

DECENTRALISED PLANNING IN ZIMBABWE: A REVIEW OF PROVINCIAL, URBAN AND DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN POST-DEPENDENCE ZIMBABWE (Post-1980)

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Abstract: The paper provides a detailed analysis of the nature and forms of decentralised planning existing in Zimbabwe since 1980. Most of them reflect a continuity from the colonial period with modifications to suit the new socio-economic order. A detailed review is made of the powers that exist for planning and implementation, and also their limitations. The multiplicity of agencies has created problems, which has called for more co-ordination particularly at provincial level. However, the conflict between territory and function is very evident, because in all cases it is planning either by sector ministries and parastatal agencies with limited territorial power, or in some cases relative autonomy exists for local planning and implementation. The conclusion to this paper is that there is a strong need for a central authority to co-ordinate decentralised planning. This is a contradiction, if one sees decentralisation as the opposite of centralisation. Here we see the co-existence of the two as inevitable because Zimbabwe is a unitary state which defines the limits of decentralisation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the attainment of independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, there has been a strong commitment to decentralised subnational planning. This commitment has been based on the view that only through local level participation can planning be effective in transforming the inherited colonial economy. The desire for effective planning is echoed in all major policy

documents published since 1980 including the 1982/3 - 1984/5 Transitional National Development Plan, 1984 Prime Minister's Directive and 1986-90 five year development plan.

In a unitary state like Zimbabwe decentralised planning can be viewed from two perspectives i.e., the territorial and the functional. The territorial refers to powers given to geographical administrative units (provinces, districts, municipalities etc) for planning and managing resources. Such powers reflect an element of devolution of political power. The functional perspective is linked, in most cases to the functioning of sectors or agencies, which are linked to central administration. In Zimbabwe such functional powers are reflected in the hierarchical organisation of ministries, agencies etc which operate at district, municipal and provincial levels.

In both cases planning aims to strengthen local-level development and there are national goals and objectives to be achieved. However, if planning is examined from the point of view of political decision making and local self-reliance it is the territorial perspective which becomes more significant. A territorial approach specifies the goals of decentralisation in terms of self-reliance of local communities and promoting social learning. The state facilitates such territorial development by allocating resources and empowering local decision making (Friedmann and Weaver, 1979).

In reality, however, the nature of decentralisation always reflects a mix or balance between territory and function. Centralisation is a feature of most developing nations and many reasons can be attributed for it. However the desire for decentralisation has been also a major feature in the post-colonial situations where emphasis on development has received major attention (Rondinelli and Cheema, 1983). A dilemma always exists as to which way the balance should tilt.

This paper aims to evaluate the decentralised planning experience since 1980. Several policy statements and directives have been issued and there have been many plans echoing the desire for decentralised planning. The major questions to be examined are:

- how effective have such plans been in terms of strengthening decentralisation?
- what are the prospects for such planning in future?

The paper will review in detail provincial, district and municipal planning experiences, highlighting the major achievements and limitations. An important feature to be highlighted is the nature of central - local relationships as they evolve politically, socially and economically.

II. POWERS FOR DECENTRALISED PLANNING IN ZIMBABWE

Two main sources of decentralised planning power can be delineated

within the context of the current Zimbabwe experience. The first are the powers derived from nationally operating agencies, which include sector ministries and parastatals. These agencies have organisational frameworks which tend to reflect deconcentration and delegation of power to lower level structures. In the case of a ministry there is a head office, a provincial office, a district office and in some cases a district suboffice. The main source of power is directly linked to annual national budgets which provide for a ministry or parastatal to implement public sector investment projects throughout the country. These powers are derived from parliament and directly linked to cabinet through the minister for that particular sector. This is arguably the most powerful form of planning existing in Zimbabwe because it is backed annually by financial budgets.

The second source of decentralised planning power is that vested in local governments and special agencies. Firstly, powers reflect a certain amount of devolution (political and administrative) given to territorial units or agencies to perform planning functions. The strength of decentralised planning powers vary depending on the strength of the units. In local government for example there are significant variations between urban and rural local governments. This is a function of their varied resources bases (natural and bestowed).

Other decentralised planning powers are provided through specific statutes, and directly or indirectly influence the sectors and the territorial units. A variety of statutes exist e.g., the regional and Country Planning Act, National Resources Act etc which impinge on both territory and function.

These various sources of decentralised planning powers result in a wide variety of organisational arrangements and are shaped by forces which sometimes overlap or even conflict. In all cases, the planning powers represent various provisions for intervention by the state and its agencies to organise the production and distribution of services, manage local and national economies and maintain of public order.

Decentralised planning is a direct function of national planning in Zimbabwe, because all the powers for it are defined at national levels. The role of the state in the managing of the economy therefore needs to be carefully analysed and in most cases decentralised planning is determined by the nature of existing national programmes. In Zimbabwe, co-ordination has been highlighted as an important feature particularly at provincial and district levels vis-à-vis the sectoral programmes.

Powers for Decentralised Planning Linked to National Ministries and Agencies

The organisation of government in Zimbabwe is based on sectoral definition of activities. It is through the sectors, which for administrative

purposes are organised into ministries, that public sector investment programmes are undertaken. Sector ministries horizontally relate to each other directly in an operational sense and through the ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for budgeting, and also more recently through the national planning agency. They relate to each other in the preparation of annual and five year plans which are co-ordinated through the cabinet committee on development.

Vertically speaking, sector ministries operate at provincial, district and sub-district levels. This relates to a specific activity e.g., water development or road construction, which is implemented at a territorial level. The organisation of sector ministries is functional and relates to a specific set or sets of activities. At the various levels functionaries are deployed to administer, plan and implement programmes. To a large degree sectoral planning powers are highly centralised because all key decisions are centrally undertaken at head office level and transmitted to lower levels, where decision making powers are limited. The budgets are centrally determined and controlled with only limited room for minor amendments at implementation level.

The powers for sectoral planning are administratively derived in that ministries are the administrative arms of government. The planning powers are reflected in circulars, memorandums and directives. In some cases statutes form the basis for the administration, for example, Natural Resources Act, Water Resources Act, Mines and Minerals Act and Local Government Acts. Each of the statutes centrally defines the nature of the sectoral activity and provides guidelines in terms of powers and regulations.

The United Nations study (1981) identified two types of sectoral ministries found in Zimbabwe: firstly, those directly concerned with economically productive activities i.e., agriculture, industry and technology, trade and commerce, agriculture and resettlement, mines, national resources and tourism and the central ministries of finance and economic planning. Secondly, the service ministries which include education; health; local government rural and urban development; transport; information; posts and telecommunications; defence; home affairs; manpower planning; youth sports and culture.

The twofold categorisation only reflects relative emphasis because the activities of all the sectoral ministries have both a productive and service component. In most cases the sector ministries reflect the allocation, stabilisation, distribution and arbitration functions of the state. In the 1988-89 budget the funding provided for ministries in the form of vote appropriations amounted to approximately 6 billion Zimbabwe dollars. That accounts for both recurrent expenditure and new public sector investment

projects. The allocation of funds to sector ministries is incremental, depending very much on previous years' performance. The approved levels of expenditure are centrally determined and depend for each sector on current national priorities.

At the end of 1987 the national planning agency was established to be responsible for national economic planning. It will have the power to prepare long term medium and short term plans in close consultation with the finance ministry and other sectoral ministries. It does not have a legal or statutory instrument for planning, and therefore will depend on cooperation with existing ministries. The agency will have provincial officers who will coordinate the different territorial needs and ensure they are incorporated into the national plan.

There are many agencies which are linked and operated under the overall direction of ministries, commonly called parastatals or quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations (Quangos). Most of them operate through a statute and are usually focussed on productive and service activities. The general rule is to expect the parastatals to make an operational profit but in most cases they survive on government subsidies. In 1988 there were an estimated 40 such organisations in all fields of activity, complementing the role of ministries.

The powers for decentralised planning linked to national ministries and agencies can be termed highly centralised and the elements of decentralisation which are evident are only in terms of deconcentration of activities or deployment of field staff. There is a variation among the ministries and agencies, with some more functionally decentralised than others. Among the ministries, agriculture, health, education and local government have more field staff than others and have stronger provincial and district offices. The powers for decentralised planning however are generally limited even where there is high deployment of field staff.

More recently in volume 11 of the 5 year national development plan (1986-90) published in April 1988, there is a greater recognition of the regional/territorial dimension of sectoral programmes. This is highlighted in the discussion on Agriculture and Rural Development which states:

'The regional dimension of agricultural development considers the development of agriculture in each province with a view to promoting and diversifying agricultural production in accordance with the soil and climatic conditions of each province ...'.

It is likely that the National Planning Agency (NPA) will continue to develop the importance of decentralised planning in close conjunction with other sectoral ministries.

Powers for Decentralised Planning Derived from Local Government Statutes

Since 1980 a tripartite local government system has been in operation and it includes rural councils, district councils and urban councils. The three forms of local government are governed by statutes and are administered by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development. Local government is a 'creature' of central government and all the powers and controls are centrally derived.

Urban councils represent the oldest form of local government dating from the early sanitary boards at the turn of the century. By 1897 the first municipal law was promulgated and has been consolidated up to the current Urban Councils Act. The provisions for urban local government enshrined in the Act include:

- powers for planning and development of the built environment (in towns, cities); this includes specific powers on land, buildings and infrastructure works.
- powers to raise revenue through local taxation and powers to expand revenue to provide services.
- powers to make local bye-laws and to implement a wide range of other national statutes. The act bestows powers on municipalities to have jurisdiction over their areas and electorates, to whom they are firstly accountable.

Indeed the Act stipulates a wide range of mandatory and permissive powers for municipalities. There are 4 city councils, 11 municipal/town councils and small town boards whose jurisdiction normally falls under the rural councils.

The relationships between urban local governments and sector ministries are expressed largely through public sector investment planning, which is directly linked to the local government ministry. The requests for the various infrastructure projects (housing, water development etc) are submitted annually through the ministry of local government to the different sectors. These are in turn coordinated through the finance ministry which is responsible annually for budget preparation. Other planning powers relate to the preparation of local and master plans which deal primarily with land use and transport issues.

An important aspect of urban local government powers for planning is the provision of a capacity for revenue generation, allowing for a significant degree of local autonomy for city and municipal councils, as the structure of their revenue income in 1981/2 revealed that only 3.7 per cent was derived from grants-in-aid. (Tax Commission 1986) This might mask other sectoral flows of revenue particularly related to specific items e.g., low cost housing, for which central government has been directly responsible in most urban areas through the housing ministry. However, there is a wide variation

reflected by urban local authorities in terms of their capacity for planning and implementation. The two major city planning authorities (Harare and Bulawayo) enjoy significant authority and autonomy in decision making.

The rural local government system was until the 1988 Rural District Council Act, divided into two parts: that which relates to the commercial farming areas (rural councils) and that relating to communal areas (district councils). The former was developed to cater for the interests of large scale (European commercial) farmers, in line with the prevailing land segregation policies (land tenure and apportionment policies). Initially the focus was on providing roads (service roads) within the commercial farming areas. Later with the 1966 Rural Councils Act the jurisdiction was extended to cover provision of a wide range of services to commercial farms and small towns located within them. The range of powers provided in the Rural Councils Act was modelled on the basis of the urban Councils Act. A key source of revenue for rural councils, not available in many other developing countries, became the taxation of farmland. This made them relatively self sufficient.

The planning and implementation powers however continued to focus on road construction and maintenance, although the management of small urban settlements has assumed significant importance. An important anomaly in the decision making structures is the exclusion of farm labourers from the local government political system. The right to vote and elect representatives has continued to be enjoyed only by the owners of land and property.

Rural local government for communal areas (formerly African reserves) was provided for through the District Councils Act (1980). Through this Act, district councils were democratised and rationalised in terms of territorial boundaries. This process was part of post-independence restructuring of what were African councils, directly controlled by the colonial authorities. The communal areas are largely characterised by peasant farming systems and they cater for over 50 per cent of the Zimbabwean population (Wekwete, 1988b). In terms of planning and implementation, the district councils lack autonomy because they do not have a readily identifiable revenue generating base. The land is not a taxable resource because of the prevailing communal tenure and there has been limited property development. Most development since independence has been focussed in rural growth points and service centres, where government through the public sector investment programme has invested in social and physical infrastructure development.

The existence of the tripartite local government system has resulted in problems of compartmentalisation and lack of co-ordination. The system of local authority planning is similar to what was observed in the United Kingdom in 1967 that the system was based

'... on separate parts, in each of which is gathered the individual service, with its professional departmental hierarchy led by a principal officer and supervising it, a committee of members.... There may be unity in the parts, but there is disunity as a whole'.

(Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 1967)

Such a situation has led to disjointed incrementalist planning. In the case of Zimbabwe it is clear that the systems were designed to cater for different socio-economic and political objectives, and hence the general desire for integration of the local government systems. In the post-independence era, even though the desire to achieve integrated planning became a major goal, there are still problems of formally instituting strategic planning at regional or provincial level.

The 1984 Prime Minister's directive represented an important step to formative strategic planning at provincial level. The directive was a recognition of the need to link urban, rural and district planning and development initiatives. The desire for co-ordination affects not only the local government systems, but also the sectoral ministries and non-governmental organisations. The main objectives of the directive can be summarised as follows:

- firstly, to streamline the administrative and decision making system
- secondly, to facilitate positive interaction between centre and local levels through greater public participation
- finally, to facilitate more co-ordination between the various actors in development at subnational levels.

A key feature of the objectives of the directive can be argued as the setting up of a framework for strategic provincial planning. This is an attempt to rationalise overlapping action space (Faludi, 1973).

The 1984 directive proposed a link-pin system of planning and administration, which would ensure both horizontal and vertical co-ordination which was clearly stated in the preamble as follows:

To define the administrative structures at provincial and district level and the relationships and channels of communication between all the participants in development at provincial and district level in order to achieve the co-ordinated development of provinces and districts of Zimbabwe.

Fundamentally therefore the primary objective was coordinative and to establish a hierarchy of plans from local village to national levels. In practice however co-ordination of relatively autonomous units is difficult and there are not enough 'command' powers which were devised at provincial level to make planning mandatory.

In 1985 the Provincial Councils and Administration Act was passed, thus formalising provincial local government. The Act reflected the weaknesses of the co-ordinating framework because there was no mention of reducing or interfering with the existing powers of urban or rural/district councils. The provincial level therefore simply is a filter, lacking budgetary powers and not having a formally elected decision-making authority. The Provincial Council is composed of chairmen of local authorities (de facto representing their local authority interests) and other prominent business and civic interests.

The provincial level however is an important level in terms of deconcentration of central government administration. The various ministries have provincial offices largely responsible for the implementation of their programmes. However the provincial level lacks territorial powers to decide on resource allocation and priorities. It is a conglomeration of disparate units, with different and sometimes conflicting interests. Therefore it is the urban councils and district/rural councils which have real powers for planning and administration (albeit weak ones in most cases vis-à-vis central government).

Specific Statutory Public Planning Powers

There is a wide range of public statutory bodies, or quangos, with powers to initiate, plan and implement development programmes. In Zimbabwe, they are generally referred to as parastatals. The statutory powers are provided by central government through parliament and in most cases the parastatals are linked to some parent sector ministry e.g. agriculture or local government. In Zimbabwe recently there has been a formation of a Parastatals Commission to oversee the running of the parastatals.

The parastatals include those which are service oriented e.g., focussing on purely marketing and distribution or advising; those which have a production orientation e.g., agricultural or industrial production; and those which combine both. In general parastatal bodies enjoy a relatively high degree of autonomy and some function on a more or less equal footing with private companies.

Legislation for parastatal bodies is geared to very specific objectives and a major emphasis recently has been the question of increasing their economic viability. In the field of regional and urban development the following play a key role:

- Agricultural Rural Development Authority (ARDA), whose terms of reference includes state farming, rural development, processing and marketing of agricultural produce and developing settlements. ARDA's operations are wide ranging.

- Small Enterprises Development Corporation (SEDCO), whose role is primarily to promote the development of the small industry sector.
- Urban Development Corporation, whose function is to assist, promote the development of rural and urban settlements, and their management.

There are many other parastatals with a nationwide mandate for various sector activities. In the agricultural sector, there are four key parastatals – Dairy Marketing Board, Grain Marketing Board, Cotton Marketing Board and the Cold Storage Commission – which have a crucial role in the production and marketing of agricultural produce. In the energy sector, there is the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority and in the transport sector there is National Railways of Zimbabwe and Air Zimbabwe.

A key issue is that all these bodies have specific and relatively autonomous powers to plan. Such powers are derived from the statutes and conform largely to national sectoral planning. In most cases the agencies are participants in the district and provincial forums where their projects and programmes are implemented. However the most crucial linkage is with central government who provide the enabling powers.

There are also in existence a wide variety of statutes which govern the operation of various activities but not necessarily related to an agency. The Act would be administered in most cases through a specific government department or ministry. Examples of such acts include:

- Regional, Town and Country Planning Act, which is central to town and regional planning management
- Communal Land Act
- Deeds Registry Act
- Water Act
- Land Acquisition Act
- Survey Act
- Housing and Building Act
- Natural Resources Act
- Road Act

Such legislation operates at both national and subnational levels and is in most cases linked to standards and provides powers for control and administration. The Acts are important sources of planning power and they are operationalised through the local planning authorities.

In spite of the fact that the parastatal bodies, and the wide range of specific legislation existing, have to operate through the system of local authorities, they to a large extent reflect a highly centralised system. All the legislation is controlled by parliament and they are in most cases supervised

by central government ministries and departments. Planning at subnational levels therefore tends to be disjointed because of the existence of many sources of planning and development powers. This calls for a greater degree of coordination, which is the main reason for establishment of provincial councils and development committees.

III. PROCESSES OF PLANNING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE DECENTRALISED FRAMEWORK

It has been established that there exists a multiplicity of agencies and local authorities responsible for planning at the local (decentralised) levels. These include national sectoral ministries, parastatal bodies and local governments. The wide range of actors complicates planning somewhat because there are many areas of overlap and potential conflict.

If we assume that planning follows the administrative (spatial) hierarchy then we should have the following hierarchy:

- Village Plans
- Ward Plans
- District Plans/Urban
- Provincial Plans
- National Plans

The assumption is that plans would build into each other from the smallest unit to the national level. This assumption does not exclude the national plan being disaggregated to the smallest levels. Therefore it could be 'bottom-up' or 'top-down'.

Planning has to be related to political decision-making powers and once again the local government hierarchy provides the basis. In Zimbabwe, however, the experience to date shows the dominance of national sectoral planning which is reflected in the processes at provincial, district and urban levels.

Provincial Planning

The advent of provincial development planning is largely a post-independence phenomenon. During the colonial era the province was largely perceived as an administrative unit with no specific 'territorial' planning powers. Sector ministries operated at provincial levels and so did parastatal agencies, but this was largely perceived in terms of service delivery. There was also a prevailing racist perception of government which distinguished between African and European needs. This distorted the function of local government and sector ministries.

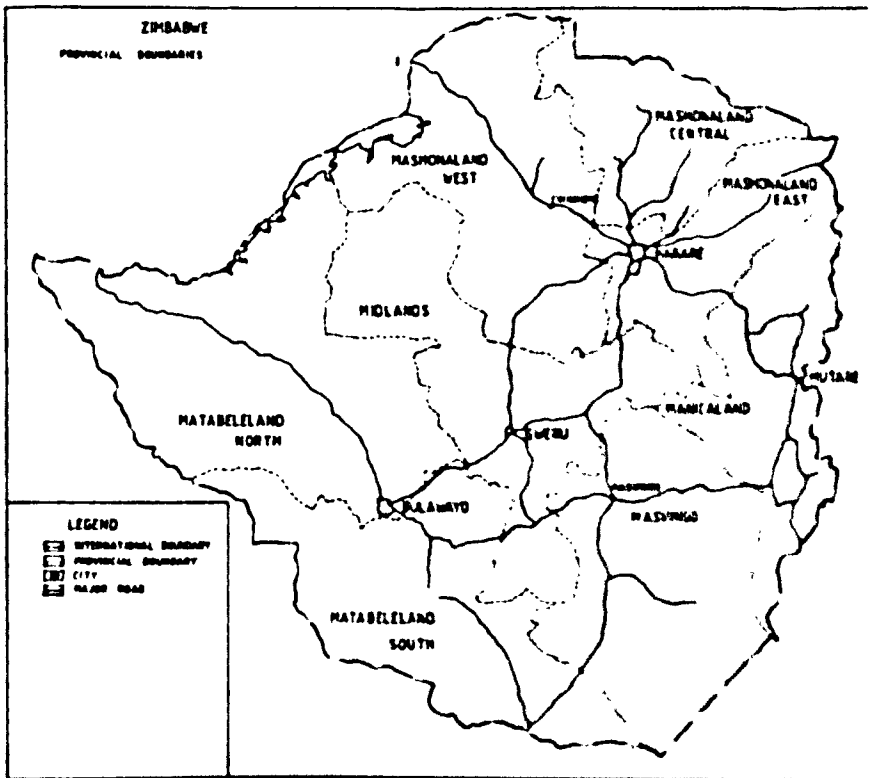
In the post-1980 era, there was an abolition of racial discrimination in government and a general democratisation of the system. Local government

was restructured and the province became an important focus for subnational planning and development programmes. Whereas there were previously five provinces, there was an expansion to eight to include:

- Mashonaland East
- Mashonaland West
- Mashonaland Central
- Midlands
- Manicaland
- Masvingo
- Matebeleland North
- Matebeleland South

(See Map 1)

Map 1.



The strengthening of the provincial set-up was closely linked to the rural development programmes. Most ministries' programmes received substantial public sector investment funding for rural physical and social infrastructure. This was enhanced by donor funded programmes provided under the ZIMCORD (Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development, 1981)

To a large extent the strengthening can be attributed to the *deconcentration* of central government public sector activities and not necessarily to the *devolution* of powers (political, economic etc) to the provincial territorial unit. The deconcentration created an important need for co-ordination of the multiplicity of agencies. Provincial planning therefore arose out of the need for co-ordination of both sector ministry activities and the activities of local governments.

Existing provincial planning powers were vested in the agencies and the various sector ministries, with no focus or co-ordinating forum. There was also increasing tension felt between sectoral perspectives of planning and those of a more territorial nature emanating from local authorities. This resulted in the formulation of the 1984 Prime Minister's directive on Provincial Councils and administration.

In terms of planning, the directive created a new drive to produce and formalise provincial development plans. The generally agreed framework for such plans was that they would promote co-ordination particularly of the various government agencies (sector ministries, departments) and parastatals. The plans would also provide a framework for the preparation of district, urban and local plans. They would also help to disaggregate national plans and programmes in a territorial sense.

In 1985 and 1986 provincial development plans were prepared for all provinces. Basically the plans were of a medium term nature (5 years) and were made up of sectoral projects and programmes. In most cases the plans did not go beyond listing of the priorities and projects of the different ministries and departments.

The responsibility for preparing provincial plans was vested in the Provincial Development Committee which is composed of provincial (central) government officials. The Department of Physical Planning (Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development) provides the technical expertise for compiling the plans. The 1984 directive stated that a provincial development plan shall reflect:

- the contents of rural district development plans which have been admitted to the provincial plan
- development plans of urban councils which have been admitted to the provincial plan and

- provincial plans of ministries.

In other words the objective was stated as bringing together territorial and sectoral plans. The plan would be a synthesis reflecting public sector investment priorities.

In all the provinces the provincial development committees were divided into committees for purposes of planning. In the case of Matabeleland North and South (co-ordinated by the same provincial physical planning office in Bulawayo) five sub-committees were established:

a) *Physical Infrastructure Committee*

- Ministry of Transport (Chairing)
- District Development Fund
- Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA)
- Posts and Telecommunication Corporation (PTC)
- National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ)
- Department of Physical Planning

The composition of the physical infrastructure is dominated by three parastatals (ZESA, PTC, NRZ) in the fields of energy, telecommunication and transport.

b) *Social Infrastructure Committee*

- Ministry of Education (Chairing)
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Community Development, Co-operatives and Women's Affairs
- Ministry of Labour, Manpower Planning and Social Services
- Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture
- Department of Physical Planning

The social infrastructure committee is largely service oriented. It is dominated by sector ministries unlike the former committee dominated by productive/service parastatals.

c) *Resources*

- Department of Physical Planning (Chairing)
- District Development Fund
- Department of Agriculture, Technical and Extension Service
- Department of Veterinary Services
- Agriculture and Rural Development Authority
- Forestry Commission
- Ministry of Water Resource and Energy Development
- Ministry of Mines
- Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce

- Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries

This is the largest committee, which by its composition reflects the importance attached to resource development. This includes agriculture, industry and commerce.

d) *Housing*

- Ministry of Public Construction and National Housing (Chairing)
- Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Rural Resettlement
- City of Bulawayo
- Department of Physical Planning

This committee is sector specific and includes the agencies which are most closely involved with housing development.

e) *Editorial Sub-Committee*

- Department of Physical Planning
- Posts and Telecommunication Corporation
- Ministry of Transport

The composition of the committees and even the exact business of the committees varies from province to province. In Midlands province four sub-committees were established:

- Agriculture and Conservation
- Housing and Employment
- Infrastructure
- Social development

In Manicaland province five sub-committees were established:

- Agriculture
- Social Services
- Commerce and Industry
- Natural Resources
- Infrastructure and Housing

In Masvingo province the structure for planning was expressed in a different form. The provincial development committee established a planning and monitoring committee, under which several project teams were established to deal with specific sectors. In the three Mashonaland provinces (East, Central and West) the committee structures were never clearly delineated and plan preparation was largely coordinated in the provincial planning office (in 1985/86 it was one office, which has subsequently been divided to cater for the three provinces).

In all the provinces the role of the subcommittees is to synthesise submissions for each sector and to prepare reports for the editorial committees. The committees meet regularly to discuss the various plan submissions and report them to the provincial development committee. In all

provinces the role of the department of physical planning is in providing expertise for plan making and acting as a co-ordinating secretariat.

The role of the Department of Physical Planning is rather unusual in comparison with many other developing countries. In most developing countries, physical planning has been largely confined to layouts and development control. In Zimbabwe, however the role was expanded at independence with the strong rural development emphasis. Initially it was most significant in the field of rural settlement planning, but increasingly this became broader rural regional planning. The scope for physical planning expanded from siting of infrastructural projects to central co-ordination of sectoral programmes.

The role of the Department of Physical Planning can be perceived in two ways: Firstly, it could argue that the department had a mandate as reflected in the provisions for regional planning in the 1976 Regional Town and Country Planning Act. It was therefore natural that with the removal of racial discrimination the department's role would expand into the formerly neglected communal areas. This view however does not explain the centrality of the Department of Physical Planning.

The second view would be that the role played by the Department of Physical Planning was part of crisis management for development. There was a need for an actor to coordinate sector ministries and agencies at provincial level and the choice of the Department of Physical Planning could have been the result of its 'visibility' at the implementation role. All projects needed to be sited and 'he who sited stole the limelight'. Indeed most district councils have close links with the department because they were the foci for significant public sector investment projects, the most visible of which were rural growth and service centres (Wekwete, 1989).

Although there are many other 'planning' agencies at provincial level, most of them were very sector specific and could not assume a broad co-ordinatory role. Their personnel tended to be sector specialists compared to the relatively broader complement of regional and urban planners. Another key factor was the location of the department in the ministry of local government which controls urban and rural/district local authorities. All these factors could have contributed to somewhat of a hegemony of physical planning at subnational levels. Also the skills in the department tended to be broader than the title of the department would suggest.

However the interpretation of provincial plans and their nature varies from province to province. In the case of the Matebeleland provinces the plans were prepared before district plans and the process of planning was largely a technocratic exercise with no involvement of elected local authorities. It was largely sector ministry co-ordination and disaggregation of

national plan objectives and programmes. The exercise involved provincial governors, but the role of the provincial councils (political representation) was weak.

In other provinces, particularly Midlands and Masvingo, it is argued that the plans are the outcome of interaction between top-down and bottom-up processes. There is also a synthesis between territorial and sector approaches. In reality however the plans reflect more of sector priorities and programmes, and less of the district territorial needs. It is clear that even at district levels the district development committees are primarily made up of central government officials. Although district councils have their own jurisdictions as locally elected authorities, this is not necessarily what the district development committee stands for.

The variations in the types of committees in the provinces is of limited importance because the representation (sectoral and parastatal agencies) is uniform throughout Zimbabwe. What emerges as an important difference are the dispositions of the various actors in the different provinces. This 'personal' variation became important because no firm guidelines emerged about the processes of provincial planning. Interpretation tended to be ad-hoc in most cases and this is reflected in the quality of the output of the plans.

A review of all the provincial plans produced so far reveal that they are overwhelmingly sector-coordination plans. They are not provincial territorial plans emanating out of provincial needs. The focus is on national public sector investment programmes coordination. In most of the plans synthesis of district and urban plans is missing; indeed such urban plans might not exist. It has also been noted that the main urban local authorities perceive provincial planning as largely rural planning. This suggests that the desire for *integrated* planning as stated in the 1984 directive has not been achieved. The term *provincial* is not yet fully representative of all the local government units geographically located in the province.

An important limiting factor on provincial planning is the lack of a budget and specific mandatory powers and responsibilities. The local authorities retain their autonomy and they are only brought together for 'co-ordination' purposes. Even the governor who heads the province politically (rank of cabinet minister) has no specific powers of sanction or of directing development. The sector ministries retain the powers they derive from the annual budget which gives them responsibility for projects and programmes in their area of activity.

Until recently with the setting up of the National Planning Agency, provincial plans were not recognised at the Ministry of Finance for purposes of resource allocation. The agency has recently began to appoint provincial economists (in the spirit of the 1984 directive) to strengthen the economic

importance of provincial planning. It is therefore hoped that provincial planning would be moulded within the context of the national planning frame of sectors. It is doubtful whether this will strengthen the role of provincial planning. Provincial planning is likely to remain 'marginal broking' in an attempt to harmonise sectoral with territorial needs. This is to avoid the common problem that a planned school ends up having no water supply or no road serving it.

It has been argued that provincial planning needs to be strengthened by clearly defining the role of the 'province' in development. The 1985 Provincial Councils and Administration Act, which consolidated the 1984 directive, lacks an elaboration of powers. It was made to suit the needs of co-ordination – the provincial councils are made up of mayors of urban councils, chairmen of district councils and other notables.

The representation is reasonable but without a budget and with no specific roles to perform (except coordination), it becomes ceremonial. Indeed since the production of the first provincial plans, the only group of actors still active are the sector ministries who benefit from an awareness of what each other does. The local authorities have limited gains in concrete terms – for them it probably is just another bureaucratic tier to deal with before the centre.

This critique does not imply that provincial planning has been a useless exercise. On the contrary it has greatly improved awareness of processes of development at subnational levels. Firstly, it has increased awareness among sector ministries of provincial development needs and there is greater co-ordination. Secondly, it has raised important questions relating to participation in development. There is a greater political awareness of the meaning and need for participation. Finally, important strides have been made in decentralising the operations of central government. This could be still limited to deconcentration of central government agencies, still represents an important stride. The nature of local government has been modified but a greater awareness exists of its usefulness and limitations in development.

We could characterise the process as 'disjointed incrementalism' (Wildavsky, 1963). However, if we adopt the view of planning as a learning process, then the years since the 1984 directive have been useful. In most provincial offices there is already a review process to reconcile the annual provincial plans, within the context of the five year plans, with government's long term objectives.

District Planning

The term 'district planning' is rather ambiguous within the context of the

Zimbabwean administrative structures. The administrative district for purposes of local government covers communal areas, small scale commercial and large scale commercial areas. This administrative district is headed by the District Administrator who is the most senior civil servant at that level. In terms of elected local government at district level, there existed (until 1988), rural councils, district councils (communal areas) and town boards.

In the post-1980 context however district planning was effectively associated with district council areas (formerly African councils) which are reconstituted as part of local government reorganisation. Out of the former 200 African councils, 55 district councils were established, in most cases in close juxtaposition with rural councils (representing commercial farming areas).

Within the context of the 1984 Prime Minister's directive (1984) the rural councils and district councils were assumed to be merged into rural/district councils. Such amalgamation only took place in 1988, albeit in a relatively weak form. However despite the 'amalgamation' efforts, district planning still fundamentally refers to communal areas. This is because the focus of development planning, through public sector investment programmes, has been on communal areas. Most of the sectors have deconcentrated their activities to district levels to ensure effective programme implementation.

Local government reorganisation in the post-independence era has emphasised democratisation of decision making and enhancing levels of public participation. The 1984 Prime Minister's directive elaborated the proposed structures to include:

- village level
- ward level
- district level

These three levels are perceived as the basis for decentralised planning and decision making at district level. The basic unit (the village) has a theoretical population of 1,000 people and elects a village development committee to enable the villagers to identify and articulate their needs. In 1984/5 a national delineation exercise of village and wards conducted throughout the communal areas by local government officials. This was meant to reflect the directive although there were in existence traditional villages.

The exercise was an attempt to superimpose the 'new' villages on the 'existing' ones based on clan and kinship ties. However because no new physical villages were created there have been no major changes taking place at village level. In most areas the fabric of the traditional village has been maintained, but in others there has been confusion with sometimes both existing side by side. Besides the 'standardised' village concept created for

planning and administration, there is also the 'party cell' which has also been associated with the standardised village.

In terms of planning however, the village is generally ineffective, and tends to be a receiver. The traditional village function has been land allocation and limited judiciary functions. The new emphasis on the village vis-à-vis other decentralised organs, has been on strengthening participation in development, planning and administration. This refers to the initial stage of needs identification.

Immediately above the village is the ward level which theoretically comprises 6 villages (6,000 people) and from which a councillor is elected for the district council. The ward is therefore an effective political unit and co-ordinates village needs and requirements. The Councillor stands effectively for the ward and its people and participates at district level. At the ward level a variety of central government ministries provide extension services including - Agricultural Extension, Community Health, Community Development etc. Indeed the ward level has an important role as a planning, administration and political unit. It is limited however in terms of lack of finance and in availability of capable staff because it is totally dependent on sectoral ministry activities.

The powers of district councils as administrative and local planning authorities were derived largely from the provisions of the District Councils Act (amended April 1980) which provided for powers to elect councillors, power to provide services, facilities and amenities for the inhabitants of the area; power to promote development and economic progress of the areas; and powers to raise revenue, plan and implement projects.

The operation of district councils has been through a committee system and the committees usually cover the following areas of responsibility:

- planning and works
- education and health
- general administration and finance

The committees are delegated decision making powers by council and the executive officers employed by council directly relate to them. The committee system also operates in urban areas.

The Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development has direct administrative links with district councils. Each district council area falls under the administrative jurisdiction of the district administrator who is responsible for ensuring effective implementation of government policies. The administrator liaises closely with the other central government sector ministries operating at district level in the delivery of services. The administrator chairs the district development committee (1984 directive) which has the planning responsibility.

The conflict between sectoral and territorial needs is very evident at district level. On one hand the sector ministries through the development committee are important actors in planning, highlighting their sectoral programmes deconcentrated from central government. On the other the village, ward and district council, are active political fora for the people and the elected representatives to formulate their needs and plans. In theory the two processes relate to each other, but in practice they do not because sectoral needs are articulated by different actors from the local 'territorial' representatives. The concept of a district development plan is therefore not straightforward; in practice it has emerged largely as a reflection of the need for co-ordination – the coordination largely serves the interests of central government sector ministries for whom conflict in implementation of projects and programmes is reduced. For the council and other elected representatives, the benefit of the plan (whose formulation they do not control) is that it acts as a bargaining tool/forum. The projects and proposals will reflect district needs (albeit with dominance of sector ministry requirements).

The district plans produced so far are largely descriptive and do not reflect the capacity for local implementation. The district has limited local revenue (Helmsing and Wekwete, 1987) and this is aggravated by the fact that even the next level up (province) has an equal impotence. It is a hierarchy of co-ordinators. Planning becomes co-ordination and co-ordination planning.

Rural Councils Planning

Rural councils cover commercial farming areas and their powers largely resemble those of the urban councils. In fact most small towns fall under the jurisdiction of rural councils (They operate as town boards).

Rural councils' main role has been to provide services (roads particularly) to the large scale commercial farmers. Land in commercial farms is privately owned and therefore rateable, which has provided rural councils with a viable revenue source. The revenue is derived from *unit* (land) taxes, and by virtue of the profitability of the commercial agriculture sector, rural councils as local authorities have been economically viable (Wekwete, 1988). The commercial agricultural sector accounts for up to 75 per cent of the total agricultural output and 90 per cent of the marketed output. Such superiority has been achieved through systematic state support since the establishment of the Department of European Agriculture in 1908. The department provided training, support services (research stations) and through it financial support was provided for farming operations. The relative autonomy and apparent self-sufficiency of the commercial farming areas was created as part of the colonial process.

Since 1980 rural councils have produced no formal plans except for annual public sector investment submissions for infrastructure. Such submissions are processed through the ministry of local government, and ultimately passed to the Finance ministry. Even after 1984 with the formal announcement of the need for rural district plans, there have not been any rural council plans produced. In most cases mention of rural councils has largely been within the context of the provincial plans.

This position however is likely to be changed with the passing of the Rural District Councils Act 1988 which has amalgamated former district and rural councils.

Rural District Planning

In 1988 the Rural District Councils Act was passed, amalgamating (unifying) the former district and rural councils. The actual process of creating structures for amalgamation is underway and is currently focussed on boundary delimitation. In presenting the bill to parliament (March 1988) at its second reading, the Minister argued:

'... it is only natural and an impending necessity that the division and administration of land between rural councils and district councils be abolished and united under one rural district council which has one aim - to equitably administer, develop and uplift the standards of living of all residents in that one community ...'
(Parliamentary Debates, 1988)

The rural district council will become a more viable economic entity responsible for planning and co-ordination of development. Indeed since 1980, the amalgamation of rural and district councils has been an important objective for central government. In the 1984 Prime Minister's directive the concept of amalgamated rural district councils was already built in. The functions of the council in terms of development were stated as follows:

- to examine the rural district development plans prepared by the rural district development committee and give approval to the contents therein. Membership of the committees was to include:
 - District Administrator (Chairman)
 - All district heads of ministries and departments
 - Leaders of commerce, industry and non-governmental organisations
- to review and monitor implementation of development plans
- to participate in the formulation of other higher level plan (provincial, national etc).

The rural district council is made up of both elected and appointed representatives and central/local government executive officers. The elected representatives include both former district councillors and rural councillors. The 1988 Act therefore formally concretises the powers for preparing and implementing plans in both communal and commercial farming areas.

The question of amalgamation or unification is however problematic given the fact that separate land tenure systems prevail and there is a vast difference in terms of economic potential between peasant farmers and commercial farmers. (Wekwete, 1988). This problem will also be reflected at the plan making stage and the stage of prioritisation of projects. Whereas district councils have been very much oriented towards providing social and physical infrastructure to a rural economy largely neglected and underdeveloped during the colonial period, the rural councils have been catering for the needs of well developed, high investment farms and farmers. Thus even if the unit (rural district) is one, it will continue to reflect the duality of problems.

The nature of the proposed rural district plan is likely to be co-ordinative and dominated by the programmes and projects emanating from sector ministries. The powers of the territorial unit will improve by virtue of its size and relative economic power (if all the resources are properly managed, particularly taxes). However, despite the fact that rural councils existed as fairly viable economic units, this is now likely to be reduced because district councils have been highly dependent on central government (Helmsing and Wekwete, 1987). Arguably however it is a step in the right direction in terms of post-independence reorganisation of local government.

Urban planning

There are 16 urban local authorities which include 4 city councils, 7 municipal councils, 4 town councils and 1 town board. They derive their administrative and planning powers from the Urban Councils Act (amended 1980), which provides a wide range of powers and jurisdiction in the designated urban zones.

Jordan (1984) reviewed some of the main features of urban local government which is also the oldest form of local government in Zimbabwe. In 1986 Tax Commission report revealed a high degree of relative self sufficiency in urban local authorities, which generate up to 96 per cent of their own revenue income from local tax and non-tax revenue. The local authorities have also been provided with powers for borrowing (which are approved by the relevant sector ministry). In reality however there are strong centre-local relations which exist in all spheres, because urban areas are units of the national economy. Therefore although the activities located in Harare

as the capital city geographically belong to it, they are to a large extent national activities. Central government is the main taxing authority (sales tax, duty etc) and is involved in the macro-economic management of cities and towns.

There are two main forms of planning which urban authorities undertake. The first is more or less sectoral planning which is linked to the administrative departments. The main departments of most municipalities are:

- Engineer's department
- Town Clerk's department
- Health department
- Treasurer's department
- Community Services and Housing

The nature of departments varies with the size of municipality. The departments (like sector ministries at central government level) are involved in an annual planning cycle to cater for recurrent and capital expenditure. This is co-ordinated by the Town Clerk's department which is the office of the chief executive. All the departments are manned by officers employed by council who report directly to committees of the elected representatives.

Sectoral or departmental planning is also linked to national annual planning through the budget. The submissions from the local authorities for public sector expenditure are put forward to the ministries of local government, rural and urban development. They in turn forward a co-ordinated submission to the Finance ministry who prepare the budget annually. Urban local authorities are responsible for providing infrastructure in their respective areas and this task is only possible through loans and grants from central government. Housing is a major activity in most local authorities and central government plans a direct role in the financing of housing schemes. In Zimbabwe central government plays a central role by both providing state land and infrastructure for housing development.

The second important form of planning is what has traditionally been called 'town planning'. This is an important local authority function which focusses on land and physical infrastructure provision. The development of urban 'town' planning has been closely linked to the forces of colonialism in Zimbabwe (Wekwete 1988). There is only a well developed statutory framework which reflects an emphasis on development control. Urban local authorities are statutorily required to prepare master and local plans to guide development in their areas. In Zimbabwe most local authorities operate on the basis of town planning schemes which were prepared in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. Such schemes however represent a tradition of planned towns since the advent of colonialism at the end of the 19th century.

The powers for 'town planning' are fundamentally derived from the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act (1976) which has evolved from the 1933 and 1945 Acts. However there are a variety of allied acts which impinge on the provisions for town planning.

These include:

- Land Survey Act
- Deeds Registry Act
- Natural Resources Act
- Public Health Act
- Mines and Minerals Act
- Water Act

All these Acts are administered by central government departments/ministries, and have to be taken into account in plan preparation. They also define a web of relationships between urban statutory planning and other statutory frameworks.

Urban planning, unlike provincial and district planning, is statutory in that the 'town plans' prepared are enforceable by the authority. This is particularly so in the area of development control where decisions have to be made about uses of land. The authority is responsible for granting planning permission to uses and this is done within the framework of statutory plans. However departmental plans are not necessarily statutory, being more defined and dictated by the nature of the annual budgets of the local authority and also of central government. Planning for urban local authorities however has less sectoral involvement of government ministries except for two which have a direct bearing on the major activities of local authorities i.e., the ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development being a 'parent' ministry for local government, and the ministry of Public Construction and Housing whose role is fundamental in the planning and delivery of low income housing.

It can be argued that direct access to local resources has created a relatively higher degree of local autonomy in decision making. This has been enhanced by relatively stronger economic bases (derived from taxing land and property) and greater capacity to generate local revenue. In Harare in 1987, the total value of developed land and property was estimated at \$500 billion (Zimbabwe dollars), whilst that of undeveloped land was \$13 million (Zimbabwe dollars) – City of Harare Master Plan Report (1987). There are also other forms of non-tax revenue (fees, licences, trading etc) which account for a significant proportion of locally generated revenue.

The relationship with both district and provincial authorities is established administratively through the 1984 Prime Minister's directive and subsequently the Provincial Councils and Administration Act 1985. The

provincial plan should reflect both the urban and rural needs and priorities. In practice although there exists administrative and geographical contiguity, there is limited integrated (territorial) planning. Urban local authorities exist as entities with their own organisational frameworks and relatively higher autonomy (even higher than that of provinces). Their planning is geared to specific budgets (local and central) and there is increasingly a strengthening of corporate planning internally.

Table 1 is a summary bringing together the local authorities and comparing them in terms of nature of authority, role of sector ministries versus local authority, source of planning, powers, nature of plans produced. The distinctions are clearly explained between the four bodies (territorial) which have a mandate for decentralised planning. The types of plans produced are different in terms of what they cover, their status and their linkages.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this paper has been to review the post-independence experience in Zimbabwe in the field of decentralised subnational planning. It has identified the many sources of planning powers found at decentralised levels. Such powers are both of a statutory and non-statutory nature. They do not necessarily define a neat hierarchy but rather the existence of a multiplicity of agencies and what could be termed disjointed sector/territorial planning.

The efforts to decentralise planning are evident, but there is a great need for streamlining. There are 8 provinces, 16 urban local authorities, 55 district councils, 55 rural councils and more than 20 sector ministries and agencies. Such a proliferation creates an urgent need for co-ordination which, indeed, has been a dominant function of the planning process particularly at provincial levels.

In most cases the dominance of central government ministries (sector planning) is fairly obvious to the lowest level. In other cases (e.g., urban local authorities) there is a tradition which reflects relative autonomy and a much more tightly defined framework for planning. The desire by central government to bring all forms of decentralised planning in one basket (1984 Prime Minister's directive) has merits, but has many problems because of the existence of established statutory powers for local authorities (district councils, rural councils, urban councils etc).

A major weakness commonly found at the decentralised levels of planning is the lack of budgets. This limits the role and scope of local planning. In the case of district and provincial authorities, the committees

Table 1.
SUMMARY OF TYPES OF LOCAL AUTHORITY POWERS FOR PLANNING, NATURE AND FORM OF PLANS

<i>Type of Local Authority</i>	<i>Role of Sector Ministries Versus Local Authority</i>	<i>Source of Planning Powers/Administrative Powers</i>	<i>Types of Plans Produced</i>
Provincial Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sector ministry dominated/limited local territorial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No directly elected elected representatives - 1984 Prime Minister's directive - Provincial Councils and Administration Act 1985 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provincial Plans (co-ordination planning) Non-statutory
Urban Local Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominance of local authority; limited sector ministry interference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban Councils Act - Regional, Town and Country Planning and Allied Acts - 1984 Prime Minister's Directive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statutory Master/Local Plans - Departmental/Corporate plans linked to annual budgets
Rural Council Local Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominance of local authority limited sector ministry interference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Councils Act - Regional, Town and Country Planning and Allied Acts - Provincial Councils Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Departmental/local sector plans for infrastructure
District Council local authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominance of sector ministries and central government public sector programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - District Councils Act - Provincial Councils Act - Regional, Town and Country Planning and Allied Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - District plans (co-ordination planning) - Linked to provincial planning directly

responsible for planning are sector ministries which are deconcentrated at those geographical levels. Local planning is an expression of their projects and programmes – it is making centrally determined projects look like locally planned (including participation of locally elected representatives).

The experience of Zimbabwe in terms of decentralised planning clearly highlights the dilemma of territory versus function (Friedmann and Weaver, 1982). Local government is an attempt to define territorial administrative and political units and vest local decision making power. The rationale in traditional western societies is that strengthening local participation and democracy, has great value in a utilitarian sense. Local government is also seen as more responsive to local needs and as assuming a wide range of responsibilities on behalf of the central state. Such a view tends to highlight the importance of territory in government. In practice however local governments in both developed and developing nations have always been at the mercy of central government.

This is particularly so in developing nations where there has been greater *statisation* in post-independence to achieve development. Local government is seen as no more than a tool to implementing stated government policies and objectives. Central government assumes a central role in all aspects of development, and local government assumes a largely implementing role. This is not always negative, but in most cases it is clear that the assumed responsibilities are well beyond what the state can achieve. In most countries therefore there is a need to define precisely what government can do i.e., defining the limits. Such limits will form the basis for prescribing a policy of decentralisation.

In most developing nations, the issue of decentralisation is not as simple as devolving powers to local levels. Because of the prevailing economic crisis, the central state is relatively weak itself, which in turn limits the scope for decentralisation. In most cases the pronouncements in the form of laws and directives (for decentralisation) are rarely effective, because there are few resources which could be spared to make decentralisation effective. In the case of Zimbabwe, although there is a commitment to provincial and district planning, the mechanisms for strengthening resource allocation and transfer to territorial levels are limited. For most countries it becomes a vicious circle of trying to decentralise poverty.

Zimbabwe has certainly a wide array of decentralised structures which perform different tasks from the role of deconcentrated sector ministries to local government. There are many laws and administrative structures which exist, and the major challenge is to effectively harness them to achieve the stated development goals. One of the major tasks is to streamline the administrative structures and to resolve the issue of whether to vest more

power and authority to sectors or to the territorial units. The streamlining could improve the effectiveness of planning and the role of the different committees. Such streamlining has to link the various subnational planning structures and the national planning agency.

Finally, it can be argued that within the context of a unitary state (of which Zimbabwe is one), the success of decentralisation will depend on the relative strength of the central state. It is the centre which decides what powers to give to subnational units, and it plays an important role in co-ordinating decentralised planning efforts which have to be ultimately synthesised as part of the national effort.

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