

Chapter 8

The Ruwa Exceptionality: Scanning Location, Corporatism and Place Marketing Factors in Peri-urban Development

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8.1 Introduction

In negotiating the tidal waves of neoliberal restructuring since the early 1990s, the marketing and branding of cities has become an all-pervasive and well-organised governmental activity contributing to the economic and physical transformation of localities for consumption in a global economy (Grodach 2009: 182). Central to the city marketing process is the “construction, communication, and management of the city’s image” (Kavaratzis 2004: 58). But what do such processes entail?

The centre piece of Harvey’s (1989a) claims in recent years is that urban governance has become increasingly preoccupied with the exploration of new ways in which to foster and encourage local development and employment creation. Such an entrepreneurial stance contrasts sharply with the managerial practices of earlier decades of economic development which primarily focused on the local provision of services, facilities and benefits to urban populations. In response to the widespread disenchantment (particularly in Africa) with the achievements of the “development project” (McMichael 1996) launched under US hegemony, many cities are proactively positioning themselves in competition for global resources in conjunction with private agents and urban elites in order to forge economic growth (Hall and Hubbard 1998; Harvey 1989b). The entrepreneurial city government formulates and implements locational policies aimed at enhancing the economic competitiveness of the locality by identifying, developing and exploiting its place-specific assets that are considered most competitive (Grodach 2009: 182).

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In this context, the chapter examines how the small satellite town of Harare, Ruwa attained its exceptional status of development during the post-colonial era of Zimbabwe when the country's economy took its deepest plunge (Bond and Manyaniwa 2002) as the state became more "exclusive and authoritarian" (Simon 2010). In particular, the chapter traces out how locational policy investments, corporatism and place marketing can stimulate peri-urban development in depressed national economic landscapes. In order to do so, the discussion will answer the following questions:

- To what extent are the everyday politics influencing growth?
- What lessons can be learnt from an urban centre developing through the privatisation of land?
- How does Ruwa compare with other urban centres whose development is 'dictated' by public and communal property rights?
- What lessons can urban Zimbabwe learn from Ruwa's corporate management policy?

8.2 Theory of City-Branding as a Place Marketing

Globally cities and towns are transforming in terms of management style, land-use organisation and development financing, irrespective of the country, location or economic prosperity. Some scholars have attributed such change to the transferability of technology, finance and ideas in the context of globalising mobilities (Mamvura 2005; Jensen 2007; Chirisa 2012). Although transformation "has become a popular, overused and misunderstood word in organisations in the twenty-first century" (Daszko and Sheinberg 2005: 1) the chapter relates the term to management style, organisation of land uses and mobilisation of financial resources for local development by entrepreneurial cities. This strand of transformation has been the catchword in place-marketing signifying the attractiveness of a locality to capital, residents and tourists. Hence branding of place plays a decisive role in local development and investment. Branding is synonymous with business and market behaviour (Howell 2010) where this literally means 'creating an image' (Mamvura 2005; Jensen 2007).

City branding as a strategy involves the processes of constructing names, images and representations of cities and towns to sell them in terms of the trends, advantages and opportunities as unique attributes. In essence, this involves storytelling and 're-imaging' the city through the construction and reconstruction of "place" identity (Sandercock 2003; Eckstein and Throgmorton 2003). The evocative story-line is designed to appeal to 'consumers of the place and space' including residents, tourists and investors (Selby 2004). The marketing strategy entails creating monolithic, consumer-oriented representations or pictures that reflect the specific attributes of the built environment. Thus, the city or place is represented in images, texts and logos, reflecting specific interventions. City managers are the

builders of the image of the city and are obliged to ‘sell’ the city to match the tastes of target ‘consumers’ (Czarniawska 2008).

For Kavartzis and Ashworth (2008: 163) place marketing is a proactive response creating an enabling environment for a city to survive and prosper in volatile economic conditions. Such conditions include the increased mobility of capital, the easier relocation of economic activity, the radical development of the knowledge-based society and increased global interconnectedness. Such conditions also engender increased inter-urban competition that is evident in today’s world, exemplified in the importance attributed to several rankings that are published regularly. Since such conditions vary both spatially and over time, how has Ruwa negotiated its exceptional growth in an uneven terrain of dried up large scale investment in the city making processes of Zimbabwe?

8.3 Place Marketing of Ruwa Within the Growth Centre Policy Strategy

An examination of the growing appeals of agglomeration economies in place marketing can best be understood within the growth pole theoretical framework. The proponents of the Growth Pole Theory (Pred 1966; Olsen 1976; Richardson 1969; Stohr and Taylor 1981; Thirlwall 1994; McCann 2001) assumed that the maturity of an economic node was subject to the existence of a propulsive factor such as the existence of an exploitable mineral resource. This factor had to be autonomous and self-propagating. The exceptional growth of Ruwa may not singularly be explained by the existence of a resource base but rather its proximity to metropolitan Harare. In addition, the private investor attractiveness of the place has largely contributed to its growth. This may have been assisted as well by place branding in the context of commitment to a growth centre policy framework.

The growth centre policy of Zimbabwe focused on the physical development of designated centres through the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) as each of the growth centres was allocated a minimum of Z\$160,000 for infrastructure development (GoZ 1981, 1982). At local government level, local authorities in conjunction with the Department of Physical Planning have prepared investment brochures for each of the growth centres (District Service Centres) as information for potential investors (Herald 2009).

Efforts were made to provide housing and related services in order to attract private investment to the rural areas. Ruwa owes her major locational advantages to her proximity to major trunk roads connecting Harare and Mutare. The small town has grown almost symmetrically along Mutare Road, a national and trunk road connecting Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe and Marondera and Mutare, the provincial capitals of Mashonaland East and Manicaland, respectively. Mutare is also the major eastern border town on the boundary with Mozambique. The railway line from Harare to Mutare and beyond to Beira runs parallel to the trunk road.

Additionally, Ruwa was declared by government as one of the growth points in the mid-1980s thereby drawing large-scale industrial investment to the small edge-city that we discuss the notion of growth points.

Corporatism has gone through the full cycle of boom and bust (Molina and Rhodes 2002; Schmitter and Grote 1997). Although the term has been used to explain policy, institutions and the ‘business’ culture of the state at national level, the term is now the buzz word in the corporate world of local governance. Siaroff (1999) argues that “...an ‘ideal type’ of corporatism involves four distinct aspects: structural features, functional roles, behavioural patterns, and favourable contexts.” The manner in which local farmers, city government institutions, civil society organisations and the residents have pooled their resources towards boosting the development of Ruwa served as the hallmark of local corporatism. Even when the situation has not been very favourable, the actors have ‘fraternised’ towards constructing a better place. Ruwa has excelled in engaging private-public partnerships for local economic development through corporate investment strategies with both local and international private investors.

8.4 The Evolution and Transformation of Ruwa

In 1991, Ruwa was proclaimed a local board area in terms of Part 14 of the Urban Councils Act and the Income and Sales Tax Act. This proclamation ceded Ruwa from both Goromonzi Rural District Council and the Urban Development Corporation that had been jointly responsible for its administration. Prior to independence in 1980, Ruwa was a designated Rural Service Centre under the then Whites-only Bromely-Ruwa Rural Council. The principal landholder in Ruwa was Mashonaland Holdings, a group of privately owned companies. In the colonial heyday, Ruwa existed as a little known satellite settlement of Harare. In the mid-1980s, it was upgraded to a Growth Point in terms of the Income and Sales Tax Act.

In the early 1990s, Goromonzi Rural District Council prepared a rural master plan that designated Ruwa as a Growth Point. The post-independence era saw the development of an industrial park in Ruwa. Mashonaland Holdings invested in the development of Ruwa low-income residential suburb (RLB 2007) in order to address the housing needs of the growing population in the town. This private sector initiative dovetailed the implementation of Ruwa’s local development plan. On its part, Ruwa Local Board complemented the housing investment with water augmentation and environmental management (Davison 2001). The local plan also saw the development of new suburbs including Elizabeth Park, Damafalls and Chipukutu. These new residential enclaves saw the emergence of wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in Ruwa. During the initial growth of the town, the secondment of specialised personnel to Ruwa by the Urban Development Corporation contributed to the transformation of Ruwa into the commercial and industrial hub that the small town boasts of today. The town planner of Ruwa noted that:

Prior to independence Ruwa was only a small rural service centre around a place called “*pa*” George. After independence in 1980 independence, the centre was upgraded to the status of a Growth Point thus empowering the local board to collect revenue from the existing properties. Starting from nothing then we now have more than 25,000 housing stands of which 15,000 have been developed while the rest are at various stages of servicing ready for allocation to prospective buyers. After independence, the satellite town of Ruwa witnessed an upsurge in development. In the early 1990s we started to witness the emergence of upmarket Old Windsor and ZIMRE (Zimbabwe Reinsurance Corporation) high income residential communities.¹

Despite the exceptional economic significance of Ruwa, the small town faces the perennial challenges of providing adequate reticulated water (Svotwa et al. 2007; Hranova et al. 2001; Guvamombe 2012). The small town relies on Harare municipality for its water supply (See Box 7.1).

Box 7.1: A quest for solutions to the Ruwa water woes

It has become a permanent feature for residents to wake up at 2 a.m. to queue for water at shallow and deep wells, throughout the year. Ruwa has always been considered a satellite town of Harare. The town is a fast-growing town with more than 60 ha of industrial area and vast swathes of residential and commercial land. The Chairman of Ruwa Town Council, Mr Phineas Mushayavanhu says:

Our water supply problem is historical. [There are other challenges including the] need to provide good, pothole-free roads. We need sound health and education delivery for our residents. We also deserve a crime free town replete with tower lights and streets lights. We need to service our housing list By servicing thereby providing affordable stands. We need to do refuse collection. However, the success of all these will not make sense to any ordinary Ruwa ratepayer and stakeholder until the water situation is rectified. Water has to be flowing through the tap of each and every kitchen. ... We have been running around looking for funding and fortunately for us, the Public Service Investment Programme (PSIP) has availed to us US\$13,5 million for water reticulation for all local authorities. We have managed to get US\$43,5 million from that, thanks to intensive lobbying. This is a victory for our small town, for such an amount to come our way... In fact, we had applied for US \$3,7 million but all the same we missed by a few hundred dollars but we feel what we got is enough to take through a comprehensive water reticulation programme and even the expansion of our water treatment plant.... Ruwa’s traditional water problems started from the time when the local authority was entirely dependent on Harare’s water supply route. We relied on Harare’s reservoirs at Donnybrook and Venterburg. It emerged that Harare had its own unfulfilled needs and any slight disturbance in Harare severely affected Ruwa, which would go for long periods without water. So when it eventually emerged that Harare would not easily solve its water problems, that Harare was no longer meeting its local demand, much at the expense of satellite towns like Chitungwiza, Ruwa, Epworth and Norton, we went into a Public, Private Partnership to build our own water treatment plant. But such infrastructure needed a very reliable all-year-round supply of water... The dam we

¹Interview with Mr Chidhakwa Ruwa Local Board Town Planner, 9 November, 2011.

identified for this project was Greenskyes. This Greenskyes also catered for the irrigation requirements of local farmers, it could not late for a year. By September or October its water levels got too low to meaningfully supply any water. Ironically, that is the time when water demand in Ruwa would be at its peak. Then the ordinary Ruwa family is forced to rely on boreholes or wells.... At its peak Greenskyes would be allowing a daily supply of 2,5 mega litres of treated water against a demand of 7,5 mega litres. That situation is far from being satisfactory to even meet half the demand in our town.... The nature of the current project is to pipe raw water from a newly identified, perennial water sup-ply dam 15 km away - Nora Valley Dam. The project has already started with pipes being laid through a company called Waterflo. The water will be move[d] from Nora Valley Dam to Greenskyes Dam which will act as our reservoir throughout the year to allow the supply of in excess of 10 mega litres of water to our treatment plant. The project is moving very fast. Waterflo is an experienced and credible water moving company which has done a lot of irrigation and water supply projects for the Government, individuals and local authorities and they have told us that they are putting up booster pumps along the way to beat the mountains, rough terrain and hills. This will ensure uninterrupted water supply to our holding dam. [Out of the US\$3,5 million not all is going towards just a 15 km pipeline] Out of that amount, we need to expand our water treatment plant by building new reactors to receive the increased raw water delivery. Out of that amount we need to build a modern laboratory for quality control. We are currently treating the water manually. We will also need to build more water reservoirs to store treated water so that even if electricity supply is interrupted, the Ruwa residents will not feel the pinch within 24 hours. I want the people of Ruwa to give the local authority two months, at most three months and the water problem will be a thing of the past. Our intention is to get the whole of Ruwa supplied with treated water. Currently, only Zimre is connected to the Harare supply system and is therefore subject to Harare's water woes. Eventually we need to pluck Zimre Park out of Harare.

Source: Guvamombe (2012)

Most residents of Ruwa town are medium-income earners. In the past 10 years or so, the emerging local urban elites, comprising high earning civil servants, businessmen, and those dependent on remittances from the diaspora—have transformed the cityscape of Ruwa. The small town has morphed from a small peri-urban growth point into a modern town constituting upmarket industrial, commercial and residential components. From its founding days, Ruwa was a productive commercial farming area whose contribution to market gardening and other fresh farm products for Harare were considerable (Marongwe 2002, 2003). Today, commercial farming has been replaced by an expanding urban development.

Situated along the transport corridor of Harare-Mutare Road and the Botswana-Bulawayo-Gweru-Harare-Mutare-Mozambique railway line, Ruwa has been upgraded into an Export Processing Zone (EPZ) specialising in manufacturing industry. By 2007, Ruwa had developed twenty-seven commercial and two hundred and fifty industrial stands (RLB 2007). In the same period, 29 % of the employable population in the town was estimated to be in formal employment while 71 % eked out their livelihoods from the informal sector. However, the exceptional growth of Ruwa has not been without considerable caveats. The rapid sprawl of the peri-urban

conurbation has increasingly taken a significant toll on the surrounding rural ecosystems through the advancing ecological footprint—a matter raising the question of property rights.

8.5 Question of Property Rights

The evolution of the spatial structure of Ruwa has been rooted in the fragmented nature of land tenure systems in pre-independent Zimbabwe when Ruwa was established as the Bromley-Ruwa Rural Council. The present town is a product of private investment initiative by TC Hardy Mashonaland Holdings—a corporate company which owns all the private land in Ruwa. More specifically, Mashonaland Holdings owns 99 % of the total land and built-up area of Ruwa town (RLB 2007). Thus, infrastructure provision in the town is private-sector-driven. By extension, individual private landowners had to seek company approval before subdividing their properties. Before that approval, the town was constrained in terms of adequate infrastructure provision. The principal constraints included the shortage of plant and equipment, financial resources and skilled labour. Negotiations between private companies in northern Ruwa and the town council (former local board) have bolstered the provision and management of off-site infrastructure in Ruwa. For ZIMRE Park, the Board engaged National Real Estate in the development of 2,500 medium density residential stands. The developer was also required to provide water and to upgrade the pump station (Odero 2003). The town planner noted that:

All the land around here was originally privately owned commercial farms. Ruwa town is a result of stands that were created from privately owned land. Since there is growing shortage of land for housing and industrial development in Harare, Ruwa filled this gap by supplying land for industrialists to house their workers. Council is working with private land developers to provide housing. We determine the land use zones. Whoever the developer is if his or her farm is zoned high density it becomes so... Initially, there was nothing, but now there is something.

Ruwa is a satellite town of Harare through providing land for the housing of people employed in Harare. Ruwa high density suburb is the only part of the settlement; the rest of the properties are high value properties. The challenge is that we have to bear the responsibility for water supply, sewer and refuse collection. As you know, Ruwa relies on Harare for its water supply but we have the intention to incorporate Sunway City into Ruwa in the foreseeable future. We are currently negotiating with the City of Harare to provide water for ZIMRE residential park”.²

An examination of flexible accumulation of resources through place marketing and private-public partnerships serves to demonstrate how the political economy of

²Interview with Mr Chidhakwa Ruwa Local Board Town Planner 09 November, 2011.

neoliberal urban space production can help our understanding the exceptional growth of the small town of Ruwa as it shifted from managerialism to entrepreneurialism.

8.6 Politics and Governance

The most dominant factors that boosted the exceptional growth of Ruwa town included:

- the existence of a cohort of enterprising private investors,
- compliance with the EIA development conditions furnished by the Environmental Management Agency.
- administrative accommodation offered to development proposals through the Ministry of Local Government Urban and Rural Development
- direction and management of space by the Department of Physical Planning,
- proactive involvement of the Urban Development Corporation.
- a supportive community comprising residents, local entrepreneurs and informal settlers,
- and the civil society organisations.

The local residents mobilised themselves for housing delivery. Evidence shows that there are some cooperatives in residential areas, which have taken over from private developers after the latter failed to service the land. According to the town planner, places like Sebassa with 400 stands, Grenbrook with ± 300 , Tawana (± 400) and Elizabeth (± 400) stands have such cooperatives. In addition, the locals have not organised themselves in caring for the environment in and around the town. It is bodies such as the Natural Resources Task Force composed of the town council (former local board) police, the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Environmental Management Agency that directly deal with the questions of sand poaching, deforestation and stream bank cultivation.

The city managers of Ruwa recognise that the sustainable way forward in keeping the town 'ticking' rests with the enforcement of legal instruments through environmental planning and the management of sand poaching, natural resources protection and finding lasting solutions to sewage treatment and water supply.³ To that end, the town has used community visioning as an asset of shaping the town through strategic planning involving the local community.

The town has initiated a programme called 'Enhancing City Diplomacy' geared at engaging the community in managing the town through community participation in planning and management. In addition, Ruwa is practising participatory budgeting, after the Municipal Development Partnership for Eastern and Southern Africa (MDP-ESA) selected it for piloting the initiative in Zimbabwe

³Interview with Mr Chidhakwa Ruwa Local Board Town Planner 09 November, 2011.

(UNHSP/MDP-ESA 2008). The government involvement in Ruwa is of little significance, given that there is little state land in the town since most of the land is privately owned. However, government policy on private developers' operations cannot be ruled out completely.

Ruwa acts a model of a relatively better-planned area located in the peri-urban spaces of Zimbabwe. The presence of committed private sector agencies including the Zimbabwe Reinsurance (ZIMRE) holdings, Inter-market Bank, Damofalls to name these few. Furthermore, the significant presence of the middle class households suggests that the residents are keen to maintain the town as an aesthetically pleasing built-up environment. This is a narrative of the operational pathways of city-branding and private-public partnerships in promoting urban development in a stagnating space economy but the question we now turn to is: in what sense has the development of Ruwa been outstanding?

8.7 Is Ruwa Exceptional?

As pointed out earlier, Ruwa was established as a growth point in line with the Income Tax (Growth Point Area) (Ruwa) Notice (1986). From the outset, Ruwa was different from other growth points and satellite towns in terms of quality of the buildings, incorporation of the natural environment, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, arrangement of settlement blocks. The town was established to provide industrial land that Harare, at that particular time, no longer had the full capacity to provide. The other economically based growth points included Gokwe and Gutu-Mupandawana. Industrialists were generally not interested in going far afield into the countryside and beyond the sphere of influence of Greater Harare. In the context of the prevailing investment spatial boundaries, Ruwa was established to cater for a reserve industrial land market. This was very different from other growth points whose statuses were based more on the administrative role that they played than economic potential. In the strictest sense, Ruwa was set up for real economic growth. The major locational advantage of Ruwa rests with its close proximity to the capital city of Harare where it can sample the advantages of global interconnectedness.

Apart from its proximity to Harare, Ruwa benefitted from its new status as a growth point after Mashonaland Holdings and partners had lobbied government for the development of the area. The growth point status helped Ruwa to expand its revenue base through levying tax on private properties. Since then, Ruwa town has been developed on land owned by the private sector (companies, trustees and individuals). It used to be a small by-the-road-side shopping centre and a block of Bromley-Ruwa Rural Council offices surrounded by commercial farms. The farmers collaborated with land developers to subdivide the farms into urban land uses. At the time of the initial development of Ruwa town only 92 ha were state land courtesy of an endowment placement from Mashonaland Holdings. At the establishment and preliminary consolidation from 1996 to 1998 over 3000 ha were in private hands compared to 92 ha of state land. The momentous rise in the

hectareage of consolidated land for urban development was unusual in the severely constrained political economy of Zimbabwe. This observation takes us to our earlier argument on place marketing and exceptional development strategies.

In the case in point, it can be contended that committed private investment was decisive in propelling forward the rapid development of Ruwa town. The local community of Ruwa residents made significant inputs in speeding up the land use planning and transformation of the growing peri-urban centre. Equally, the private sector companies in Ruwa were interested in developing the town since they engaged planning consultants to work with the Department of Physical Planning on preparing the local development plan.

The transparency of the Ruwa Town Council in collecting and using revenue tax on residential, industrial and commercial properties is an increasing rarity in Zimbabwe—as the “systemic consumption of the surplus by the ruling and urban elites is the norm rather an exception” in the arena of most African governments (Arrighi 2002). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Ruwa council’s efficiency in revenue collection endeared it to the local community. However, this was short lived when the disturbances that came with the suspension of council officials following the transfer of water administration in 2004 to ZINWA eroded the bond of trust between the city managers and residents alike (Murinda 2011).

8.8 Conclusions

The chapter has demonstrated the exceptional growth of Ruwa as the town proactively mobilised capital and social capital resources in conjunction with private companies and local residents in negotiating its economic growth (Hall and Hubbard 1998; Harvey 1989b) albeit the severely depressed space economy of Zimbabwe. The small town has registered profound transformations since its inception as a Growth Point in 1986. The upsurge in the infrastructure and real estate development of Ruwa in sharp contrast to other satellite towns in Zimbabwe has mainly been attributed to the creativity of private-public partnerships in the entrepreneurial urban turn. Although the private sector has worked on its own, it sought positive collaboration with the proactive state planning agencies. These public agencies played an instrumental and enabling role in stimulating and shaping the development of the town. To date, the place and town has remained intact and free from dysfunctional urban developments that tend to hinder effective service delivery. In this particular respect, Ruwa presents an image of a middle class town in which development harmonises with the shared vision of its promoters and beneficiary community.

On the contrary, Harare’s satellite towns of Chitungwiza, Norton and Epworth continue to grapple with the challenges of informality in planning and the use of land. This informality has provided territorial spaces of conflict and a diversity of populations who do not share common values of development. The chapter exposes how, despite the structural constraints and economic challenges, some collective

understandings have been fostered, over the years between the community and Ruwa Town Council. This is a testimony of how infrastructure development and planned land use have benefitted from a committed and enterprising community. Equally, the expansion of Ruwa has been attributed to its proximity to Harare. The synergies drawing on the commitment of its resident movements, place marketing and the multiplier effects of joint investment have been mainly responsible for the exceptional development of Ruwa. Benefitting from the shared vision of the community, corporate world and aggressive place marketing, Ruwa has positioned itself to become one of the most enterprising towns in Zimbabwe.

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