INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS' PLANNING THEORIES AND POLICY-MAKING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA – FROM 'SITE' TO 'PEOPLE': A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF OPERATIONS 'MURAMBATSVINA' AND 'GARIKAI' IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT
This article explores the theoretical debates on informal settlements and presents a critical overview of the related planning strategies. Operations Murambatsvina and Garikai have been the response of the Zimbabwean government to the rapid growth of uncontrolled and spontaneous settlements in major cities. This response sparked an avalanche of criticism throughout the international community. The article's fundamental research question is to assess whether that response was structured in accordance with the ideal and recommended planning practices for informal settlements. Operations Murambatsvina and Garikai were gigantic failures; they were configured for humanitarian crisis. The proposal for remedial action in the long term is to take decentralization, good local governance, and community participation seriously. The article suggests that the revamp of the institutional and legal framework is hereby the *conditio-sine-qua-non* pathway.
Keywords: African context, civil society, community participation, decentralization, development administration, informal settlement planning, rapid urbanization, slum, squatter settlement, urban poor.

> The poor are just rational as the middle and upper-income classes in terms of their response to a situation, but the squatter shack is a rational step on the way to self-improvement.
>
> Charles Abrams

> Give the poor security of land and he will progressively transform the shack into a respectable house.
>
> John F.C. Turner

1 INTRODUCTION

Two decades ago, at the University of Paris X (Nanterre)'s Laboratory for Urban Geography, Guy Burgel ignited debates about the dilemma of developing countries' cities between demolishing, regulating, ignoring, or accepting parallel spontaneous 'cities', between interventionism and *laissez-faire*. His colleagues at the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Comparatives sur les Espaces et Aménagements Urbains (CERCAU) objected that there was no short- and even medium-term need for exploring such a problem ([1], pp. 5–7). Burgel was right. The urban population in Africa grew exponentially. The Eastern African urban population accounted for 16.4% of the total population, Central Africa had 34.5%, Western Africa 22.5%, Southern Africa 46.5%, and northern Africa 46.5%, in the 1980s ([2], pp. 3–31). The African growth rate is at 4.87%; Africa is the continent with the fastest rate of urbanization [3]. The main source of this rapid urban growth is the rural-urban exodus. The influx of rural populations into urban centers puts an added strain on basic services and facilities; in addition, the costs and requirements for formal residence and employment are often beyond the capacity of the newcomers. Informality remains by large the easiest and fastest solution

for urban integration. As a result, the population in slums and squatter settlements increased at a rate of 15% per annum ([2], p. 6).

After the rescinding of the segregationist laws – the Native Urban Areas Accommodation and Registration Act (1946), the Land Tenure Act (1969), following the 1980 independence – large cities in Zimbabwe became the destination of massive migration from the countryside. Within a decade, slums and squatter settlements mushroomed extensively in the inner city and outskirts of Harare, in Bulawayo, and in other major cities in the Butare province. These uncontrolled settlements represented a challenge for urban planning. From 19 May to 21 July 2005, the Zimbabwean government embarked on a radical policy toward the informal settlements. The policy had two components: first, 'Operation Murambatsvina' and, second, Operation Garikai. The major interest of this research lies in investigating the following questions:

1. What are the norms and the ideal practices for informal settlements planning, and what orientations did the debates within the scholarly and policy-led discourse on informal settlements and on the urban poor take?
2. How were Zimbabwe's Operations Murambatsvina and Garikai conducted?
3. Did their execution comply with the ideal practices? If no, what institutional and strategic framework is needed to improve future operations?

The research questions give rise to two concerns: first, the *what-concern* (i.e. descriptive account), and, second, the *how-concern* (i.e. change initiative or contribution). Accordingly, the first research objective is to *explore* the normative discussions and cutting-edge developments on the issues of informal settlements and informal settlers; the next objective is to *describe* and *evaluate* the government policy under Operations Murambatsvina and Garikai. The final research objective is to *change*, which means to enumerate propositions for a better intervention in the social situation of informal settlement in Zimbabwe. Hence, this article is structured into two main sections. The first section deals with the general conceptual framework and the second highlights the case study on Zimbabwe. Some policy recommendations are highlighted in the conclusion.

2 THE GENERAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Shelter: relevance and implication for sustainable development

The importance of shelter and housing policy for sustainable development is manifest. Shelter is the prime step and the foundation toward empowering the poor to live up to sound ecological and anti-poverty solutions. The question of shelter has been recurrently described as the predication for the enjoyment of a body of substantial benefits, ranging from mere security, access to improved health, and better education services to the access to income-earning opportunities [4]. The realization of these benefits at community level (as well as at the household or individual scale), in the spirit of sustainability as elucidated by the Brundtland Commission (The Brundtland Report, 1987), is cognate to the existence of decent shelter. Specifically, in the least developed countries (LDCs) or in the so-called Third World countries (TWCs), the housing issue has the potential to either contribute or hamper development – in other words, it helps either to foster poverty reduction schemes or to nullify their impacts. Thus, the significance of housing amounts to something so important that it could be argued that decent shelter is one of the prime factors and aggregated indicators for good sustainable development practices. The UNDP Social Development Index and the associated annual reports on the world situation since the early 1960s, under the banner

of 'decent standard of living' ([5], pp. 327–352), have unequivocally acknowledged this fact. The UN Millennium Development Goals further emphasize the dialectical nature of shelter for the eradication of poverty ([6], pp. 4–5, 16–20). This therefore suggests more commitment to the issues of shelter and settlement from the policy-makers. Those issues should be preceived as privileged components in programs addressing cross-sectoral problems, regardless of whether at the macro, meso, or micro policy-making and implementation level [7].

2.2 African context analysis: decontextualizing versus detextualizing

It seems important at this stage to stress the core methodological and even cognitive peril always confronting social analysis as soon as African societies are the subject of inquiry. As a general law of social theorizing, regardless of whether one follows the inductive, deductive, or retroductive research path, unbiased observation is regarded as essential – if not as an iron rule. Everyday discourse and scholastic narratives, of Western as well as of non-Western provenance, have often engaged in simplistic and reductionist reasoning; itself dictated by a certain negativity myth upon Africa. The incurring dogma: this refers to the circular representations, born out of an obstinate 'comparicism' with Western parameters, that have wholly portrayed African phenomena in terms of 'lack', 'absence', 'deficit', 'non-being', 'bad', chaotic', and 'abysmal'. This widespread scholarly assertive hymn, by nature, assigns 'Africa to a special unreality such that the continent becomes the very figure of what is null, abolished, and, in its essence, in opposition to what is: the very expression of that nothing whose special feature is to be nothing at all' ([8], p. 4). The effect of the epistemological *longue durée* of this instrumentalist paradigm, instead of objectively capturing the 'context', rather creates a 'text' nurtured by subjective off-the-cuff representations ([8], pp. 7–8). In addition, as a matter of fact 'cavalier interpretations and shallow rehashes become the order of the day' ([8], p. 6) at the terrible expense of the principles of distinguishing the causes and effects, of asking the subjective meaning of actions, of determining the genesis of practices and how they are interconnected [8]. This state of affairs inexorably gives vent to a *decontextualization* of the African materiality and concomitantly establishes a programmatic *textualization*. The latter, reversely, obstructs the true lawfulness, the 'true raison d'être' ([8], p. 5) and 'the true historicity of African society' [9]. The upshot on the analysis of the African context is evident: it makes an objective (and realistic) account of the polity and social idiosyncrasies, including urban realities, pretty unattainable. Mbembe pungently argued: 'while we now feel we know nearly everything that African states, societies, and economies are not, we still know absolutely nothing about what they actually are' ([8], p. 9). The pressing change or vigilance to initiate in African urban studies, including investigations pertaining to informal settlement issues, is, first of all, to reconnect with the axiomatic approach of understanding and appreciating social phenomena in African societies in relation to nothing other than themselves. The other precautionary aspect is to reconcile with patient, careful, and in-depth research insulated from the usual off-the-cuff presentations and from groundless assertive premises. Constellations of African societies, as well as those of any other part of the world, are much nuanced and demand the thoughtful and well-grounded approach, which is liberated from postcolonial melancholies [10, 11] and psychograms.

One of the direct research implications having bearing on informal settlement studies is a possible ill-conception of standards – decent shelter, land use, urban poverty, urban governance, urban density, urban designs, etc. To this effect, Asiama [12] highlights the distinctiveness of land tenure in Uganda and Ghana. In Ghana and Uganda the land tenure system is caught between two paradigms: the traditional and the European-inherited notions. Among the Buganda in Uganda, the Kabaka (the traditional ruler) was the ultimate owner of all land in the state, and other landowners

hold land rights through him. In Ghana, land belongs to the community defined as a vast family [12]. After decolonization, the central administration authority became more and more extended over the control of land, setting the path for an ample penetration of the European-inherited land tenure regulations. The duality of the system of land tenure is characteristic of the nuanced nature of urbanity in African societies. Therefore, it implies the paramount need to work toward (to use again our neologisms) *detextualizing* and *recontextualizing* the analytical approach. A genuine *contextualized* approach – one that proceeds by viewing the African context not in an evolutionist comparison to western societies and by transcending the usual gratuitous negativity representations – is most amenable to understanding clinical problems.

2.3 Definitional precision: informal settlement and sub-concepts

The analysis that follows evolves out of certain concepts whose content and meaning still needs some precision. The central concept of this article is 'informal settlement'. It inevitably carries a corpus of sub-concepts distinguished in the wordings: *slum* and *squatter settlement*. The University of Witwatersrand's Informal Settlement Policy Research Center defines informal settlements with the following characteristics [13]:

1.   land use is unauthorized;
2.   the settlement pattern is unauthorized or not approved; often this involves a high residential density;
3.   the construction is unauthorized and not to prescribed standards;
4.   the occupation originates from a land invasion.

As already mentioned, the literature breaks down informal settlements in two distinct categories: the slums and the squatter settlements. Consider first, the concept of slum, which is also known in popular parlance as *shantytown*, *bidonville*, *musseques*, *canicos* and *favelas*. There are two definitional patterns to distinguish, which are mutually non-exclusive. The first definition, provided by Solzbacher [14], gives an account of the general perspective, while the second one, proposed by Mabogunje [15], specifically seeks to be interpretive of the African slums' context. Solzbacher's definition of slum identifies three criteria or constitutive characteristics. Following this definition, it is right to talk of 'slum' only if the following factors are at work ([14], p. 45):

1.   the physical condition of an area, including housing condition (inter- and intra-housing condition, sanitary conditions), lacks access to facilities that make possible the physical and mental well-being of the dwellers;
2.   lack of effective social organization;
3.   the social image factor: the images that are held of the community of the area by the larger community and the self-image of the residents.

Mabogunje's definition throws into relief the common physical appearance of slum environments in Africa: 'a construction of insubstantial housing constructed of recuperated waste materials of wood or corrugated iron sheets ... mud wall and thatch-roof or iron roof. There is little in the way of road systems ... and if a road system is discernible ... it is usually unpaved and gutted by erosion. Many houses have no electricity or piped water and most of them have pot latrines. There is no sewerage or drainage system. (...) There are also few schools ... and no hospital or health facilities. Yet this is the most active area of the city with its petty traders' ([15], pp. 8–9). The analytical account of Solzbacher [14], wedded to the descriptive approach of Mabogunje, morphs into a more balanced and, for our objectives in this article, operational understanding of the concept of 'slum'.

As opposed to slums, *squatter settlements* are transitional or temporary by nature. *Stricto sensu*; a squatting occupancy is a problem of legal dimension. The legal dimension in the other forms of informal housing discussed earlier is not established as a component of the problem-definition. A squatter settlement is located on land or in buildings that are occupied without the consent of the owner and is not consistent with the land-use laws. A squatter settlement can be both a slum and a squatting, i.e. the settlement under consideration fulfills the criteria of non-compliance with the law regulating land use and of exhibition of decaying physical conditions. Stren's [16] comments to that question make it more explicit by providing a comparative picture of both phenomena in more details. Arguing on the nature of squatter settlement, he writes that it is 'an area in which the people have built themselves homes without regard to survey boundaries, whether or not such boundaries have been established. Squatter's houses may be as good as (if not better than) many houses built on surveyed plots to which the house owners have the rights of occupancy. However, most of the squatter areas have poorer urban amenities than do comparable high-density areas where houses are built on surveyed plots. Roads, schools, water and electric facilities, surface water drainage and septic tank emptying services in squatter areas are markedly inferior to those in non-squatter areas' ([17], pp. 53–54). The aspects emerging out of Stren's comments are the issues of legality and urban amenities.

2.4 Informal settlement theories: the state of the art

The landscape of the theoretical debates over informal settlement planning and working with the urban poor, especially in the TWCs or LDCs, has received paradigmatic momentum since the early 1960s. From Oscar Lewis [18] to Charles Abrams [19], William Mangin [20], John Turner [21] and the World Bank [22], a considerable *Wandel der Denkungsart* (change of the thinking) has taken place.

Oscar Lewis' famous culture of poverty concept [18, 23] is based on fatalistic assumptions about the urban poor. He depicts the urban poor as contented with their situation and intrinsically incapable of self-initiating and sustaining decent living conditions. Based on his haphazard and marginal experiences in Puerto Rico, he advocated the diversion of funds from upgrading the urban poor housing to 'more rewarding' undertakings, such as investments in nation building. For Lewis, any investments in the redevelopment of urban poor settlement would be a waste; consequently, attention should be directed to the promotion of industry. The transportation system should rather target industrial and commercial population segments. Lewis' theory was used to legitimize increased governmental expenditures in housing and servicing urban middle class populations. The other side of the coin is the total abandonment of policies aimed at improving informal settlements.

The first countervailing wave of thought came from Charles Abrams. He emphatically impeached Lewis' idea that the urban poor are unwilling to act and destitute of intrinsic eagerness to take care of decent housing conditions [19]. Abrams draws on his practical experience in different TWCs (e.g. Ghana, Turkey, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nigeria, India, Jamaica, and Bolivia) to argue that it is not a waste to assist the poor. He maintained that empowerment to self-help was the most appropriate solution pathway. He also proposed to adopt a different perception on slums and squatter settlements. For Abrams, the 'shantytowns', 'bidonvilles' and 'favelas' are not the locus of the urban ills or the expression of a poverty culture per se; they are the poor response to a situation: a rational step on the way to self-improvement ([19], p. 174).

Building on groundbreaking thoughts spread by Abrams, John Turner, and William Mangin made seminal contributions in terms of how to initiate change and create an environment propitious to liberating the poor's energy toward improving their housing standard and social livelihood.

Turner regards land tenure security as a pivotal incentive in facilitating the poor's commitment to the progressive transformation of their shelter [21]. Accordingly, tenure security is the primary step for solving the problem of squatter settlement by the government. Another principle enunciated is the reduction of the burden of charges for informal settlement dwellers by sharing the workload with the government. Thus, the government provides the basic services and amenities whose realization lies beyond the dwellers' capacity. A realistic portion of the work is then designed to be achieved by the inhabitants themselves. This scheme has been termed 'sites-and-services', which will be analyzed in depth in the subsequent sections. Mangin [20] also highlights the prime necessity for creating access to basic social infrastructures in squatting neighborhoods, where some shelters might probably be over the standard, but where the (unplanned) physical environment remains an obstacle to access or enjoy social benefits [20]. This approach has been coined 'upgrading scheme', which will also be discussed in greater detail in the forthcoming sections.

In a broadly thought perspective, the works of Amartya Sen represent a gigantic conceptual input to the *Wandel der Denkungsart*, as described above. In fact, the novelty of Sen's theory of development is to broaden the scope of freedom and to view its materiality in every segment of human activity. Dignity and capability are the core concepts of this interconnectivity between freedom and development. He identifies freedom as a constitutive as well as instrumental attribute to development. The substance of development is viewed as the 'general capability of a person or people to live more freely' ([24], p. 38). The development theories proposed by Abrams, Turner and Mangin for informal settlements firmly emphasize the categories of ownership and dignity. This squarely correlates to Sen's cherished concept of capability building for the urban poor. Sen has definitely been authoritative in the moral-ethical shift that occurred in the scholarly and policy-directed discourse upon the TWCs' poor in general, and upon the poor informal settlements dwellers in particular.

The World Bank's adoption and vigorous advocacy of the self-help theory, in conjunction with the sites-and-services schemes, has been an important factor in legitimizing the capability and freedom approach in the international development cooperation. The demise of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) [25] in favor of the ideology of 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper' (PRSP) – despite being perceived by some as a rhetorical masquerade starved of genuine innovation – evidences, once again, the re-centering of the poor in terms of capability-building [26].

2.5 The policy level: five planning strategies for informal settlements

There is a variety of planning strategies for informal settlements. Their mechanisms and scope vary according to the level of government involvement. The reason for the selection of the five planning strategies that follow is that they are evocative of the evolution of governmental planning practices in Africa since the 1960 decade. We do not intend to explore the history of housing policy in Africa, as it would extrapolate the objective of this research. Our enticement to past and actual planning practices in Africa is to shield eventual criticism that they might be unrealistic or alienating for the African context. This selection does not either reflect our value judgment; it is merely the stocktaking of the most practiced planning policies.

2.5.1 Strategy I: Eviction-and-demolition schemes
This strategy, also labeled *direct action* ([27], pp. 177–186), consists of clearing up informal settlements, i.e. evicting the occupants and demolishing their spontaneous shelters and other informally erected structures. We can discern two schemes of this policy: hard and soft eviction-and-demolition schemes. The hard scheme does not contain a compensation plan for the occupants, with whom no negotiation of any kind is set up; the occupants are rather perceived as undesired criminals, as the

problem itself to get rid of. The soft scheme slightly differs from the hard one in the sense that it is accompanied with a resettlement plan (in the city outskirts mostly) or includes a modest compensation package. It might also include a low level of negotiation with the dwellers and the issuance of a demolition schedule or notice. However, both alternatives of the eviction-and-demolition schemes understand the slum dwellers and the squatters as the problem and not as the solution. Additionally, they do not seek rehabilitation but pure eradication.

2.5.2 Strategy II: Low-cost housing provision programs

This strategy is rather proactive and pre-emptive in magnitude. It is not aimed at solving an instant problem. The planners assume that the phenomenon of urban slums and squatter settlements is the direct emanation of scarce low-cost housing stock. Thus, more low-cost housing units would eliminate housing shortage and, therefore, ultimately solve the problem of informality. The salient and critical point is that the long-term success of this strategy is predicated by the mobilization of large financial resources – as exemplified in the cases of Singapore and Hong Kong – which many African countries' low-income economies cannot sustainably afford. However, history indicates that there has been a grand enthusiasm around this strategy in the 1970s in Africa. State corporations such as the Office des Habitations à Loyer Modéré (OHLM) in Senegal or the Société Ivoirienne de Construction et de Gestion Immobilière (SICOGI), the Société d'Equipement du Terrain Urbain (SETU), the Société de Gestion Financière de l'Habitat (SOGEFIHA) in the Ivory Coast, and also the National Housing Corporation (NHC) in Tanzania constructed massive low-cost housing units between 1970 and 1979. From 1970 to September 1979, the Ivorian SETU could accommodate 350,000 households and the SOGEFIHA built 17 912 low-cost housing units ([16], pp. 36–39).

2.5.3 Strategy III: Sites-and-services schemes/land-and-utilities schemes

The objective of the sites-and-services schemes is to provide an economically accessible physical framework for shelter and related employment needs to the slum or squatter settlement target groups. The major components are: first, the land (subdivision of urban land); second, public utilities; and third, community facilities. The funding of sites-and-services schemes is a combination of government assistance and largely efforts of community residents – with and sometimes without outside assistance ([22], p. 3). The sites-and-services schemes cannot be effective if the issue of land tenure security is not incorporated into the plan. Therefore, we agree with Laquian that the sites-and-services scheme is comprised of four elements ([28], p. 17):

1. residential building plots (so that individual households may build their own dwellings);
2. public utilities (basic amenities such as water, sanitation, electric lighting, sidewalks, paved roads);
3. neighborhood facilities (schools, markets, police, fire protection, parks, community centers, religious and cultural centers, etc.);
4. contractual arrangements (legal relationships between the government and the residents: land tenure, responsibility for basic services, land use regulations).

The sites-and-services schemes can be bluntly defined as the subdivision of land and its servicing. As is apparent, this strategy concentrates on land and services and relegates the improvement of the shelter commodity to the very effort of the dwellers themselves.

2.5.4 Strategy IV: Aided self-help/mutual help strategy

Aided or assisted self-help schemes owe their formal inception to the works of Abrams and Turner. The term *self-help housing* lends itself to different interpretations and meanings, depending on the

ideological context. In the 1970s–1980s, during the apogee era of leftist programmatic changes in Africa – as perceptible in the rhetoric of self-reliance, auto-centered and endogenous development – self-help housing meant using local by-products, materials, and traditional techniques to build houses and stepping down from 'pseudo-Western middle-class standards of housing and environmental planning' ([27], pp. 187–188). Before the Abrams–Turner concept became authoritative in the area, self-help technically designated housing for low-income families, constructed with their unpaid labor, especially in rural areas ([2], pp. 340–341). Turner's definition supports the variable of the mobilization of dwellers' unpaid labor. But it also adds the variables of direct investment by the concerned families and of their participation in the decision-making ([2], pp. 340–341). The new configuration of the concept is made of *aided* or *assisted* and *self-help*. This denotes two complementary actions: the governmental support or international agencies' assistance on one side, and the efforts of the informal settlers on the other side. The role of the government and international cooperation is limited to providing supporting structures such as standard designs and specifications, supervision, know-how instructions, financing, to supplying certain materials, plants and tools, or demonstration prototypes ([2], pp. 340–341). The future occupants supply the labor. The advantages to gain are numerous. First, the sense of belonging and development ownership is cultivated in the dwellers, who will feel emboldened to take care of the maintenance once the governmental partners have withdrawn (*the sustainability argument*). Second, the costs of building are kept low and shelter deployment can be carried out quickly at a large scale (*the cost-benefits argument*). Third, while building their houses themselves, the future occupants familiarize with the environment and develop social contacts with their would-be community (*social argument*). Finally, as the slum dwellers and squatters best know their own needs, building by themselves allows them to design their shelter in harmony with their expectations (*efficiency argument*). However, few requirements need to be met for the aided self-help schemes to be really successful. In fact, sound urban planning and provision of suitable infrastructure, good dwelling design, possibilities for future improvements or extensions, availability and use of local materials, simplicity of construction, selection of and reasonable size of participants, careful handling of social sensitivity, ought to be at work ([2], pp. 340–341). To conclude this section on aided self-help schemes, let us once again sharpen the understanding of the difference between sites-and-services schemes and aided self-help schemes. While the first is strictly preoccupied with planning the subdivision, by creating access to public utilities and community facilities (*the plot or site logic*), the latter is primordially concerned with erecting shelters of acceptable standard (*the shelter logic*).

2.5.5 Strategy V: Slum/squatter upgrading schemes

Slum/squatter upgrading consists of physical, social, economic, and environmental improvements that are done in partnership with informal occupants, community groups, businesses, and local authorities. These improvements often focus on introducing or improving – where it already exists – basic services provision, mitigating environmental hazards, regularizing security of tenure, providing incentives for community management and maintenance, and improving access to health care and education. These basic services can involve water and sanitation, garbage collection and disposal, surface drainage, roads, footpaths, electricity supply. They are often accompanied by community facilities and security of tenure. Upgrading schemes, like sites-and services schemes, do not involve housing construction. Upgrading schemes require the active participation of all stakeholders: the *housers* (interested in self-help housing improvement and view upgrading as a tool to increase land tenure security); the *principal engineers* (interested in public health, public safety, and clean water provision); the *politicians* (interested in consolidating their political power or control over constituencies in dwellings they regard as a marketing tool to enhance their

social profile); the *community-builders* (concerned about raising awareness in the community on common interests); the *international funders* (concerned about providing financial support to projects that can make a difference to the life of the poor); and the *slum dwellers* (concerned about getting real and instant benefits from the government) ([29], p. 6). Thus, the success of an upgrading scheme hinges upon good urban governance; the government should rely upon the urban grassroots democratic participation, on the World Bank fetish concept of Community Driven Development (CDD) [30], where the affected groups have the due room of maneuver and advantage. The most important element for success is commitment by all stakeholders. A sense of partnership must be at work among them. Second, upgrading must meet a real need, i.e. people must want it and understand its value. For a thriving implementation, the (local) government must get the institutional arrangements right: it should give incentives for agencies to work with the poor, should keep everyone informed, and should coordinate between stakeholders, and define clearly the roles of the various agencies. And to keep upgrading going, sustainability concerns must be highly ranked among priorities while devising financial, institutional, and regulatory plans. It is also very important that the government provides training to NGOs and dwellers so that they can fully participate in the entire process.

2.5.6 Ex-course: aspects of participatory planning

Desai defines participation in upgrading planning as 'organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situation on the part of the groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control' ([31], p. 42). Participation in upgrading planning represents a decisive tool to enhance the quality of the process and produce benefits at a different level. From a development-as-human-rights' perspective it is arguable that people have to participate in decision-making which directly affects their living conditions. Self-reliance is furthermore a by-product of participation by the affected groups. Participation helps achieve more effectiveness, e.g. close public–private partnership between local government authorities and communities can render the project satisfactory for both sides. In terms of management, participation helps reduce the risks of misunderstanding and resistance from the community groups, as they will identify themselves with the project value. This also fastens the realization pace of the tasks. Sustainability is also best pursued, because the target groups are motivated enough by valence and ownership to take care of the project after the agencies' staff withdraw ([31], pp. 47–48). As the government is the major provider of social development services, its role is crucial for a true participation to emerge during the planning process. Contrary to the prevalent vertical public sector reform in most TWCs, an alternative concept of development administration should be sought in addressing problems of urban informality. The state should structure itself to create more responsive, public-service-oriented administration that involves beneficiaries more directly in organizational control. The local government should shift its role's understanding from 'provision' toward 'enablement', i.e. it should morph into a facilitator, a supporter, and an interpreter ([31], pp. 47–48). This role of facilitator should be played at all stages of the project: planning stage, implementation stage, and post-project maintenance phase. NGOs are unquestionably vested with significant powers in fostering communities' participation. They should be watchful of any governmental attempts to subvert and manipulate local people, to make use of pseudo-participation as a means of social control to deflect opposition or to exclude communities in the project design stages. NGOs are helpful in mitigating and influencing the abandonment of top–down decision-making processes, and in forcing admission to the decision-making and resources. By organizing slum-dwellers' communities in collective groups, and by instilling in them the ethics of acting in group-based mobilization, a tremendous contribution toward increasing their bargaining power is achieved. It is highly recommendable that local NGOs get connected to international

networks for social action, and ensure an optimal level of financial independence from their local government. Under an authoritarian or autocratic political climate, which is by evidence the case in Zimbabwe, the role to be played by NGOs' global networks is critically indispensable in bargaining for sound urban policies [32]. In summary, community organizing is critical for the success of participatory planning at the local or urban municipal level.

3 OPERATIONS 'MURAMBATSVINA' AND 'GARIKAI' IN ZIMBABWE

3.1 A brief overview of the Zimbabwean context

Zimbabwe belongs to the group African countries whose political history has been highly polarized around the land question, and whose city planning was designed to serve the goals of racial segregationist policies. Furthermore, as in the majority of the countries in the region, Zimbabwe's present trends are characterized by rapid and chaotic urbanization ([33], pp. 226–227). The 1980's Lancaster House Constitution, which sanctioned the country's political independence and specified the platform for national reconciliation after years of liberation war, identified land reform as the chief pursuit of the new nation's government. It advocated a 'willing-seller willing-buyer' policy. The Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development (ZIMCORD) held in 1981 mobilized the international community around financing the land redistribution policy on a willing-buyer willing-seller basis, in Zimbabwe. Due to the non-availability of funding, the land reform plan became a big fiasco. On its ruins a permanent political tension on the land issue vegetated and exists to date.

Since 1980, the informal sector in Zimbabwe has grown steadily. In the labor market, for example, the informal sector's share of employment grew from 20% by 1986–87, 27% by 1991, and an estimated 40% by 2004 ([34], pp. 8–9). It is also estimated that 3–4 million Zimbabweans earn their living through informal sector employment, supporting another 5 million people, while the formal sector in the country employs only about 1.3 million people ([34], pp. 8–9). Zimbabwe's formal housing stock is 700,000 units for a population of nearly 12 million (an average of 17 people per house). The housing shortage is estimated at over a million units, an accumulation increasing by 250,000 units annually, while the annual production is only about 18,000 units ([35], pp. 17–20). Serviced land in Harare's high-density townships sells for about Z$ 70 per square meter (US$ 1.75), making a 200 m² land worth about Z$ 14,000 (US$ 350). The average income of Harare's mainly informally employed residents is less than Z$ 600 (US$ 15). Public low-cost housing provision has become almost non-existent; more than 140,000 low-income families are on the public waiting list in Harare alone [35]. These figures reveal the housing crisis prevailing in large Zimbabwean cities.

3.2 The design and implementation of Operation 'Murambatsvina'

Operation Murambatsvina (i.e. 'Clear the Dirt' in Shona language), or in its official translation 'Operation Restore Order', was launched on 19 May 2005. The operation was jointly organized by the Minister of Local Government and Urban Housing (Mr Ignatius Chombo), the Minister of Home Affairs (Kembo Mohadi), the Commissioner of Police (Augustine Chihuri), and the Chairperson of the government-appointed City of Harare (David Karimanzira) [36]. The objectives of the operation according to government officials were to restore order and sanity throughout the capital [37], to prevent disorderly urbanization, to stop illegal market transactions in the informal economic sector, and to enforce bylaws to crush all forms of illegal activity [38]. Five days after the operation launch, the city of Harare issued a notice calling the informal settlements dwellers in Harare to demolish

their structures by 20 June 2005 ([38], p. 14). Similar notice was not unfortunately issued in other affected cities. On 25 May, in complete disregard of the deadline announced, a massive police operation swept the cities of Harare and Bulawayo. Vendors' markets, flea markets, other informal market premises, and informal housing structures were first targeted ([38], p. 12). Throughout the month of June the operation targeted almost every large town and business center in Zimbabwe. Countless homes and flea markets were bulldozed and smashed in the localities of Bulawayo, Chinhoyi, Gweru, Harare, Kwe Kwe, Marondera, Mutare, Rusape and Victoria Falls ([38], p. 13). The destructions began in the so-called shantytowns in high-density suburbs, before being extended to squatter settlements on farms in peri-urban and rural areas.

The operation forcibly evicted 700 000 people from their homes, made them homeless and destroyed their source of livelihood. The eviction was indiscriminate. The demolition of houses and properties included houses built without a council permit, such as unplanned houses built behind legal dwellings; houses built as part of informal settlements after residents were initially moved and resettled there by the government; houses built as part of housing cooperatives on farms; even some legal houses and buildings and flea markets stalls from licensed informal traders operating in the cities' markets. More than 100 000 people were forced to migrate to rural areas where they ultimately suffered acute food shortage [39]. As a part of the operation, transit camps were established on Caledonia Farm – on the outskirts of Harare – in Mutare and in Bulawayo to hold some evictees [39].

3.3 Objectives and nature of Operation 'Garikai'

On 29 June the government launched 'Operation Garikai' (i.e. 'reconstruction' in Shona language) and announced a 3 trillion Zimbabwe dollar (US\$ 300 million) rebuilding and reconstruction program that principally aimed at providing decent accommodation to those affected by evictions and at solving the waiting list problem by building 1.2 million houses [40, 41]. Operation Garikai was structured for long-term needs and did not specifically target the immediate shelter needs of people rendered homeless [38]. On 21 July the government decided to close the transit camps in favor of a comprehensive resettlement plan [37]. A number of people were transported to demarcated housing stands (e.g. Hatcliffe Extension), while many others were compulsorily transported to the rural areas ([37], p. 19). Another group of about 2000 men, women, and children was relocated to another transitional settlement (Hopley Farm, Masvingo) [37]. The government has marketed and advertised Operation Garikai as an initiative to restore dignity to the affected people. But is still not clear whether business losses and people forcibly relocated in rural areas will be awarded compensation, and if so, in what form? It was also reported that the criteria to allocate housing were arbitrary and worked to the disadvantage of those without formal employment or housing [38]. These are the questions the government's Inter-Ministerial Task Force responsible for coordinating 'Operation Garikai' has blatantly left unaddressed. As a result, the whole program was non-transparent to the affected slum and squatter settlement dwellers. The evictees did not know how and where to seek help and even if they were entitled to do so. A situation of almost tectonic disarray reigned among the evictees. Instead of bringing order, a challenging humanitarian situation, made of internally displaced and economically broken urban masses, was created by the government.

3.4 Gap analysis of the inherent governmental policy

The first section of the article has described a set of normative principles and an array of strategies for good practice in dealing with informal settlements. The Zimbabwean operations Murambatsvina and Garikai showcase characteristics which are rather at odds with the recommendations overviewed.

The author believes that even though the government is confronted with drastic financial constraints, much could be done differently. It could be argued that the government's planning behavior failed to comply with the best practice strategies for informal settlements planning based on critical points discussed in detail below.

The first level of inadequacy is the philosophical perception of slum dwellers. We have seen that it is fundamental for the planner, as a first step, to bring the Oscar Lewis culture of poverty's model into disrepute. The planner should increasingly perceive the dweller as a part of the solution rather than a part of the problem. In the Zimbabwe case, the squatters and slum occupants were demonized and targeted as the problem itself. Hence, it seemed legitimate to the public authorities to take military-style measures against them. No effort was made at the design or problem-definition stage to evaluate and to properly identify the socio-economic roots causes and logic of the slum and squatter settlement situation. It seemed that the government did not seek the well-being of 'people' but the welfare of the sites. The disconnection between the Harare urban poor from their local and central governments is actually troublesome. The urban poor appear like certain disenfranchised aliens without *droit de cite*. So, the paradigm introduced by Charles Abrams, William Mangin, and John Turner were not at work. If we use the metaphor of 'old' and 'new regime', we might assert that the Zimbabwean planners were still caught in the 'old regime'.

The second level of shortfall is of a procedural nature. It was clear that the planning strategy, preferred or decided upon by the government, was the one listed as 'Strategy I: Eviction-and-demolition schemes'. However, the government's attitude was ambivalent and heterogeneous in the practice as it incorporated few aspects of other strategies. A deadline of two months was issued by the chairperson of the government-appointed Harare commission in May 2005, but was not held by the enforcement authorities. No compensation scheme was designed for the affected people; instead, discussions were hastily prompted about transit camps and later about reconstruction. If the people were at the center of the preoccupation, the issues of compensation and reconstruction would have been an integral part of the plan, right at the beginning. It would have even been the *sine qua none* for starting the operations. This adoption of the hard eviction-and-demolition scheme, coupled with a flirtation with soft management instruments, is testimony of the unprepared character of the 'planning'. In our sense, it is null and void of social motivations and betrays political calculations.

The third level of failure concerns the understanding of reconstruction and humanitarian assistance. Operation Garikai could be analyzed as an avowal of failure and as a determination to correct past planning mistakes: better late than never. It is also difficult to discern what type of strategy Harare is pursuing, and what teleology underlies this program. Is it a short-term program for immediate humanitarian assistance to the evictees left without shelter? Is it a tool for long-term coping with the situation of formal housing shortage? How will the 300 million US$ be managed and allocated? What room of maneuver is given to local housing cooperatives, to local government structures closer to the affected people, to the housing-seekers, etc.? Is it specifically designed as a response to the low-income population in the informal sector or is it more comprehensive? The non-clarity about these questions leaves doubts about the effectiveness – good will – of Operation Garikai. However, the feature that appears recognizable is the impetus of the government to adopt 'Strategy II' (low-cost-housing provision program). Such a capital-intensive strategy is rewarding only when the government can permanently sustain the related financial burden (as it was the case in Singapore). The Zimbabwe government is undergoing a harsh economic crisis for a decade: the budget deficit is estimated to exceed 14% of GDP and domestic debt is estimated at 1 billion US$ ([42], p. 17). These figures reveal the factual incapacity of the government to live up to this strategy's requirements in the long term. Nevertheless, that strategy, according to cutting-edge research, also belongs to the 'old regime'. The 'new regime' of planning for informal settlements pertinently recommends the inclusion or the

participation of all stakeholders, especially the informal occupants. It equally advocates a plan of regularization of land tenure, where this appears necessary. The government is advised to play the role of facilitator and to relinquish its classical position as provider – except for basic amenities. None of these recommendations has been part of Operation Garikai. The reconstruction and assistance schemes, without the systematic inclusion of the affected communities and non-governmental actors, remain a disastrous science fiction.

4 CLOSING REMARKS: LESSONS LEARNED

In the Section 2, the theoretical discussion and normative background supporting the modern strategies of planning for informal settlements have been critically evaluated. The evidences gathered from the analysis of Charles Abrams, William Mangin, John Turner, Amartya Sen, and the World Bank suggest that a *Wandel der Denkungsart* has come about in the planning theories related to informal settlements. The quintessence of this change in thinking – of the disapproval and demise of Oscar Lewis' model – orbits around the perception of the urban poor as being a part of the solution; the concepts of participatory planning or grass-root development, decentralization and facilitation; the notions of capability-building and sustainability; and the values of freedom and ownership. The methodological ambushes to which the social scientist of urban studies is exposed were also discussed. It was asserted that it is important to increase methodological vigilance while working on a case study related to developing countries, including African societies. The myth of negativity of the African continent, developed since the colonial era, has left dogmatic representations of Africa that threaten the ability to remain objective and non-ideological. African case studies should be seen only in relation to themselves, to their own *raison d'être*. The social scientist should therefore pursue the logic of recontextualizing his approach and detextualizing the cut-and-off representations. But, being realistic does not imply obstinately portraying Africa from a paradisiacal angle; it is about reading realities from the lawfulness of the society itself.

Furthermore, Operations Murambatsvina and Garikai were presented and scrutinized. Operation Murambatsvina consisted of a spontaneous and military-style eviction and demolition campaign in the shantytowns of Zimbabwe's largest cities. Operation Garikai was aimed at remedying the humanitarian problems that erupted, i.e. reconstructing the damages, assisting the evictees, and supplying more housing stock to address the informal housing problem. To evaluate the governmental policy, this article has criticized it as being downright negative. We shall argue that the planning policy encapsulated in Operations Murambatsvina and Garikai was doomed or condemned to generate a humanitarian crisis owing to the fact that it failed to incorporate elements of community participation, and that it was arbitrary and not formally rule-bound. It was also a failure because it was primarily concerned with 'getting the sites right' rather than 'getting the people right'.

It appears indispensable for the Zimbabwean government to earnestly foster decentralization policy reforms, so that local decision-making agencies can have a say in projects affecting their environment and constituencies. However, local governance should be restructured in a way that permits increased public–private collaboration and grants community organizations a full range of direct participation. We acknowledge that such a transformation is rendered difficult if the legal framework remains non-inclusive. That is why the first reforms should aim at protecting political and association rights. Current cumbersome laws restricting NGO activities and discouraging community mobilization need to be revoked. This is the institutional framework necessary to enable better informal settlement planning. *A propos* the civil society and NGOs should work to provide slums and squatting communities with training in organizing and bargaining. Networking with other social interest groups inside and outside the country is an asset.

Finally, we can maintain that the execution of the cited measures will represent a powerful framework conducive to the consideration of the planning strategy IV (aided self-help/mutual help strategy) in Zimbabwe's future informal settlement planning operations.

APPENDIX

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