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ZIMBABWE'S UNSTABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

This article explores Zimbabwe's literal and metaphorical infrastructure and the different ways this in/stability plays out in practice. Digital infrastructure, in particular mobile infrastructures but also fibre, is the primary focus. The country's physical infrastructure, especially in the capital Harare, is reviewed. The intersection of these with Zimbabwe's politics and social change movements is also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The phrase "unstable infrastructure" seems tailor-made for a discussion of Zimbabwe's current political and economic situation. The instability of our infrastructure manifests itself in a most literal sense in the corroded pipes, water leaks, sewage bursts and water shortages which characterise Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. The instability of our mobile phone network is apparent in the government takeover of Telecel, one of Zimbabwe's three mobile phone companies. The instability of our socio-political infrastructure is visible when reflecting on the fact that citizen engagement with government is at its lowest level in over a decade.[1] And the instability of our economic infrastructure is evidenced by, among other things, cash shortages that began in January 2016 and have worsened over the course of the year.[2]

And yet, whilst the words instability and Zimbabwe might seem synonymous, the situation in Zimbabwe is in some ways one of entrenched uncertainty. A scan of opinion pieces or political analysis headlines since 2000 are striking in their similarities. Year after year, Zimbabwe's future is bleak, its economy on edge and its politics

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1 Stephen Ndoma, Richman Kokera, "Citizen Engagement in Zimbabwe at Lowest Level in a Decade", *Afrobarometer,* Dispatch No. 70, 2016. Available at: http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r6_dispatchno70_civic_disengagement_in_zimbabwe.pdf [accessed June 25, 2016].

2 Unknown Author, "Banks Cap Withdrawals as Cash Crisis Bites", *The Chronicle*, 2016. Available at: http://www.chronicle.co.zw/banks-cap-withdrawals-as-cash-crisis-bites/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

uncertain.[3] But the country continues to stagger along. The more things change, the more the "crisis in Zimbabwe" remains the same.

This article explores Zimbabwe's literal and metaphorical infrastructure and the different ways this in/stability plays out in practise. Digital infrastructure, in particular mobile infrastructures but also fibre, is the primary focus. The country's physical infrastructure, especially in the capital Harare, is reviewed. The intersection of these with Zimbabwe's politics and social change movements is also discussed.

MOBILE PHONE AND INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE

Zimbabwe's mobile phone usage has taken off since 2009. In part, this was due to the transition away from Zimbabwe's inflationary "slash the zeroes quick as you add them" dollar towards a multi-currency system, which resulted in Zimbabwe largely becoming a US Dollar economy. This created economic stability, which the country had not experienced after years of hyperinflation, and enabled businesses to develop pricing structures and revenue models, which made entering the mobile (and mobile web) market more affordable to consumers.

That said, Zimbabwe's mobile phone calling, SMS and data charges were still high, particularly for the region. A government directive resulted in a dramatic reduction of mobile phone charges in January 2015. For example, Econet, Zimbabwe's largest mobile phone company, brought call charges down 30 per cent after the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) ordered that operators not charge more than 15 cents per minute for voice calls and five cents per SMS (down from 23 cents and eight cents respectively).[4] At the time, POTRAZ indicated that it would continue to push call tariffs down. But after telcos complained of significantly reduced revenue, POTRAZ agreed to a one-cent per minute tariff

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3   Lloyd Sachikonye, *Whither Zimbabwe? Crisis & Democratisation*, London, Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2002.; Farai Chideya, "What's Behind Zimbabwe's Financial Crisis?", *NPR*, 2007. Available at:
http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=15327421 [accessed June 25, 2016]; Alois Mlambo, Brian Raftopoulos, "The Regional Dimensions of Zimbabwe's Multi-Layered Crisis: An Analysis", *Election Processes, Liberation Movements and Democratic Change in Africa Conference,* 2010. Available at: www.cmi.no/file/?1011 [accessed June 25, 2016]; Azad Essa, "Zimbabwe on Brink of New Political Crisis", *Al Jazeera*, 2013. Available at:
http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/08/201383181656559428.html [accessed June 25, 2016]; NewsDay, "Zim to Plunge into Further Crises", *News*, 2015. Available at: https://www.newsday.co.zw/2015/03/11/zim-to-plunge-into-further-crises/ [accessed June 25, 2016].
4   Unknown Author, "Econet Slashes Tariffs", *The Herald*, 2015. Available at: http://www.herald.co.zw/econet-slashes-tariffs/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

increase in January 2016.[5]

Mobile phone and mobile web use grew rapidly, and were stalled only by Zimbabwe's economic difficulties.[6] The figures for the fourth quarter of 2014 suggest a decline in mobile revenue and internet penetration from the previous quarter.[7] But the December 2015 figures showed an increase to 95.4 per cent[8], aided in part, perhaps, by the tariff reduction ordered by POTRAZ.

According to POTRAZ, by the end of 2015, Zimbabwe had over 6.5 million active internet subscriptions, putting the national internet penetration rate at 48.1 per cent (an individual or organisation may hold more than one subscription in their name).[9] Of these internet subscriptions, 97.5 per cent are connections happening over mobile phone/tablet 3G mobile data connections.[10] Mobile data usage is also increasing. Largely thanks to WhatsApp and Facebook data bundles, mobile data usage for the last quarter of 2015 was up 27.4 per cent on the previous quarter.[11]

Perhaps because of the limitations of mobile being one's primary way of accessing the Internet, or the costs of mobile data, or other factors, only a minority of Zimbabweans report that the Internet is their primary sources of news. According to data from the Afrobarometer Round Six survey, the majority of Zimbabweans access news via radio, particularly in the rural areas. Seventy-eight per cent of Zimbabweans say that they "never" get news via social media, and 75 per cent "never" get news via the Internet.[12]

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5 Nigel Gambanga, "POTRAZ Effects One Cent Increase on Voice Tariffs", *TechZim*, 2016. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2016/01/potraz-effects-1-cent-increase-voice-tariffs/#.Vwjd3qR942w [accessed June 25, 2016].

6 Nigel Gambanga, „Zim Telecoms Stats from POTRAZ Show Decline in Mobile Revenue, Internet Penetration", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/04/zim-telecoms-stats-from-potraz-show-decline-in-mobile-revenue-internet-penetration/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

7 Ibid.

8 Nigel Gambanga, "Latest POTRAZ Report Shows Increase in Zimbabwe's Mobile Internet Penetration", *TechZim*, 2016. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2016/03/latest-potraz-report-shows-increase-zimbabwes-mobile-internet-penetration/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Unknown Author, "Public Perceptions of Corruption, Trust in State Institutions, China's Influence, Media Usage and Medical Male Circumcision. Findings from the Afrobarometer Round 6 Survey in Zimbabwe", *Afrobarometer*, 2015. Available at: http://afrobarometer.org/media-briefings/zimbabwe-chinas-influence-corruption-media-usage-and-male-circumcision [accessed June 27, 2016].

TELECEL: UNSTABLE MOBILE OPERATOR

The experience of Telecel provides a perfect illustration of just how unstable infrastructure can be in a context like Zimbabwe's. Three mobile phone companies currently operate in Zimbabwe: Econet, the privately-owned giant of the mobile phone industry, the state-owned NetOne,[13] and Telecel.

Telecel operated under private ownership from 1998 until April 2016, when it became Zimbabwe's third licensed mobile operator. It has been alternated between being the country's second or third largest mobile telecommunications company, and has invested an estimated USD 237 million into Zimbabwe's mobile phone infrastructure.[14]

But POTRAZ cancelled Telecel's operating license effective April 28, 2015, and gave the company 30 days to continue to provide services and 60 days to decommission its equipment. A month earlier, Zimbabwe's ICT Minister, Supa Mandiwanzira, had told journalists that Cabinet had approved the closure of Telecel because it was operating without a license, and because it was in violation of the country's indigenisation regulations.[15] Telecel disputed this and said that its licensing requirements with the government had been met.[16] Telecel applied to the High Court to have its permit reinstated, and was granted a provisional order which enabled it to continue operating whilst the dispute was being battled out in court.[17] This order gave Telecel the opportunity to appeal to the Minster of ICTs, present a statement outlining its license fee payments, and clarify its ownership issue and shares structure and explain how this is in line with Zimbabwe's indigenisation regulations.[18]

Whilst Telecel was able to demonstrate that it had paid its license fees, and paid its June 2015 fee on time,[19] the indigenisation regulations proved

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13 Unknown Author, "Massive Management Shake-Up at NetOne", *The Herald*, 2015. Available at: http://www.herald.co.zw/massive-management-shake-up-at-netone/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

14 Ndamu Sandu, "Telecel Closure Blow to Economy", *The Standard*, 2015. Available at: http://www.thestandard.co.zw/2015/05/03/telecel-closure-blow-to-economy/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

15 Ibid.

16 Nigel Gambanga, "Telecel Says It's Met Its End of the Licence Payment Deal, Starts Social Media Campaign", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/05/telecel-says-its-met-its-end-of-the-licence-payment-deal-starts-social-media-campaign/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

17 Unknown Author, "Latest: Telecel Granted Provisional Order", *The Herald*, 2015. Available at: http://www.herald.co.zw/latest-telecel-granted-provisional-order/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

18 Nigel Gambanga, "Telecel Basks in Judicial Sympathy – Great, But What Happens Next?", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/05/telecel-basks-in-judicial-sympathy-great-but-what-happens-next/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

19 Pardon Gatsi, "Telecel Pays License Fee Instalment for June", *Tech Unzipped*, 2015. Available at: http://techunzipped.com/2015/07/telecel-pays-licence-fee-instalment-for-june/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

harder for the company to meet. Zimbabwe's indigenisation regulations require that at least 51 per cent of a business operating in Zimbabwe must be owned by indigenous Zimbabweans. This is particularly the case if a business is in a key sector such as mining, manufacturing or communications, or has a net asset value of more than USD 500,000.[20] According to the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act, an "indigenous Zimbabwean" is defined as: "any person who, before the 18th April, 1980, was disadvantaged by unfair discrimination on the grounds of his or her race, and any descendant of such person, and includes any company, association, syndicate or partnership of which indigenous Zimbabweans form the majority of the members or hold the controlling interest."[21]

The legality of these regulations has been questioned, as has their selective application. Government itself has not always maintained a clear line about the regulations, their target and their enforcement. According to the Constitution and legal researcher Derek Matyszak, "[t]he defining characteristic of Zimbabwe's indigenisation policy has been the wide disjuncture between the law (as it is), government pronouncements of the law (as they would like the public to believe it to be) and the policy in practice."[22]

The Telecel ownership issue, and its non-compliance with Zimbabwe's indigenisation regulations, made headlines throughout 2015.[23] At the start of the year, 40 per cent of Telecel was owned by the Empowerment Corporation (EC), an indigenous entity,[24] and 60 per cent by Vimpelcom.[25] Vimpelcom had been looking to sell its stake in Telecel

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20 Parliament of Zimbabwe, "Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (General) Regulations, 2010, S.I. 21/2010 (Amended)", *kubatana.net*, 2011. Available at: http://archive.kubatana.net/html/archive/legisl/110325indreg.asp [accessed June 25, 2016].

21 Parliament of Zimbabwe, "Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (General) Regulations, 2010, S.I. 21/2010 (Amended)", k*ubatana.net*, 2011. Available at: http://archive.kubatana.net/html/archive/legisl/110325indreg.asp [accessed June 25, 2016].

22 Derek Matyszak, "Madness and Indigenisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Lawlessness", *Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU)*, 2014. Available at: http://www.researchandadvocacyunit.org/system/files/Lawlessness%20%26%20Indigenisation%20in%20Zimbabwe.pdf [accessed June 25, 2016].

23 L. S. M Kabweza, "Zim ICT Minister 'Cancels' Telecel's License. Accuses Vimpelcom of Speculation", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/02/ict-minister-cancels-telecels-license-accuses-vimpelcom-of-speculation/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

24 Nigel Gambanga, "Makamba Finally Speaks on Telecel Shareholding, Announces Move to Resolve Issue", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/02/makamba-finally-speaks-on-telecel-shareholding-announces-move-to-resolve-issue/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

25 L. S. M. Kabweza, "Sale of Telecel to Proceed as Makamba & Co Agree to 1997 Shareholding", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/03/sale-telecel-proceed-makamba-co-agree-1997-shareholding/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

even before the licensing issue came up.[26] However, efforts to find a new investor in Telecel were stalled for at least a year, in part because of the indigenisation regulations.[27] In April 2015, Telecel's indigenisation proposal, which was to transfer 11 per cent of the company from foreign shareholders to Zimbabwean employees of Telecel, was rejected by POTRAZ.[28] In November 2015, the government bought out Vimplecom's 60 per cent stake for USD 40 million.[29] And in April 2016, the parastatal National Social Security Authority (NSSA) was reported to have bought the 40 per cent stake, which had been owned by EC, consolidating the government's ownership of Telecel.[30] Some analysts argue that the government wanted to acquire Telecel and so created legal issues for the company in order to dissuade other potential buyers.[31]

Two reasons behind the government's desire to acquire Telecel are related to the country's economic and socio-political infrastructure. Zimbabwe's tax revenue is declining,[32] but its recurring costs such as the civil servants' wages (83 per cent of the country's USD 4 billion budget) are not decreasing.[33] Economically, telecommunications is currently one of Zimbabwe's more vibrant local industries. According to research commissioned by POTRAZ, Zimbabweans spend over USD 500 million per year on airtime.[34] Given that Zimbabwe's entire household spending is around USD 12 billion (including rent and durable products such as

26 L. S. M. Kabweza, "Zim ICT Minister 'Cancels' Telecel's License. Accuses Vimpelcom of Speculation", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/02/ict-minister-cancels-telecels-license-accuses-vimpelcom-of-speculation/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

27 L. S. M. Kabweza, "Finally, Someone to Buy Telecel. Brainworks Moves to End Indigenisation Impasse", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/01/someone-finally-to-buy-telecel-brainworks-moves-to-end-indigenisation-impasse/ [accessed June 25, 2015].

28 L. S. M. Kabweza, "POTRAZ Revokes Telecel Zimbabwe License, Orders Shut Down within 30 Days", *TechZim*, 2015. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/04/potraz-revokes-telecel-zim-licence-orders-shut-within-30-days/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

29 Faith Zaba, "Govt Takes Over Telecel", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2015. Available at: http://www.theindependent.co.zw/2015/11/13/govt-takes-over-telecel/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

30 Unknown Author, "NSSA Eyes 40pc Stake in Telecel", *The Herald*, 2016. Available at: http://www.herald.co.zw/nssa-eyes-40pc-stake-in-telecel/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

31 Faith Zaba, "Govt Takes Over Telecel", 2015

32 Taurai Mangudhla, "Govt Crafts Measures to Punish Tax Offenders", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2016. Available at: http://www.theindependent.co.zw/2016/01/15/govt-crafts-measures-to-punish-tax-offenders/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

33 International Crisis Group, "Zimbabwe: Stranded in Stasis", *Crisis Group Africa Briefing*, No. 118, 2016. Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/b118-zimbabwe-stranded-in-stasis.pdf [accessed June 25, 2016].

34 Unknown Author, "Zimbabweans Spend US$500 Million on Airtime", *Zimeye,* 2016. Available at: http://www.zimeye.net/zimbabweans-spend-us500-million-on-airtime/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

cars),[35] a third of which are imports,[36] this USD airtime expenditure represents a significant portion of local revenue. By owning Telecel and NetOne, the government now owns nearly half of Zimbabwe's mobile phone market.[37]

Socio-politically, greater ownership of the mobile space makes it easier to control, censor and regulate. In order to maintain international relations, and access international financing, Zimbabwe tries to keep a veneer of media and press freedom. But the government's autocratic tendencies regularly come out in its rhetoric. Returning from a recent trip to Japan in April 2016, President Mugabe addressed his supporters and acknowledged that while the government wants technology to be advanced, it's also looking at China's internet security measures as a model for Zimbabwe.[38] A week later, the state-run Sunday Mail reported that Zimbabwe's government is looking at regulating social media usage and is developing local social networking sites, following China's model with Weibo.[39] According to the Sunday Mail,

> "these measures are tailored to protect citizens' rights following a surge in social media abuse through propagating falsehoods, defamation, character assassination and national security" threats."[40]

In March, a school headmaster was arrested for posting a photo mashup of President Mugabe and singer Rihanna on Facebook. He was charged with insulting the president, and faces a year in jail if convicted.[41] In April, a man was charged with "criminal nuisance" after having shared on a WhatsApp group a video clip suggesting that 92-year-old President

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35 Unknown Author, "Zimbabwe – Household final consumption expenditure", *indexmundi,* n. d.. Available at: http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/zimbabwe/household-final-consumption-expenditure [accessed June 25, 2016].

36 Unknown Author, "Zim's Import Bill Needs Urgent Curbing", *Manica Post*, 2014. Available at: http://www.manicapost.com/zims-import-bill-needs-urgent-curbing/ [accessed June 27, 2016].

37 Taurai Mangudhla, "Econet Loses Market Share", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2016. Available at: https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2016/03/18/econet-loses-market-share/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

38 L. S. M. Kabweza, "Chinese Style Internet Censorship Coming to Zimbabwe", *TechZim*, 2016. Available at: http://www.techzim.co.zw/2016/04/china-style-internet-censorship-coming-to-zimbabwe-president-mugabe [accessed June 25, 2016].

39 Lincoln Towindo, "Government to Regulate Social Media", *The Sunday Mail*, 2016. Available at: http://www.sundaymail.co.zw/social-media-regulation-is-nigh/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

40 Ibid.

41 Farai Mutsaka, The Associated Press, "In Zimbabwe, Make Fun of Robert Mugabe at Your Peril", *CTV News*, 2016. Available at: http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/in-zimbabwe-make-fun-of-robert-mugabe-at-your-peril-1.2830738 [accessed June 25, 2016].

Mugabe was incapacitated and had become a burden.[42] According to the Zimbabwe Independent, "Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) says it has represented over 150 people charged with insulting Mugabe since 2010."[43] These insult cases include in-person conversations as well as communications via social media. Many of the cases were dropped,[44] but it is hard not to view the government's acquisition of Telecel, and its talk of regulating social media, without suspicion.

URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE: HARARE WATER

The nation's capital, Harare, provides just one example of the extent of instability in Zimbabwe's infrastructure, both literally and metaphorically. Nicknamed "The Sunshine City", Harare has been losing its lustre over the past few years. City leaders' ambitions that Harare obtains the status of "World Class City" by 2025 have been dismissed as unrealistic by many concerned with the city's decaying infrastructure and increasing failures at service delivery.[45] According to the Zimbabwe Independent,

> "a World Class City is one that has eight or more attributes of a modern city, including 'effective urban planning and management, decentralisation policies and appropriate institutions, a system that creates equal opportunities for all, participation of civil society, elected local officials, a favourable business environment, access to basic amenities and public transport and mobility'."[46]

Harare currently boasts one of these: elected local officials – and even that is a matter of debate. The other seven are currently non-existent. Harare's water infrastructure provides a useful lens through which to view the challenges facing physical infrastructure in Harare, and Zimbabwe more widely. Water is more essential to health than roads or internet connectivity, but the provision of water, and maintenance of water and sewage infrastructure, has faced mismanagement and a lack of resources just as other infrastructure categories have.

A 2010 survey found that only 50 per cent of Harare's population had 24-7 water service, and 55 per cent of residents perceived the water to be

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42 Blessing Zulu, "Zimbabwe Intensifies Crackdown on Facebook, WhatsApp Messages 'Insulting' Mugabe", *VOA Zimbabwe*, 2016. Available at: http://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/zimbabwe-mugabe-insult/3268562.html [accessed June 25, 2016].

43 Farai Mutsaka, "In Zimbabwe, Make Fun of Robert Mugabe at Your Peril", 2016.

44 Ibid.

45 Hazel Ndebele, "Zimbabwe Independent: Harare World Class Status a Pipe Dream", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2015. Available at: http://www.theindependent.co.zw/2015/02/13/harare-world-class-status-pipedream/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

46 Ibid.

of poor quality.[47] By November 2013, Harare's water problems were even worse, with an estimated 62 per cent of water being lost to non-revenue water (including leakages),[48] and the vast majority of residents experiencing water cuts at least once per week. The city council in part blamed Harare's aging piping infrastructure, and set itself the ambitious task of replacing this, an estimated 6.000 kilometres of piping. But between 2009 and 2013, only 150 kilometres had been replaced.[49] In December 2014, the City of Harare received 19.5 million dollars as part of a Zimfund grant to replace water pipes.[50] A 2009 loan agreement sourced 144 million dollars from China's Export Import Bank to rehabilitate Harare's water and sewage infrastructure. The China Exim loan project was supposed to last from April 2013 to March 2016.[51] According to Harare Mayor Bernard Manyenyi's State of the City Address of March 1, 2016, only 40 per cent of the work had been completed by then.[52] In addition, the city continues to lose 60 per cent of treated water due to burst pipes. When delivering his address, Mayor Manyenyi noted there were 180 burst pipes pending repair on that day. Among other things, the China Exim loan is expected to help replace pressure-reducing valves, bringing the number of daily water bursts from 25 to 12.[53]

Manyenyi did not suggest when the Exim loan work would be completed, but given that work was only 40 per cent complete by the time it was scheduled to be finished, it may be several more years before these improvements are finalised, and even they will not allow for 24-7 water provision for all Harare residents. An additional USD 179 million loan from China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) discussed in December 2015 is expected to further reduce physical water

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47 Mediel Hove, Auxillia Tirimboi, "A. Assessment of Harare Water Service Delivery", *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa,* Vol. 23, No. 4, 2011. Available at: http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/Vol13No4_Summer2011_B/PDF/Assessment%20 of%20Harare%20Water%20Service%20Delivery.pdf [accessed June 25, 2016].

48 Farai Dauramanzi, "City of Harare Drained by Leaks and Unpaid Bills", *Harare News*, 2013. Available at: http://www.hararenews.co.zw/2013/11/city-of-harare-drained-by-leaks-and-unpaid-bills/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

49 Ibid.

50 Unknown Author, "HCC Receives $19.5m Grant for Water and Sewer Works", *Zimbabwe Mail*, 2014. Available at: http://www.zimville.com/blogs/p/45855/hcc-receives-195m-grant-for-water-and-sewer-works [accessed June 27, 2016].

51 Loverage Nhamoyebonde, "China Exim Loan for Harare Water Abused", *NewsDay*, 2015. Available at: https://www.newsday.co.zw/2015/07/16/china-exim-bank-loan-for-harare-water-infrastructure-abused/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

52 Mayor Bernard Gabriel Manyenyeni, "State of the City Address", *City of Harare*, 2016. Available at: http://www.hararecity.co.zw/index.php/template-features-3/mayor/speeches/mayor-s-state-of-the-city-address [accessed June 25, 2016].

53 Ibid.

loss, which will also increase supply.[54]

In July 2014, a special committee established to investigate allegations of corruption in regard to spending on the China Exim loan highlighted the City's inability to manage large scale projects or effectively evaluate large infrastructure tender bids.[55] If this is not addressed, the efficiency of the Exim and CCCC loans, as well as other city infrastructure projects, may be undermined.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Zimbabwe's political and social infrastructures of course influence and are influenced by its physical and digital infrastructure. A paper by the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) draws on the template of power developed by John Gaventa, and describes the visible, hidden and invisible power at work in Zimbabwe.

> "Visible power in present day Zimbabwe resides in a wide range of state agents; the police, the army, and the Central Intelligence Organisation are primary amongst these. They are supplemented by a wide range of other government agencies; traditional leaders, local government officers, and even government officials such as teachers, headmasters, and the like. […] This network of overlapping agencies and agents provides a remarkable system of political control, and is documented in myriad reports by Zimbabwean civil society. This is attested to also by the documentation of the participation of all of these agencies and agents in the commission of gross human rights violations. All of this is visible every day for the ordinary Zimbabwean citizen, and an everyday reminder of the power of the state and its potential for inflicting violence. […]
>
> For the citizen, the *visible* forms of power are supplemented by a network of *hidden* agents, directing the government officials and agents described above. Ostensibly, this is the government, acting through the executive and its ministries, but it is also evident that the President alone wields enormous power in many different ways: through appointments to executive and government posts, as well as through the use of presidential powers. […]
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> Thus, dealing with invisible power in Zimbabwe and Southern

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54 Nyemudzai Kakore, "Harare Water gets USD 179 Million Shot in the Arm", *The Herald*, 2016. Available at: http://www.herald.co.zw/harare-water-gets-179m-shot-in-the-arm/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

55 Farai Dauramanzi, "Council Hears Committee Findings on Water Loan Abuse", *Harare News*, 2014. Available at: http://www.hararenews.co.zw/2014/07/council-hears-committee-findings-on-water-loan-abuse/ [accessed June 27, 2016].

> Africa is not merely a matter of changing the ways in which structures operate – making them open to scrutiny, and becoming more transparent and accountable – but rather, as Gaventa points out, it requires the changing of minds, deeply ingrained feelings, and behaviours."[56]

These networks of power contribute to what has proven, so far at least, to be a very stable infrastructure of power in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. Despite efforts by civil society, opposition parties and selected opinion leaders, as well as reports of factions, infighting and divisions, Zimbabwe's ruling party remains largely in control, and does not appear to be overly concerned about how others might judge its actions.

The Harare municipal water challenges described above represent a stark and compelling example of local authority failure, because access to water is a daily problem for urban residents in the absence of a reliable municipal supply. But this service delivery failure is just one example of Harare's larger challenges – potholes, street lights, storm drains, sewage systems, healthcare and schools all also suffer from the city's service delivery failures. These problems exist with distinguishing local characteristics, across all of Zimbabwe's urban authorities.

This decline in service delivery has presented new opportunities to use digital infrastructure to share experiences, focus dissent, and advocate for change. SMART Harare was launched by concerned Harare residents in March 2015.[57] The website crowdmaps residents' service delivery reports (water leaks, bulk water selling, etc.) in the hopes of painting a full picture of how Harare is doing in terms of the delivery of services such as roads, waste and sewage. Given the number of burst pipes mentioned by the Harare Mayor, persistent challenges with potholes[58] and the extent of illegal dumping in the city alone, this site could provide a valuable service through which residents can report concerns, and the city can learn about them, take action and fix them.

But unfortunately, the failure of the City of Harare to embrace ICTs has been a recurring frustration across a number of sectors.[59] SMART Harare has yielded little actual improvement in service delivery to date.

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56 Tony Reeler, "On Power in Zimbabwe", *Research and Advocacy Unit*, *RAU*, 2014. Available at: http://www.researchandadvocacyunit.org/publication/transitional-justice-6 [accessed June 25, 2016].

57 Unknown Author, "Harare Municipality Services: Online Reporting Launched", *Harare News*, 2015. Available at: http://www.hararenews.co.zw/2015/03/harare-municipality-services-online-reporting-launched/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

58 Farai Mukuwane, "Council Hires More Road Workers", *The Herald*, 2016. Available at: http://www.herald.co.zw/council-hires-more-road-workers/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

59 Mfundo Mlilo, "Service Delivery Hinged on ICTs", *The Standard*, 2014. Available at: http://www.thestandard.co.zw/2014/08/24/service-delivery-hinged-icts/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

Partly, local authorities such as the City of Harare genuinely lack funds for things like fuel, transport and spare parts. This is in part due to non-payment of rates by residents who either cannot afford the bills, or who have lost interest in paying for services they never receive. But it is also partly due to the City's expenditure structure, which saw 48 per cent of spending go to salaries in 2013 and 2014. With a low and shrinking revenue base, and a wage bill that takes half its income, the City has little money left for necessary maintenance and repairs, let alone investment and capital costs. However, civil society organizations like the Combined Harare Residents Association and the Harare Residents Trust, argue that this would not be the case if the city did not pay the Town Clerk and Director's exorbitant monthly salaries and allowances, which disproportionately skew the wage bill.

The City of Harare's accounts are notoriously opaque. The annual budget statement shares only the most basic overview of revenue and expenditure, and repeated attempts to access the City's audited accounts (as is ostensibly the right of residents) are met with evasion and stonewalling. "Participatory budgeting" goes as far as annual "budget consultations" in which residents are told what the city will be spending next year, and on what. Salary schedules, itemised accounts, revenue and expenditure by ward are not available to residents, nor is there any ability to interrogate the city's finances.

In addition, the central government exercises a great deal of control over the city's affairs, even though the 2013 Constitution set the stage for devolution. In the most recent example, the Minister of Local Government, Saviour Kasukuwere, rescinded the city's appointment of James Mushore as Harare's Town Clerk, following the previous Town Clerk's resignation. The City of Harare advertised for the position, interviewed candidates, and selected Mushore. The Council then approved the decision and Mushore was hired. Just one day after he took office, however, Minister Kasukuwere rescinded the appointment, arguing the City did not follow the procedure outlined in the Urban Councils Act.[60] The Combined Harare Residents Association and Chitungwiza Residents Association are currently challenging Minister Kasukuwere in the High Court.[61]

All of these factors contribute to a generalised sense of helplessness and frustration of Zimbabweans, which may explain why there have been

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60 Harare Bureau, "Harare Town Clerk Hired, Fired in One Day", *The Herald*, 2016. Available at: http://www.chronicle.co.zw/harare-town-clerk-hired-fired-in-one-day/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

61 Tendai Kamhungira, "Harare Town Clerk Case Spills into Courts", *Daily News*, 2016. Available at: https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2016/04/01/harare-town-clerk-case-spills-into-courts [accessed June 25, 2016].

only 250 reports entered into SMART Harare in the past year. According to the Afrobarometer, Zimbabweans consider it a duty to participate in community affairs, but 75 per cent are not a part of community groups, and 63 per cent say they haven't united with others to raise an issue.[62] Given that 78 per cent of Zimbabweans believe that MPs never or only sometimes try to listen to ordinary people, and 71 per cent believe local councillors never or only sometimes listen to ordinary people, perhaps this is not surprising.[63]

CORRUPTION: TECH FOR TRANSPARENCY

Several initiatives have tried to use technology to tackle Zimbabwe's pressing problem of corruption. According to the *Afrobarometer Round 6* data:

> "– Over two-thirds (67 per cent) of adult Zimbabweans believe the level of corruption in the country has increased over the past year.
>
> – Government receives poor ratings in the fight against corruption and generally incidents of corruption are underreported because people fear possible consequences.
>
> – Zimbabweans generally feel helpless in terms of what they can offer in order to combat the social vice."[64]

In particular, 81 per cent of Harare residents believe that corruption has increased in the past year, and 49 per cent believe ordinary people cannot make a difference in the fight against corruption.[65] The last point may have stalled the uptake of independent anti-corruption measures, which have been initiated but achieved little success to date.

I Paid a Bribe Zimbabwe[66] was launched by Zimbabwean developer Tawanda Kembo in 2012, shortly after he himself had paid a bribe at a road block.[67] Kembo did not like the experience of bribing the police, and launched the website in order to enable Zimbabweans to report corruption anonymously. As the Afrobarometer research mentions, "incidents of corruption are underreported because people fear possible

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62 Stephen Ndoma, Richman Kokera, "Citizen Engagement in Zimbabwe at Lowest Level in a Decade", 2016.
63 Ibid.
64 Unknown Author, "Public Perceptions of Corruption, Trust in State Institutions, China's Influence, Media Usage and Medical Male Circumcision. Findings from the Afrobarometer Round 6 Survey in Zimbabwe", 2015.
65 Ibid.
66 Ipaidabribe, *Official Website*, 2013. Available at: http://www.ipaidabribe.org.zw/ [accessed June 25, 2016].
67 Unknown Author, "Ipaidabribe: Fighting Corruption in Zimbabwe. Tawanda Kembo, Voices of Africa", 2013. Available at: http://www.ipaidabribe.org.zw/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

consequences,"[68] a website where one can anonymously report corruption has a lot to offer Zimbabwe. According to Kembo, there were about 3,000 visits to the site in the first two days.[69] But a visit to the website in April 2016 suggests that the site has not had viral uptake. The reports window shows that the last report was made in October 2013, and that just ten reports were made between April 12 and October 10, 2013.

If corruption is as wide spread as Zimbabweans report it to be, why are Zimbabweans not taking advantage of platforms like *I Paid a Bribe Zimbabwe* to report corruption? While these campaigns take advantage of Zimbabwe's digital infrastructure, they do not reach Zimbabweans at the suitable technological level and do not satisfy users' desire for anonymity. The platform's *Ushahidi / Crowdmap* interface may be more accessible from a laptop or desktop computer than a mobile phone. An integration with SMS, WhatsApp or Facebook might increase the uptake of these initiatives. But SMS and WhatsApp are connected to a user's mobile phone number, and mobile phone registration is required in Zimbabwe – with submission of ID and proof of residence. Posting on Facebook similarly connects a user's identity with their report.

Another reason may be the absence of sufficient pressure, focus and organisation on the part of the civil society organisations running the initiatives. In the case of *I Paid a Bribe Zimbabwe*, a passionate and well-meaning developer may construct a website quickly and efficiently, but without an awareness campaign, the uptake of the site will be limited. Similarly, in the absence of sustained advocacy and outreach (and ideally a few high profile victories along the way), an organisation like Transparency International – Zimbabwe can monitor, report on and encourage participation against corruption. But ensuring public buy-in into these campaigns can be challenging. To be successful, advocacy campaigns and technology must complement each other and work in ways that encourage participation, including demonstrating the impact and value of participation.

In studying the success of *I Paid a Bribe* in India as compared with its failure in China, Yuen Yeun Ang wrote:

> "Authoritarian states restrain online activism not only through repression and censorship, but also by indirectly weakening the ability of netizens to self-govern and constructively engage the state. I demonstrate this argument

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68 Unknown Author, "Public Perceptions of Corruption, Trust in State Institutions, China's Influence, Media Usage and Medical Male Circumcision. Findings from the Afrobarometer Round 6 Survey in Zimbabwe", 2015

69 Unknown Author, "Ipaidabribe: Fighting Corruption in Zimbabwe. Tawanda Kembo, Voices of Africa", 2013.

by comparing I-Paid-A-Bribe (IPAB) — a crowd-sourcing platform that collects anonymous reports of petty bribery — in India and China. Whereas IPAB originated and has thrived in India, a copycat effort in China fizzled out within months. Contrary to those who attribute China's failed outcome only to repression, I find that even before authorities shut down IPAB, the sites were already plagued by internal organizational problems that were comparatively absent in India. The study tempers expectations about the revolutionary effects of new media in mobilizing contention and checking corruption in the absence of a strong civil society."[70]

While India, China and Zimbabwe are clearly very different countries, each with their own context, India is more of a democracy, and its politicians have more of an incentive to heed popular demands and frustrations. Zimbabwe's politicians, in contrast, appear to be increasingly disinterested in public opinion and unresponsive to civil society's demands. In India, "the constructive role of *I Paid a Bribe* in fighting corruption [was] endorsed by a number of high-ranking government officials"[71] and India's Transport Commissioner 'became one of the most loyal fans' of the initiative.[72] In China, by contrast, *I Paid a Bribe* initiatives fizzled out within months, in part because

"authoritarian rule provides an inhospitable environment for nurturing online citizenship in the full sense of the word, involving not only the exercise of rights and free speech, but also accountability, responsibility and trust."[73]

Without comparing Zimbabwe to China, I would argue, like Yuen Yuen Ang, that direct measures of state control (regulation, censorship and repression) only tell part of the story about Zimbabwe's political environment. The state's hidden power, as well as fatigue, learnt helplessness, economic despair, the brain drain, and other factors, all contribute to limited uptake of the potential new media might provide for social change and citizen engagement. In addition, the fact that 97 per cent of Zimbabwe's internet connections are via mobile is also likely to contribute to reduced uptake. To increase the chances of success, an advocacy campaign would need to be built on a mobile optimised platform that could ensure the anonymity of contributors. The country's

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70 Yuen Yuen Ang, "Authoritarian Restraints on Online Activism Revisited: Why 'I-Paid-A-Bribe' Worked in India but Failed in China", *Social Science Research Network*, 2013. Available at:
  http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2244661&download=yes
[accessed June 25, 2016].
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.

technological constraints further hamper its political engagement.

And a third reason may be that individual Zimbabweans are themselves sceptical about the value of using their time and bandwidth to report corruption, especially the report is not acted on. If civil society is unable to push government to take corruption seriously, and if government itself is not committed to taking corruption seriously, why should people bother to report whether or where or when they did or did not pay a bribe? As Kembo himself noted in 2013, the government loses millions to police corruption,[74] and there is no commitment from the Zimbabwe Republic Police to deal with corrupt police officers.[75] This, in turn, may in part be due to officers in charge benefiting from corruption themselves. Also, in the absence of sufficient funds to pay police officers and other civil servants a living wage, the government has an incentive to turn a blind eye to corruption, as it enables their employees to earn more without it coming out of government funds or increasing dissatisfaction among civil servants.

CONCLUSION

Zimbabwe's collapsed physical infrastructure provides ample fodder for potential civic reporting and citizen engagement initiatives. Underserviced local clinics, roads, which are severely potholed and flood due to lack of verge and storm, drain maintenance, and the nearly ubiquitous non-functioning streetlights are more examples of service delivery failures, which frustrate Zimbabweans. Likewise, Zimbabwe's digital infrastructure – including growing smart phone usage, mobile internet penetration, and the popularity of WhatsApp – in theory provide new platforms through which people could engage around social issues. However, these opportunities have yet to translate into successful political and social change.

In part, civil society organisations and Zimbabwe's opposition can be blamed for not doing more to leverage the potential of Zimbabwe's expanding digital infrastructure, and the opportunities created by its decaying physical infrastructure, to exert greater influence over its political infrastructure.

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74 Unknown Author, "Govt Loses US$1m to Police Graft", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2012. Available at: http://www.theindependent.co.zw/2012/07/27/govt-loses-us1m-to-police-graft/ [accessed June 25, 2016].

75 Unknown Author, "Stealing from the State and Impoverishing the Nation: Zimbabwean Traffic Police Officers Pocketing Huge Sums of Money through Bribes at Checkpoints", *Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa*, 2012.
Available at:
http://archive.kubatana.net/docs/demgg/act-sa_stealing_state_zrp_bribes_121105.pdf [accessed June 25, 2016].

This is not to say that civil society initiatives cannot or do not make a difference in the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans. The Combined Harare Residents Association's engagement with the City of Harare helped 40 households in Harare's densely populated suburb of Dzivarasekwa get building plans from the city council so that they could build toilets with the assistance of church sponsors.[76] Miracle Missions regularly conducts clean up campaigns and raises funds to help feed prisoners, orphans, and other vulnerable populations.[77] Similarly, the With Love Foundation runs a weekly soup kitchen in Harare's highly populated suburb of Mbare, providing a nutritious hot meal to many families in need.[78]

But it is difficult to see how any civil society could effectively engage and advocate for change in a context like Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's current government appears to lack not only political will, but a political conscience. In the face of an entrenched, non-responsive government, which appears unmoved by local or international pressure, even a lively and dynamic civil society is bound to be of little effect. In the case of Zimbabwe, civil society is also operating within the constraints of repressive politics, which constrain freedoms of speech and assembly. Years of the "crisis in Zimbabwe" narrative and little change on the ground have resulted in donor fatigue. Zimbabwe's shrinking economy means that private sector philanthropy is constrained. A political environment that equates disagreement with treachery means that local businesses, which do donate support, are largely interested only in blatantly 'non-political' causes such as sports teams and children's homes. And years of economic and political instability – again with little to show for it – have also left ordinary Zimbabweans tired. Rather than wanting to take down a system or fight for their rights, Zimbabweans increasingly opt to stay out of politics – including the youth.[79] Civil society, meanwhile, has been slow to engage both active citizens and "disconnected democrats".[80] Zimbabwe appears to be in a vicious cycle

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76 Lenard Kamwendo, "Advocating for Improved Municipal Services: An Interview with Combined Harare Residents' Association (CHRA)", *kubatana.net*, 2014. Available at: http://www.kubatana.net/2014/06/19/2091/advocating-improved-municipal-services-interview-combined-harare-residents-association-chra/ [accessed June 9, 2016].

77 For Miracle Missions' Facebook Page, see:
 https://www.facebook.com/MiracleMissionsTrust [accessed June 25, 2016].

78 For With Love Foundation's Official Website, see:
 http://www.withlove.co.zw/soup.html [accessed June 25, 2016].

79 M. A. Oosterom, P. Lloyd, "Being a Born-free. Violence, Youth and Agency in Zimbabwe", *Institute for Development Studies (UK)*, 2014. Available at: http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/being-a-born-free-violence-youth-and-agency-in-zimbabwe [accessed June 25, 2016].

80 Unknown Author, "Zimbabwe since the Elections in 2013: The View from 2015", *Research and Advocacy Unit, RAU*, 2015. Available at: http://researchandadvocacyunit.org/system/files/RAU%202015%20Zim%20since%20the%202013%20elections.pdf [accessed June 25, 2016].

– the country's collapsed economic infrastructure contributes to a reduced sense of possibility, which contributes to constrained civic engagement, which enables its political mismanagement to continue, contributing to further economic decline which results in decay of the physical infrastructure, and so on.

In addition, Zeynep Tufekci warns that social media might actually make certain types of organising too easy.[81] As Tufekci points out, the civil rights movement in the US in the 1960s did not have access to social media, but they were ultimately effective. At the time, if you wanted to get the word out about an issue, you had to do so through in-person gatherings. If you wanted to distribute a flyer about your cause, you did so by hand. If you wanted to send information through the post, you would get together with others, stuff, stamp, seal and label your envelopes, and then take them to the post office. This might have made getting the word out less 'efficient', but these face to face gatherings had the advantage that they enabled activists to get to know each other, to build trust and commitment to one another and the shared vision and cause, *before* any demonstration or arrest or crack down. Today, social media makes it easy for people to spread a message, get the word out and build a following without ever having to meet anybody. This makes things spread quickly, and means that we can be in Harare and still get inspired by events in Tahrir Square, Gezi Park, or Ouagadougou. But it also means we do not have the advantage of the face-to-face conversations, the slow build up, the week-in and week-out *work* of organising together which helps people build strong ties and shared commitments.[82]

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81 Zeynep Tufekci, "How the Internet Has Made Social Change Easy to Organise, Hard to Win", *TED,* 2014. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/zeynep_tufekci_how_the_internet_has_made_social_change_easy_to_organize_hard_to_win?language=en [accessed June 25, 2016].

82 Malcolm Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted", *New Yorker*, 2010. Available at: http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell [accessed June 25, 2016].