Perceptions of Secure Life Space in Informal Urban Zimbabwe

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Introduction

The objective of this paper is to readdress the term ‘security’ in the context of contemporary Southern Africa. The focus moves away from the broader macro-level investigation of land reform, but addresses the spatial, urban household security at micro-level. Taking the basic social unit of the ‘household’ as the strategic point of departure, my paper reviews two key complex, yet interrelated variables of the land-housing debate: firstly, the perceptions and implications of security of the territorial base; and secondly, the momentum it gives to the changing physical living conditions of the family.

By investigating the spatial occupation, consolidation processes and use of the home and the home-based enterprise, offers a valuable insight as to how people claim their right to land, involving the concept of ‘start-up’ or household formation. This reveals how families express their social identity and produce democratic personal and community spaces within the built environment regarding complex levels of perceived ownership. Accordingly, this can further enhance our understanding of the meaning of household security, which should lead to more sensitive and supportive housing policy responses concerning urban land systems.

Research is based on hearing the voice of the urban poor themselves (Ewing, 2004). A key element was to comprehend ‘reality’ from the households’ perspective (de Souza, 2001: 177; Jones, 1983: 147; Peattie, 1983: 231). The issue of urban land and perceived secure life space became relevant only after talking to the people living in two highly contested informal settlements on the urban periphery of Harare1 and observing the changing situation on the ground. In other words, direct explorations of visible and tangible aspects of housing were recognised through engagement with the residents (Lewis, 1976; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Slim & Thompson, 1994). This method was used to clarify the sequence of events in the life cycle of the household, past, present and future. Data was gathered from in-depth personal interviews and individual spatial surveys with 137 households 2.

This paper is organised into three interrelated sections. Firstly, it presents the background discourse, questioning theories on low-income housing and land security in the developing world today. This presentation sets the tone for the following section, which narrows the field to the assessment of changing spatial implications of physical living conditions of households in Harare, Zimbabwe. The case studies introduce the current ‘urban reality’ facing the people living and working in home-based enterprises. I will describe 2 family’s life stories in socio-spatial detail, focusing on the different processes of the development of each specific ‘home’. Thirdly and in conclusion, positive ingredients for change are recommended.

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1 My doctoral research was conducted during a highly unstable political and economic period in Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004 (Ewing, 2004). This required a perceptive approach to information compilation. Gathering knowledge required unlimited time, patience, flexibility and determination (Buckle, 1995; Kellett, 2000). This problem was seen as a possible way to understand a solution to conduct research in sensitive areas (Ewing, 2002). Oral narratives are represented as spoken word for word by the informants.

2 16 households were further studied in close detail over a one year period.
I. Theoretical airings from the past

The land-shelter problem in developing countries is by no means a novel phenomenon. Low-income housing, informal settlements and urban land tenure have been hotly debated in the past four decades. Despite the many critiques of Turner (1972, 1976) (e.g. Burgess, 1982), housing theorists have continued to use the examination of informal settlements to learn from survival systems of people living in poverty. Previous theoretical writings mention the inability of governments to supply adequate quality and quantity housing and land for the urban poor (Angel et al., 1983; Hamdi, 1985; Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 1989; UNCHS, 1987). “Households have, therefore, taken their own initiatives to house themselves… but such initiatives are often considered illegal” (de Souza, 1999: 20).

Friedmann and Douglass (1998: 5) argue, “Access to environmental life space, access to land, housing and a life supporting environment is a primary good for which even very poor households will make an exceptional effort and sacrifice to secure.” Friedmann (1992: 67) regards defensible life space where it, “includes the physical space in which household members cook, eat, sleep and secure their personal possessions… It extends beyond the space called ‘home’ to the immediate neighbourhood where socialising and other life-supporting activities take place… Gaining a secure and permanent foothold in a friendly and supportive urban neighbourhood is the most highly prized social power of all...” Douglass (1998: 124-125) explains that the importance of secure life space centres on the perception of a secure community environment. Social mechanisms of the household are fundamental in the utilisation and development of different economic functions within the physical setting. Such mechanisms allow members of a household to form strategies, make decisions, allocate resources, manage the household, produce their livelihood, and maintain their habitat both at an individual and community level.

Yet why do people still risk investing in improving households and community environments on illegal land? The answer is far more complex than basic necessity to provide shelter. “Land is frequently a scarce resource…” (Turner, 1976a). Urban land once occupied, whether it is legal or illegal, has an exchange value (Ward, 1989). Combined with this factor, land that is occupied or invaded by the urban poor has a use value for both reproductive and productive activities. Evidence reveals that people invade vacant land with the intention to occupy and build a house for their personal daily living (Payne, 2002). Households invest in all kinds of processes and commodities to improve their plots and businesses, which inevitably change their perceptions of security (Assies, 1994).

Perceived land tenure relates to how the people view their situation with regards to the household and security and their experiences as a past, present or future resident of a neighbourhood (Razzaz, 1993: 349). De Souza (1999: 23) defines perceived tenure as the household’s perceived rights to own, buy, sell or use their houses. By using the term ‘perceived tenure’ avoids the requirements to ascertain legal proof of property rights (de Souza, 2001: 179; 1999: 19). More importantly it establishes the term ‘perceived’ to emphasize the dynamic, energetic process of tenure security depending on who perceives it (Doebele, 1987). Payne (1989: 44) notes, “Perceived security of tenure is more critical in

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3 Other preceding arguments (UN, 1976; UNCHS, 1996) identify that governments have been urged to move towards alternative land and housing solutions rather than relying on previous orthodox planning principles and housing provision. Regrettably, the reality is that many countries have not taken this route. Some governments see success in the number of units built, rather than the number of families who have benefited or the quality of life experienced.
releasing investment for housing consolidation than legal status as such, and clearly the provision of public utilities is regarded by residents as strong evidence that they are officially accepted and enjoy de facto security of tenure.” To confirm Payne’s statement, Douglas (1998: 125) points out that many people consider their security on other factors, “The overall result of the mixed messages arising from de jure and de facto land tenure and state policies and actions is that residents of low-income communities without tenure may look to other indicators of stability, such as the length of time that the community has existed, the household’s position in the ethnic or religious mix of the community, the appearance of significant numbers of new migrants representing new rural origins or household types, the extent of government investment in the community infrastructure and services, or whether previous efforts to avoid eviction have been successful.” De Souza (2001: 178) further argues along similar lines to that of Douglass where, “perceptions of tenure are also related to the housing process, since all incremental investments to build shacks informally to provide households with a certain degree of tenure.” Payne (1997: 9) suggests that informal areas that do not have access to secure tenure with the threat of eviction are generally of a ‘low standard’. Contradictory to this, de Souza (2001: 178) disputes that the quality of housing increases as a result of housing consolidation, despite tenure legality. However, there may be variations on the perceptions regarding informal claims of tenure. This is dependent on the property that is being claimed, whether that may be the house or the land. There is a clear distinction between household and land security. This is related to the household’s perceived right to possess the dwelling, the materials and personal possessions. It relates to how such security has been gained and what is perceived as secure (de Souza, 2001: 176). A perceived right may not be seen as only the right to occupy land but the actual dwelling itself.

In many cases land invasion or land (re)distribution may cause spatial upheaval. Different families have various priorities and reasons for building their home in a certain way or occupying a distinct space, or even developing the home over a short or long time period. Consolidation processes are linked to the surrounding local forces and perceived security of the household. What is interesting in the housing process is how the people initially ‘start-up’ their ‘home’, either legal or illegal, and how do physical living conditions influence the process of locational choice and change. The occupation of space of the home reveals the importance placed on the security of socio-spatial relationships. Families form an attachment to new places giving identity and belonging. The importance of development on virgin land is vital in the spatial understanding of how people form the home. Dwellings may have been taken down from previous locations and reconstructed on the new site or plot of land (Kellett, 1997: 5). Ownership may also be declared by growing vegetables, constructing a dwelling, informing your neighbours that you ‘belong’ or sweeping the ground to claim possession. It is interesting to note the importance placed on the stage of development of the home in terms of spatial use and time of development from the beginning. This helps in understanding the consolidation process and time-space relationship of households. It informs the use of space in the household dwelling and relationship of user to dwelling.

However, even with preceding discourse, there is still insufficient understanding of what security means to individual households or the nature of households’ perceptions to security of tenure (de Souza, 1999, 2001; Payne, 1989; Ward & Macoloo, 1992). Despite numerous initiatives during the last decade to improve land systems and tenure security, limited results have centred on empirical evidence of individual household security on the ground (Fourie, 2001: 2).
Land and housing for the urban poor is a fundamental problem throughout the developing cities of the world (Angel et al., 1983; Auret, 1995; Payne, 2002a). Urban Zimbabwe is no exception to this. The capital Harare has an early and long colonial history of urban racial segregation and land division, where the settler government controlled the occupation of space by the African population (Gargett, 1971). Today, Harare is still a city in transition. It is currently experiencing severe economic depression, political disruption and spatial upheaval. Land insecurity in Harare represents a greater opportunity for addressing the skewed allocation of rights inherited from colonial times. This is combined with the visible outcomes of the current chaotic national, rural land reform programme. Consequently, if comprehensive sustainable redistribution of urban land rights is to succeed, there will need to be new legislation issued to deal with the ‘reality’ of the situation. Policies should relate to the actual requirements of the urban poor, where urban land reform needs to address the appropriateness of space rather than legal title. Or could this be merely searching for yet another African miracle?

“Mukai muZimbabwe. That means, ‘wake up Zimbabwe’, you have been sleeping too long, so much has happened to us and we just sit back and watch” (Betty Mukora, Hatcliffe New Stands, October 2002).

2.1 Setting the Context…Contested Ground

The area researched in Harare is called Hatcliffe, located 25km north of the city centre. Hatcliffe Extension was established as a ‘holding camp’ in December 1993 accommodating 1081 families. The majority were homeless people relocated from Churu Farm (south of Harare), in hope of better conditions and promises of housing from the hierarchical system. A survey (Dialogue, 2001) conducted in 2001 revealed that more than 2219 families lived in the Holding Camp (approximately 13 015 people). An increase of over 100% since the development of the Holding Camp.

However, with recent land reform policies implemented by government in the past four years, a section of virgin land (previously council farmland) on the urban periphery called Hatcliffe New Stands was allocated to certain households from Hatcliffe Extension Holding Camp in February 2002. The new stands are located approximately 4 kilometres from the existing Holding Camp. Eviction orders were issued in September 2003, but by October 2002 903 families had relocated using their energy to demarcate boundaries and claim land. There is no legal paperwork involved in the land accord except verbal agreement. Nevertheless, the people ‘believe’ that they now ‘own their piece of land’. There has been phenomenal spatial change between the existing Holding Camp and people that moved to new ‘allocated plots’. From March 2002 to March 2003, a new, organised but informal settlement developed on the new plots of 200m². There is no water, no sewerage and no electricity on the allocated land, but people have moved their ‘plastics’ and ‘cabins’ to the new land. The open spaces now carved within the Holding Camp are being invaded by existing residents for further extension or new people searching for a space to build a home on the city’s edge.

Informal structures are commonly referred to as ‘ma plastics’ or ‘plastic shacks’ in the Holding Camp by the community. Government initially built 822 prefabricated timber ‘cabins’ to accommodate the homeless people from Churu farm, but the number of people exceeds the amount of cabins, so there is a combination of ‘cabins’ and ‘plastics’ within both the Holding Camp and Hatcliffe New Stands.
2.2 Musha wedu… ‘our home’, but should we stay or should we go?

The following two families are presented to reveal the occupation of space; firstly an elderly couple Paul and Janet Hamandawana. They support the family through chickens, selling meat and eggs. Their home reveals an adaptable, spatial environment changing the settings daily to suit their activities and their needs. The Hamandawana family have moved their home and livelihood to their new stand. Secondly, Peter and Rose Makuyana manage and operate the grinding mill in Hatcliffe Extension Holding Camp. It is the only grinding mill in the settlement. Peter started the mill many years ago through profits from selling ‘temba’ (small dried fish) to the local community. They have been ‘allocated’ a new stand, but the Makuyana family move between their two homes in the New Stands and the Holding Camp, uncertain of the outcome of security on either.

2.2.1 The spatial development of the Hamandawana and Makuyana households

Paul Hamandawana explains the spatial development of his home in Hatcliffe Extension Holding Camp, "You find we were dumped in the bundu (grassy over-grown area) just out at the Extension there [...] From there we started to build again some other shelter. Tall grass and snakes, animals were there, but the people we stayed until the government started to allocate and put us in lines, because we just stay scattered. They decided no, that people must stay in the lines, as we know where we are. That is when they started again to give some people some cabins, wooden huts... and then we were given a cabin, number, 604 (stage 1). The first use was in this little space here. Here, at the back of the house, there was a road to go to clinic, so this place was a little bit bigger, a little bit open, so we managed to put up, because we built there at the back of the cabin. I first build a small room for bathroom [...] Second, after that we find out that still we decide to put another small one for the chickens at the back to make some for the people, to sell (stage 2). Then we put another chickens at the side, a long one, and the one that remains there all the time that you, Kathryn, saw long time ago, that we used for many things (stage 3). So then there was all one big chicken (chicken run 1 and 2 combined). That was a small one we use for a dining on the front, because it was joined to the cabin... The third stage, then we staying here a long time, then we decide that people move to Dzivaresekwa, but we first got the cabin in '95. But it stayed like that until people moved to Dzivaresekwa by Ministry in '97. No, it was like that until we moved here (discussion with his wife, Janet). But still we had a neighbour who was staying next door to us here and she went to Dzivaresekwa. That is when we built another chicken for layers (chicken run 3), but the house was the same (stage 4). We just take the floor that was there (concrete slab) and build up with the floor... From there, we put a fence around the chickens, but only a door and a small passage there only. That was the last to go when we moved (stage 8), but by then it was for the storage of our property and not for the chickens, because we moved those on wheelbarrows and baskets and walked to the New Stands in that August holiday after the time I saw you there at that Holding Camp. But then we decided to move everything then to here."
Paul continues with his explanation of the development on his new stand,

“…We moved the cabin in March, a day after elections. There was no transport but it was cheaper that day as transport was going up and up, like today you cannot expect to move, it is too hard. We did not expect that the stand would be taken away. We did not expect it to be like that. Anyway, my house was built in different stages because of all this up and down and not knowing, but also because we have no money and now the chickens are no more, I am not sure. But, I still built it like that. So when we moved here (New Stands), we started with the cabin first and the dining to the New Stands and then the bathroom came too as it was attached. On the stand we first put, this cabin was just there (stage 1), yes, same as where the chicken is now. The dining was not yet built, but the material was here on the stand.

We were just laying it on the floor, but now it is that one (points to kitchen on New Stands - stage 4), because at that time we could not have started to build to join more because we were told that you people are going to move here, you are going to go back […] That is why chicken is there, that’s why we were sleeping there and the chicken staying there for a long time because we were told we were going to move (Holding Camp) […] We spend the day here and in the afternoon go for these birds. Then I eat here and go and sleep there, in this house (chicken run 2 of Holding Camp) and still my chickens there. Then we had to remove it (chicken run 2 of Holding Camp) and then put it here waiting to be built. I used to go and sleep there every night to keep all that property. There was a lot of property as there is security wire and all the planks and plenty of stuff and bricks there (Holding Camp). When we stayed here (New Stands), we stayed for the time before doing anything. There was a big heap of soil here, like right at the front, then I started to spread it all over here until this place here, you can see by yourself, this floor is now on the position. That is when I take the cabin from there and remove it and put it here (stage 2). That was in about May (discussion with Janet about dates) […] So I decide to build the brick one like this, for the chickens (stage 3). In the meantime, my children were staying in the cabin. Once I have finished building, that is when we start moving the chickens […] When we moved the chickens, that one stay there (chicken run 2 and chicken run 3 at Holding Camp). It stay there for two to three months (confirmation from Janet) […] So what we do is that we join this cabin in a position and put the kitchen on the corner there like it is now. Then we had some African chickens, which we had, so I have to join this chicken (chicken run 2). Lastly we join another chicken again (chicken run 3) (stage 5 and 6). Some those for the chicks from the Extension now made up these ones joined up to that fresh one (brick chicken run). I made those over a period of time, from March until now, and we are still building. We don’t know what is exactly happening […] We were very busy so it gives us time to rest by working in these stages. We build today and then give us time to rest and think what to do. Now there is nothing in the Extension. Everything is here.”

The Hamandawana household is flexible in the use of space. Different spatial settings accommodate constantly changing activities. This was experienced in both the Holding Camp and the New Stands. The actual dwelling structures have been built up in both settlements according to materials available. Their home-based enterprise functions in separate structures, being the flexible ‘chicken runs’. Such spaces are not rigid in their use, but adapt to the needs of the family. The space initially intended as a chicken run has changed its nature to being a space that is multifunctional and diverse. In the Holding Camp, the Hamandawana’s
maximised the yard space and increased the area by claiming the neighbour’s space. Their home in the New Stands lends itself to similar changes. The brick chicken run recently functioned as storage for drying their maize stock. Within the Hamandawana household the separate structures for business dominate approximately half of the dwelling structures as a whole. This was experienced in both settlements, which places importance on the business within the home and the values attached to the economic space.

The Hamandawana’s contemplated moving all their property from Hatcliffe Extension Holding Camp to Hatcliffe New Stands over a 10 month period. Their perceptions of security changed over time. This had implications on their home-based enterprise. In June 2002, Paul explained that the lack of water was the main problem in the New Stands. Therefore, they kept the chicken run in the Holding Camp in order to continue business. However, by October 2002, the Hamandawana’s had gradually moved a large proportion of their belongings to their new stand. Paul and Janet have certain doubts about the future of the land. Nevertheless, they made a concerted effort and a decision to develop a home on the newly, ‘allocated’ piece of land. By December 2002, they had relocated all their materials, implying a perceived sense of safety on the new land. Despite the expansion of the dwellings on the stand, they still maintain that they will wait for the official ‘go-ahead’ to build their ‘big house’, but they believe the stand belongs to them and are willing to develop the main chicken run in brick. The Hamandawana’s have subconsciously consolidated their household. They agree that life on their new stand is more comfortable than that in the Holding Camp. However, their financial difficulties give a certain level of insecurity to the household in order to support the ever-growing family of grandchildren and continuation of the business, let alone the cost of the construction of a house to meet Government standards and building regulations on the new land.

The Makuyana household is now described.

Peter Makuyana describes his story,

“When I came here, I first stayed just on top near the offices (ZRP), just 500 metres from here. I just built two rooms for the plastic with two doors, yah that was in January 1994 when we came to the Holding Camp... After they had finished building, I was allocated and given a cabin (Stage 1). That was in ’95 (confirms with his wife, Rose). Right, there is a road here and a road here, so I am on the corner. That was when I first was given a cabin. Then we stay there with my family and I bought my grinding mill in ’96. I operate that from ’96 up until now. First after getting a cabin, so I get that grinding mill just near to here but that did not work, you see […] There was a war for it to be where it is […] People
are pleased and saying 'please don't leave, your grinding mill is good to us', but before they used to curse and shout saying 'you must move' [...] It was serious! That is why they want me away but that is why I must stay here…"

"...The house, after that, I put a kitchen opposite (stage 3). Then after that I put some chickens next to that kitchen after I put another room to it for the cooking and storing (stage 4). So then I could carry on using that one room for selling my temba and have a separate space for my wife to do the cooking next door. I sell that temba out the front because I am on the corner so it is good for business. But you know, that room is used for many things you see, so it changes, but I can call it the tuckshop, but I don't sell that temba anymore. Then, there is a bathroom on corner. Then I put my toilet next to that bathroom that was in '99 when the donors give us those prefabricated ones. The toilet and the bathroom they are together. I have some peach trees and some avocado pear trees there now. It is good, because now they can give us some food because they are old enough, not like in the New Stands there are no trees there, no food...Then, we went to those New Stands in March 2002 after the elections (confirms with Rose). It was Davious who was first on 1 March and then Chikwire on 8 and then me on 9 March. We were fast moving, but we were the first, like at Churu Farm we are the first! [...] I removed the cabin (stage 5 of Holding Camp and Stage 1 of New Stands), and it goes there, on my new stand, and the toilet there and this is the grinding mill here (Holding Camp). The kitchen remains; it is the same one (Holding Camp). Then, at that time, we were sleeping in the small kitchen because there I had made two compartments in the kitchen there. [...] At that time, sometimes I used to go there (New Stands) myself to stay in the cabin. I used to wake up in the morning and come back here. Sometimes I leave at about twelve midnight for security reasons, as the thieves...ah. But still the others are staying on the new stand right now, two girls and one boy (children) [...] Right now, sometimes we are here sometimes we are on the new stand. There is always someone here, my wife or myself because we have to look out for the grinding mill..."

![Figure 4: Drawings to represent the different stages of spatial development of the Makuyana household in Hatcliffe New Stands](image)

"Then, we were lucky. The new cabin again comes in the same place, yes, exactly the same place as the previous one (at the Holding Camp- Stage 6). This cabin was donated by Philip Cunningham for the orphans (Peter feeds and helps support 25 orphaned children in the Holding Camp)... so the children come in here after school to eat, but they are sleeping at their grandmother’s. Now we sleep next door at night of this new cabin. That is what it is like today here at the grinding mill (May 2003). One cabin here, one cabin there. But, there at the new stand, there is the first cabin. That is what we first put up. Then there is a borehole, a well there (stage 2). We put the well there the same time, just after the cabin, so for more than twelve months now. There is a kitchen there too. I built that kitchen just after, yes, all up quickly (stage 3). There is a dining and a bedroom there.”

The Makuyana household in the Holding Camp has parallel characteristics to the Hamandawana households in the use of space. In the Holding Camp, their tuckshop functions not only as a selling space, but also as a flexible living, sleeping, storing and cooking space. The function has changed over the years, dependent on the demand of the family and the business. The grinding mill however operates in a separate structure, although more of a semi-open structure. This space is used only for keeping the machinery employed for grinding. Customers normally wait outside in the yard.
In comparison to the Hamandawana’s, the Makuyana’s have divided their home between Hatcliffe Extension Holding Camp and Hatcliffe New Stands. They have managed to claim space in both settlements. There is always ‘another option’ should there be eviction orders in either of the settlements. The Makuyana’s have relocated only their cabin to the New Stand, which his children occupy. Peter regards the stand as safe for habitation. This shows a certain level of perceived security. Yet Peter feels it is better that he occupies their household with the grinding mill in the Holding Camp. The business is seen to be the fundamental future survival of the family. Peter is not willing to give up his business regardless of the outcome of the legality of the land, but he has decided that their business is dependent on remaining in the Holding Camp. It is revealed that the grinding mill was seen to be the vital focal point in spatial consolidation of the small surround at the Holding Camp. However, Peter is finding the difficulties of access to finance and food a security risk. This may affect the continuity of his business and the livelihood of those involved.

2.2.2 Analysis of case studies

A statement made by UNCHS (1996: 371) claims, “Significant housing investment does not make sense unless tenure is secure and assistance in securing land is generally the first step in a process of consolidation.” In contradiction to this theory, based on empirical findings from Hatcliffe, my argument agrees with de Souza (1999) where many households consolidate their homes and businesses despite their apparent lack of land tenure security. Households improve the family living conditions to enhance their quality of life they have reason to value, relying on their capabilities and personal assets (Sen 1999). I found that space on newly occupied and contested land is constantly (re)negotiated and dependent on the level of perceived security to the consolidation process. Households that have relocated to Hatcliffe New Stands from the Holding Camp have increased their quality of life considerably. People have established their homes even with eviction orders and the threat of removal. The legality of land tenure is not the main anxiety for households when concerning the daily survival of the family. Nevertheless, there is importance placed on access to title deeds, even though the majority of the people interviewed perceived that they had been ‘given’ the land by Government. They believe they were entitled to their rights to own land in urban Harare. This attitude increases the perception of secure tenure to households.

Even though the people in Hatcliffe have used the opportunity of access to land, there are many problems that are associated with this spatial disruption. Social network and community ties are now in conflict and the whole question of the struggle for land continues. What remains unknown to the households in Hatcliffe is the future outcome of the legal question of urban land tenure and ownership rights, future housing possibilities and financial assistance. To gain legal land tenure usually requires money, something that the people of Hatcliffe severely lack. Market forces may push the families back into uncertainty (Angel et al., 1983; Gilbert & Ward, 1985; Jones & Ward, 1994; Varley, 1994). Home-based enterprise forms a possible route towards a sustainable livelihood for individual households (Kellett & Tipple, 2000: 213). However, in the context of Hatcliffe New Stands, legal tenure would mean strict regulations regarding working from the home premises combined with strict building regulations and standards, and in many cases, closure of the business. In short, the formalisation or legalisation of land may jeopardize rather than improve household security in the specific social context. The importance of addressing and assessing an alternative concept of security is needed in order to comprehend sound urban land and housing policies.
3. **Conclusion: Positive ingredients for urban change**

Housing and land policies should push towards coexistence in an African city that has been subjected to exclusion and dominant urban colonisation processes. An alternative theory to land security involves indirect, local actions of the poor, and their relationship with the authoritarian system. This is reviewed in correlation to how people have made a spatial claim to a piece of land on the urban edge of Harare. Future policies based around a comprehensive urban land reform include the following issues related to an alternative theory of ‘security’:

*a) LAND TENURE*
- A focal starting point would recognise that alternative approaches should emerge from specific contexts where no legal tenure or land rights are present.
- In order to propose a new approach of household security, the concept of legal tenure needs to be addressed from an individual household perspective.
- Legalisation of land tenure is not necessary for both individual household and settlement consolidation. People choose to improve their households for personal well-being and increase assets incrementally to their needs, despite illegal occupation.
- The aspect of tenure security is imported from conventional planning and land tenure practice, relating primarily to freehold property rights, as in the Zimbabwean context. However, many individual household’s perceptions of security do not involve similar principles of the formal understanding. This includes the influence of customary relationships to land tenure and the occupation of space.

*b) HOUSEHOLD SECURITY*
- Individual household security, economic resources and capabilities, assets incurred, building capacity, personal gains and consolidation processes are as important as perceived levels of security.
- Household security is a relevant aspect in local decision-making in the home, which has an influence on the reasons for consolidation of the home environment, especially development of income-generating activities. People’s perceptions of security change according to the local forces. Allowances in policy formation and implementation must be acknowledged and included.
- Realism about household differentiation, where each household is dependent on varying security factors and local forces both at household and community level. Housing is seen as heterogeneous. Conventional urban land tenure implies homogenous settlements of ordered plots of land where housing complies with strict building regulations.
- Household security increases with the mobilisation of the urban poor. Terms related to everyday practice should be used and adapted within land and housing terminology in the presentation and formulation of land and housing policies.

A positive ingredient for change centres on the influence of careful planning and low-income housing design in informal contested areas. There is a need to push towards appropriating urban space in such a way that it is valued and preserved, accommodating for change over time, growth and most importantly the freedom of choice for the people.
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