develop enabling environments and strategic infrastructure to support the development of more competitive cities (Githira et al. 2020).

The chapter draws on primary and secondary data sources to illuminate what Masvingo City, Zimbabwe, offers to urban development policy in Zimbabwe and the SADC region. Academic, policy, and development literature pieces were used in conjunction with primary data. Primary data gathering was supported under an ongoing Inclusive Urban Infrastructure (IUI) research project being implemented with the University of Sussex’s Sussex Centre for Migration Research within the School of Global Studies. It involved key informant interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) sessions, a household survey targeting Old Mucheke and Victoria Ranch households, and the ‘enumeration’ of service delivery issues over a 6-week period by young community contacts (YCC). The YCC initiative involved young residents, two in each of the six IUI settlements, capturing pictures demonstrating the state of services and writing up stories about the pictures taken. This was an adapted version of the photovoice methodology, designed to trigger conversations between these young contacts and community leaders to develop an understanding of issues while also contributing to understanding local service delivery and governance. Using these data, the chapter discusses Masvingo’s governance and spatial growth performance to illuminate what national and regional urban policy can learn from the city.

15.3 City Governance Frameworks, Structures, and Functions

Masvingo City Council is governed by a ten-member Council made up of elected representatives. The city’s current vision is to become an industrialised world-class metropolitan city by 2030 (City of Masvingo 2022). The policy and governance functions of the city, like other urban local authorities, are derived from several national laws. These include the Constitution of Zimbabwe; Provincial Councils

and Administration Act; Public Procurement Act; Urban Councils' Act; Regional, Town and Country Planning Act; Public Health Act; Public Finance and Management Act; Labour Act; Burials and Cemeteries Act; National Social Security Authority Act; Environmental Management Act; Food and Food Standards Act; Liquor Act; Standards Act; Factories and Works Act; Children's Act; and relevant statutory instruments (ibid). The Council's policy-making functions are based on a committee system. This involves detailed deliberation of motions on specific service delivery or governance issues and making recommendations for Council consideration. The issues are deliberated on and recommendations made at the committee level. These recommendations are then brought to the full Council (the body where all ten (10) Councillors sit, including the Mayor). Masvingo City has five (5) Council Standing Committees. These are (i) Health, Housing, and Environmental services; (ii) Public Works and Planning; (iii) Finance; (iv) Human Resources and Gender; and (v) Audit. The Council also has representatives who sit in boards of other strategic institutions in the city.

The Executive has five (5) technical departments led by the Office of the Town Clerk. These are Finance, Health, Engineering, Housing and Social Services, and Chamber Secretary. The Finance Department performs the overall municipal financial functions of the Council, including revenue collection, budget preparation, the allocation of financial resources, and the preparation of financial statements. City Health manages health care systems, the provision of services to residents, and the licensing of business operations that need health certificates. Issues of city regulations, by-laws, and the general overseeing of Council operations are overseen by the Chamber Secretary's Department, which also hosts the city's legal advisory services. This department is also the custodian of city records, including minutes of Council meetings. Housing and Social Services oversees housing provision and management, which includes schools, recreational facilities, parks, cemeteries, and burial grounds. The Engineer's Department performs physical planning, infrastructure development, and management, including overseeing water and sanitation systems.

15.3.1 The City's as a Node on Multiple Corridors

With a present population of 90,286, Masvingo can be classified as a medium-sized city. This population represents an insignificant 5.9 percent of the total provincial population (ZIMSTAT 2022). The city straddles the Harare-Beitbridge and Mutare-Bulawayo highways, serving Zimbabwe's East-West and South-North corridors. It seats as the main transport node from South Africa into Central Africa through Zimbabwe. Notwithstanding its old age and being the first largest settlement in the country, the city has long been outpaced by far younger cities in Zimbabwe, which include Bulawayo, Chitungwiza, Mutare, and Gweru, as well as the capital, Harare (Nyawo and Rich 1980).

Masvingo City emerged as a key part of these corridors, facilitating the entry, extraction, distribution, and transportation of resources from the country. It developed, from the colonial era, a road transport network (Chingarande et al. 2020). In the early years, it was also the first town reached by visitors to Rhodesia from South Africa, which had some growth benefits. It was soon eclipsed by Bulawayo once the railway arrived there in 1897 (Jenjekwa and Barnes 2017), with Masvingo City only being connected by rail in 1914 (Nyawo and Rich 1980) from Gweru through Mvuma. This meant that the city became somewhat of a backwater in the development stakes compared with what might have been. However, road traffic increased after the opening of the Alfred Beit Bridge over the Limpopo at the settlement now called Beitbridge. Masvingo retained the spotlight from tourist visitors from South Africa to the Zimbabwe ruins (i.e., Great Zimbabwe Monument) and, in later years, Lake Kyle (Jenjekwa and Barnes 2017).

The city is strategically located. It is equidistant from all major cities in the country, 293 km from the capital city, Harare; 282 km from Bulawayo; 289 km from Beitbridge, bordering South Africa; and 297 km from Mutare in the eastern highlands, bordering Mozambique (City of Masvingo 2019). Surfaced roads in relatively good condition link Masvingo with these other urban centres and beyond, allowing the city to play a strategic role in national and regional population movement (Chingarande et al. 2020). Masvingo additionally performs some logistical functions. These functions are enabled by air, road, and rail. However, this strategic infrastructure advantage has not been fully utilised. As such, it is not sufficiently driving the city's development when compared to other national and regional cities like Cairo, Johannesburg, Lagos, Kinshasa, and Addis Ababa, which perform similar functions (Githira et al. 2020).

The city's growth was undermined by the coming of alternative routes linking sites that came after Masvingo. This is, however, not a new phenomenon. Ajobiewe (2016) argues that the evolution of regions and urban agglomerations is seen as following development cycles that include periods of rapid growth, followed by periods of slower growth and possibly decline. These factors and cycles have also affected Masvingo's role as a city. This is different from the emergence of secondary cities such as Gweru, Kwekwe, and Mutare. Gweru and Kwekwe thrived because of involvement in industrial manufacturing anchored on mining and enabled by good rail and road connections to cities with complementary or related functions. Mutare emerged and thrived because of being a sub-national centre with a provincial capital status (Githira et al. 2020), further driven by being a border city as well as being a hub for agricultural and tourism functions, which are better performing compared to Masvingo. Mutare, thus, grew from a historical trading centre to a sub-national and regional political, economic, and social centre.

15.4 Peculiar Drivers of Masvingo's Urban Growth and Significance

15.4.1 *Positive City-Residents Relations*

The relations between the city and its residents are stable and advanced. The synergies are generally steered by the efforts of civil society organisations (CSOs): the work by CSOs such as Dialogue on Shelter (housing and livelihood development in Mucheke and Victoria Ranch) and MURRA (We Pay (residents) You Deliver (council) advocacy work (We Pay You Deliver Consortium 2018). An interview held as part of the Inclusive Urban Infrastructure study with the town clerk on 3 March 2021 showed how instrumental Dialogue on Shelter was for the Mucheke upgrading project. In terms of MURRA, there are cases where the CSO allied with the city to block the confiscation of Council property, citing negative service delivery implications. MURRA used local forums and the courts to register its voice regarding the fate of the public assets (Musekiwa and Chatiza 2015).

In 2013, UN-Habitat had a programme to strengthen citizen participation in urban local governance in Zimbabwe. The programme was implemented in Masvingo, Bulawayo, Gweru, Kadoma, and Kwekwe (Musekiwa and Chatiza 2015). The focus was on conflict transformation and improving relations between councillors and council officials, as well as with residents. Residents were involved in processes targeted at improving their contributions to city policymaking and service delivery. In an interview, a senior official of the ministry responsible for local government overseeing Masvingo City confirmed the city's traditions of engaged relations with residents (Interview, 30 April 2021). The city's COVID-19 responses also involved listening to residents' demands, resulting in the provision of water using bowsers and attending to other resident-raised requests. These experiences built co-governance traditions and are documented in an assessment of multi-level government COVID-19 responses in Zimbabwe, where Masvingo City was one of the case study cities, with the others being Mutare, Harare, and Bulawayo (Chatiza et al. forthcoming).

15.4.2 *Infrastructure and Service Provision Models*

Rakodi (1997) cited reasons for the failure of many urban authorities in developing countries to cope with demands for service delivery, including limited political frameworks, inadequate financial systems, and inefficient management systems. The City of Masvingo demonstrates innovative infrastructure financing models that are worth acknowledging and supporting at the policy level. In the context of subdued municipal revenue and inadequate and erratic national fiscal transfers, Masvingo is one city directly engaging residents to fund specific infrastructure using a special levy model. Examples include a 2012 water augmentation project

Phase 1 (ICA 2012). This involved the building of new water pumping, conveyance, and storage infrastructure, which was initially to be funded through a government loan or grant. The city resorted to levying residents for the project. In 2015, after citywide consultations, residents of Masvingo agreed to the city's proposal to instal a traffic circle at a busy intersection where vehicular-pedestrian conflict led to frequent accidents.

The interview with the city's town clerk of March 2021 and the senior government official of April 2021 revealed other innovative infrastructure financing models. These include a school the community directly supported, a partnership with Simbi (a steel company) on social services, and the expansion of the steel industry using a model that integrates small-scale businesses. Another example is the upgrading of Mucheke Hostels. The project involves upgrading housing, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in the oldest of the city's suburbs where in some sections up to twenty-five (25) households living in one room each share a toilet-cum-bathroom and did not have places for washing clothes or cleaning plates. In partnership with Dialogue on Shelter and the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation, Masvingo City expanded infrastructure to decongest housing and WASH facilities (see Fig. 15.5). Some of the refurbished apartments include Mambo and Large Barracks Hostels housing approximately 60 families (City of Masvingo 2020). The project addresses the infrastructure gap that was occasioned by the absence of adequate housing facilities to cater to the booming population since independence.

The ability of a local authority to provide services depends on the revenue it collects and how innovative it is to source and manage the funds (We Pay You Deliver Consortium 2018). The City of Masvingo is responsible for providing services such as healthcare, refuse collection, water and sanitation, fire protection, and primary education. The town's principal sources of revenue include water charges, land rates, municipal bars, sewerage fees, and bus park fees. Masvingo derives its largest income from water charges, contributing 30 to 40% to Council revenue (Gukurume 2011). Innovative sources discussed above augment Council revenue.



Fig. 15.5 Pre- and post-refurbishment of facilities. (Source: Inclusive Urban Infrastructure Fieldwork: Young Community Contacts (2022))

There are, however, current challenges in Victoria Ranch. The interview with the town clerk confirmed a lack of adequate infrastructure and social services. As a result, a new clinic and a primary school built in the nearby area of Runyararo West were being overloaded by residents from Victoria Ranch, where relevant services are lacking. The school was now the size of three in terms of enrolment, forcing hot sitting. Victoria Ranch needs schools and clinics but is outside the city's spatial and governance boundary. This puts pressure on the city to find innovative ways of improving relevant infrastructure and services to meet the demands of its formal residents and those of the neighbouring settlements established under national government supervision. The city estimates that water demand will reach 60 mega litres per day by 2030 in the whole city (City of Masvingo 2020). As a result, plans to further engage residents to reduce physical water losses and expand appropriate infrastructure are underway. The city is building on the success in the 2010s when it augmented water pumping and piping based on a special levy model, as noted above.

15.4.3 Cooperation with Masvingo Rural District Council

The city operationalises cooperative governance in its co-management of the expansive Victoria Ranch housing project established by the national government. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) of April 2011 outlines how the Masvingo RDC and Masvingo City Council were to operate in facilitating the development of infrastructure in Victoria Ranch. The two local authorities jointly approved infrastructure (water and sewer) designs and architectural drawings for houses and other structures. Masvingo City is responsible for connecting water and sewer to settlement following on-site or in-settlement emplacement of infrastructure by land developers contracted by the national government to facilitate housing development on urban state land. The city will also maintain water and sewer reticulation for the settlement, anticipating urban incorporation should the local authority boundaries change in the future (see also Takuva 2017).

15.5 Underutilised Uniqueness of the City

Masvingo City is rich in heritage resources. Its proximity to the Great Zimbabwe City, which has a world heritage status (Ndoro 1994), can inform physical planning and urban design practice. The ancient city's materials, colors, scale, and building style provide a basis for a cohesive set of design guidelines that can be utilised in coming up with heritage-based urban planning (Tanyanyiwa and Chikwanha 2011) and governance. The indigenous architecture of the 'ruins' is in sync with the local natural environment, building technologies, materials, and social values (Chirikure et al. 2016). Given that this settlement relies on its heritage values to attract tourism, it

seems appropriate to draw upon the heritage wealth of the area to promote its future. The Great Zimbabwe Monument is the flagship of the Zimbabwe tourist industry and therefore has national importance (Chirikure et al. 2016). This settlement developed on a natural landscape. This makes it a unique cityscape based on its heritage status, and hence its planning must be based on heritage and environmental enhancement rather than common planning and design practice (Macheka 2016).

The city's uniqueness provides a framework for thinking about and understanding the concept of heritage and environmental conservation in spatial planning. While the quality of development is important in all resort communities, its location in a World Heritage Site makes it essential for the quality of the built environment to strive to match the quality of its spectacular heritage and natural environment (Macheka 2016). The Great Zimbabwe is a designated World Heritage Site and is one of the major tourist attractions of the city. Tourism, if fully utilised, is one of the major industries with relevance to the economy of the city and the province. Other tourist sites, which are also important to the economy of the city, are the ragged and rocky shorelines of the Mutirikwi Dam; the second-largest national park, the Gonarezhou National Park; and the wildlife conservancies of Malilangwe and Save Conservancy (Mapfumo and Madesha 2014).

Zimbabwe and the SADC region have not adequately articulated the heritage of the 300 dry-stone settlements for urban policy, planning, and development. Clearly, also, the lessons of how these settlements were used, maintained, and expanded have not influenced relevant thinking, even for the settlements physically closest to these ancient cities like Masvingo. Perhaps the establishment of Fort Victoria and the colonial urban trajectory the city's development buried the history. However, it is opportune for present-day planners and city designers to draw inspiration from the ancient city for application in Masvingo City's strategic and spatial development.

15.6 The City's Lack of a Vibrant Industrial Base

Despite it being the oldest town, the city has been relatively behind regarding industrialisation compared to other towns established later, such as Harare and Bulawayo. Masvingo does not have a dynamic industrial base. Notable manufacturing industries include the iron and steel company, a meat processing factory now defunct for years, and a leather manufacturing company. Most of the city's businesses are in the service sector, dominated by bus operators and a few distribution centres (Mapfumo and Madesha 2014). Other industries supporting the economy of the province are mining with limited city-based mining-related manufacturing. In the mining sector, only two major mines are functional, which are the lithium mine in Bikita and the gold mine in Renco (Maunganidze et al. 2013). There are, however, small-scale alluvial mining activities throughout the province, mostly in the informal sector (Chazovachii 2020).

Masvingo has a weak industrial economy. It has struggled to diversify its economy despite having strategic location factors supporting it. This may be attributed to the lack of dedicated national development policies targeting the growth of location-relevant industrial activity in secondary cities. In addition, the socio-economic challenges experienced in the country in the past contributed to the constrained economic base of the city (City of Masvingo 2019; Chidoko and Zhou 2012). Recently, there have been efforts for Victoria Falls to utilise its strategic location based on tourism to boost the city's growth, with the government setting up a stock exchange. Such measures, if applied to all secondary cities, are useful in transforming them to realise their potential.

Despite its traditions of sound governance, Masvingo has not had a focused industrial development programme with sufficient national government support. Industrial activity anchored on mining and agricultural production in the province has not been adequately promoted. The sugar industry; cattle ranching; and lithium, gold, and iron ore mining in the province can be connected to tertiary-level processing in the city. Place-based economic potential has long been a relevant ingredient for settlement sustainability. In Masvingo's case, enough has not been done to ensure that key economic drivers are supported as a basis for the city's development locally, nationally, and regionally.

15.7 City Deprivation

Secondary cities tend to suffer domination by primary cities (Githira et al. 2020). They face multiple deprivations that constrain their potential. Deprivations in secondary cities stem from unsustainable urban growth and a lack of commitment to shaping growth (Githira et al. 2020). Despite the unique status of the Great Zimbabwe ruins as a World Heritage Site, the planning of such areas still follows normal planning and design regulations that have no guidelines for banking on the uniqueness of these areas. The deterioration of rail use in the country affected the performance of Masvingo as a corridor city. The neglect to keep up with railroad conditions has decreased good transport from 18 million tons in 1998 to 4 million tons in 2015 (Chingarande et al. 2020). Yet cities like Masvingo do not need to be governed as if they were competing with capitals or other cities. Rather, their comparative advantages need to anchor their growth and sustainability in a manner complementing the national settlement hierarchy as well as overall development. Such a model can determine how national fiscal transfers target cities' anchor activities in terms of social and economic drivers of growth. In the case of Masvingo, this would be its heritage and tourism assets, as well as the industrial advantages it has.

15.8 Discussion

Masvingo City has had a historical role as an economic aggregation, processing, and distribution node at the heart of two strategic national corridors connecting the country's north-south and east-west axes. As a provincial capital for Zimbabwe's south-eastern corner, the city has had spatial and economic leadership of a region rich in tourism assets and agro-based industries. Further, the city has an important political, social, and economic history. The completion of Tokwe-Mukosi provides another strategic tourism and recreational asset around which a service industry requiring support from Masvingo City can grow. A unique mix of heritage, agricultural, mineral, recreational, and tertiary education resources require conscious cultivation in Masvingo's development praxis.

These rich and unique opportunities offer key lessons for national and local urban planning and broader urban governance. As a secondary city, Masvingo has not been a mere copy of Zimbabwe's main metropolises of Harare and Bulawayo. It has fulfilled unique geo-spatial and economic functions, with its authorities leading a trajectory of development in a manner relevant for other secondary cities to learn from. As observed by Githira et al. (2020), secondary cities are full and stand-alone urban centres, something that Masvingo exhibits based on historical and contemporary analyses. Though similar to other cities in some instances, Masvingo remains distinct and should be classified and developed accordingly. Development plans (master and local) are key instruments to guide urban development in a way that recognises the unique local context to anchor a diversified heritage and industrial economy.

While many studies have overemphasised on the political and socio-economic challenges and opportunities in primary cities (ADB and Cities Alliance 2019), there are also key experiences and lessons from secondary cities' experiences. These may contrast or even be similar to experiences in primary cities. Secondary cities need not be looked at based on the actual political and socio-economic factors that define them. Contrasting infrastructure emplacement and governance experiences in Old Mucheke and Victoria Ranch show the need for a closer look at the contextual factors in the city. This is because secondary cities have their own political and socio-economic contexts that may either constrain or promote sustainable urban development interventions. The urban managers, officials, and policymakers of secondary cities need to understand this context and use it to frame spatial interventions.

15.9 Conclusion

Masvingo City demonstrates contextual uniqueness in its transition. This requires support at the national, regional, and local levels. The city went through some cycles of development as it transitioned from 1890 to the present day. The question becomes whether Masvingo and Zimbabwe's urban managers invest enough in understanding the city's transition and what lessons it offers. There are innovative

infrastructure financing models emerging from the city that are worthy of acknowledgement. The city is making good progress in terms of how it relates to residents, CSOs, and the private sector. These are some of the important factors that explain its transition. The chapter shows that conflicting rationalities can be amicably dialogued. Examples of partnerships presented in the chapter attest to this.

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