Planning Scholarship and the Fetish About Planning in Southern Africa: The Case of Zimbabwe's Operation *Murambatsvina*

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Abstract

Contributing to the resurgent debate on urban informality in the global south, Kamete (2013) charged that urban planners in Southern Africa have a fetish about informality that is fuelled by an obsession with modernity. In these and other writings, Zimbabwe's 2005 Operation M*urambatsvina* (OM) is used as a prototype planning malfeasance. Using the concept of fetish and fetishism, this paper argues that a fixation on and fetish about planning and planners has led some planning scholars to churn out misplaced or misleading understandings of OM regarding the role of planning the operation. Inevitably, recommendations for planning reform from such scholarship are largely inefficacious. It is time planning scholars looked seriously beyond planning for both analytical tools and space for political activism.

Key words: fetish, planning, *Murambatsvina*, Zimbabwe, Southern Africa.

Introduction: the rumblings of Zimbabwe's Operation Murambatsvina

Demolition of rural and urban squatter settlements, informal enterprises and the removal to rural areas of urban 'vagrants' and 'undesirables' remains an intermittent occurrence since colonial days in Zimbabwe[1] and Southern Africa more broadly (CCJP, 1994; Mbiba, 2001; Potts, 2007; Vambe, 2008; Potts, 2011; Kamete, 2013). Between May and July 2005, the government of Zimbabwe unleashed an unprecedented globally condemned countrywide demolition of alleged informal economy activities and housing structures. The campaign was code named Restore Order or Operation *Murambatsvina*; meaning 'he or she who despises filth'. The exercise was unprecedented in that it was wholesale in scope, thorough and militaristic in its execution. Crucially and paradoxically, it occurred at a time when livelihoods were precarious and the state was politically and economically under siege even though the ruling ZANU (PF) party had just won another parliamentary majority in national elections earlier in the year. Moreover the bulk of the structures were legal as will be explained in the third section below.

At the instigation of the UK Government and alleging that crimes against humanity had been committed (Mbiba, 2006), the UN dispatched a Special Envoy, Mrs Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka (then Executive Director of UN-BABITAT) in July 2005 who conducted the first authoritative investigation of OM (UN-HABITAT, 2005). We shall refer to this as the Tibaijuka Report. The Government of Zimbabwe provided a written response to the Tibaijuka Report (GoZ, 2005), although this response has largely been absent in the subsequent academic commentary probably due to its non-available in the public domain. In its findings, the Tibaijuka Report, estimated that "…some 700 000 people in cities across the country … lost their homes, their sources of livelihoods or both. Indirectly, 2.4 million people (were) affected in varying degrees" (UN-HABITAT, 2005: 7). There was also an

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[1] See periodic media reports in New Zimbabwe.com; Nehanda Radio; Newsdzezimbabwe.co.ok including the latest for demolitions in Harare. http://nehandaradio.com/2016/10/27/demolitions-leave-3000-families-homeless-along-harare-masvingo-road-pictures/ [last visited 3rd July 2017].

avalanche of media, civil society (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2005; 2010; Slaughter, 2005; Olaleye and Tungwarara, 2005) and scholarly reports (for example Shale, 2006; Kamete, 2007; 2009; 2013; Potts, 2007, 2008; Vambe, 2008) on this phenomenon that continues and with attention paid to the rights and legal issues (Nicolai, 2006; COHRE/ZLHR, 2007; Hughes, 2007), humanitarian, livelihoods, social and economic impacts (UNICEF, 2005; ActionAid International, 2005; Potts, 2008), political and international relations dynamics (ICG, 2005; Mbiba, 2006; Sadomba, 2011) and the implications for urbanisation and urban planning (Fegue, 2007; Kamete, 2007, 2009, 2013; Potts, 2007;2008). Operation Murambatsvina had hidden dimensions (Vambe, 2008) including its obscure causes, key drivers behind it, and motivations for its timing. But while the ruthlessness of its execution was unprecedented and violation of rights undisputed, the role of planning was not only obscure but appears misunderstood and misinterpreted by planning scholars.

Since 2005, and taking a leaf from the Tibaijuka Report, there has been a stream of publications that use or point to OM as symptomatic of colonial planning and failure of planners in Africa. Planning scholars have been unrelenting in portraying planners as the culprits or presenting OM as a failure of planning. Kamete (2007; 2013) castigated unfeeling planners for their technocratic planning and for unleashing Operation Murambatsvina. The victims are presented as 'victims' of planning (Potts, 2011; Kamete, 2007; Watson and Abola, 2013). In contrast, most other social scientists and civil society reports hardly mention planners or see Operation Murambatsvina as a failure of local authority planners. Even in the widely cited Tibaijuka Report (UN-HABITAT, 2005) only one of the seven recommendations focused on planning and at any rate this was misdirected as will be illustrated and discussed in section three of this paper. To appreciate this continued fixation with and presentation of OM as an exemplar of planning failure, this paper will extend use of the idea of 'fetish and fetishism' (Kamete, 2013). But unlike Kamete (2013), the paper flips the idea and suggests that while the response of planning to informality leaves significant room for improvement, it is planning scholars that have a fetish about planners and planning. The conclusion underlines the need for more radical reformulations of how we understand what planning represents in contexts of crisis (Roy, 2009) especially in relation to power and the way we intervene in managing cities of Southern Africa.

Given the notions of power that underpin planning, the next section will briefly sketch the ideas of power informing this paper. This is followed by an outline of how 'fetish' and 'fetishism' is understood for purposes of this discussion and extends the way it has been used in Kamete (2013). The emerging conceptions are then used to shine a light on the Southern African planning scholarship *vis a vis* Operation Murambatsvina and in particular to examine whether and to what extent the phenomenon can be portrayed as a planning exercise as presented in planning scholarship – including most recently in Watson and Agbola (2013) and Kamete (2013). The analytical approach in this desktop study is thus textual and assesses the planning literature on OM against the Tibaijuka Report as well as the national planning policy that this literature refers to. The deep political economy origins of OM are captured elsewhere in the literature including the view that it was a central intelligence (CIO) operation to foil a possible countrywide uprising (Vambe, 2008; Sadomba, 2011). It is not the purpose of this paper to delve into these critical dimensions. Rather it seeks to highlight the bluntness of analysis by planning scholars and urge that future reviews look beyond the discipline for tools and practical guidance for actions that offer radical alternatives for structural change in the urban political economy of Southern Africa. The work of Harvey (2014) and Roy (2009) points in the direction for such needed understanding of the political

and economic dynamics that shape urban spaces – with a focus on state-capital-society relations (Mbiba, 2017).

A brief note on power
Interrogating power in planning practice (Kamete, 2011; Mantysalo, 2008; Innes, 2006; Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002) and the perceived crisis (Grange, 2016) or malaise of its professional and academic status (Campbell, 2014) is a major preoccupation in planning debates. Although consensus is hard to come by (Harris, 2011), the debates view planning as a rational, bureaucratic and technical exercise of regulatory and expert power to control and guide land-use change. However, in contexts of crisis (Roy, 2009) like that of Zimbabwe, attention should be more on critiquing the historical, political-economy and governance forces (the state) that underpin and circumscribe planning as this is where real power dwells. Power is conceptualised in several interrelated ways at the core of which are the 'two faces of power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962), namely the 'power to' and 'power over'. 'Power to' or generative force (Mantysalo, 2008) is the ability to change ourselves and the world around us; such as to tax, to use force, to stop development, to discipline society, to redistribute resources such as land and other products of economic growth. In planning processes, this 'power to' is largely about collective, rather than individual endeavour, to influence decisions that affects us.

This capacity or power to change things derives from and is intertwined with 'power over' i.e. control, ownership and access to resources. Mantysalo (2008) adds 'explicit' and 'implicit' dimensions of 'power to' and 'power over' such that a matrix of at least four categories of power emerges. For the state, 'power over' includes critical monopoly control of the instruments of force such as the military, police, prisons, militia as well as the judiciary and soft power in the form of knowledge systems, the media and planning that are its 'hidden', implicit and subtle forms. Power features in planning and development studies for instance around the question of 'why poor people stay poor' that has been answered with ideas of 'empowerment' (Chambers, 1984) that pervade participatory development and the sustainable livelihoods framework thinking (see Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones, 2002) ubiquitous in development literature since the late 1990s. Control and access to capital (natural, human, political, social, financial etc.) is seen as critical for not only the survival of households, institutions and communities but also their ability to make progress.

To reiterate, 'power to' and 'power over' are not mutually exclusive and both are implicated in the Foucaltian views of power as 'exercising political sovereignty' and 'acting on others' actions' (Gordon, 1991: 5) which is the domain of planning (Kamete, 2011). However, in acting on the actions of others, urban planners do so as instruments of the state, as part of the implicit architecture of governance; with resources and capacity derived from and permitted by the state. In crisis contexts like Zimbabwe, the idiom of governance is authoritarian with the state suspending its own laws, including planning laws *Murambatsvina* style, to operate informally (Roy, 2009) so as to assert its authority and retain power.

The history of Zimbabwe shows that this practice of 'state-informality' has been repeated countless times in other spheres of the political economy including in *jambanja. Jambanja* or the "Third Chimurenga" (revolution) is indigenous lexicon that refers to Zimbabwe's famous ongoing and highly contested 'fast track' Land Reform Program ongoing post 1999. Nuanced discussions and meanings of these concepts from the Zimbabwean landscape abound (Scoones, et al. 2010; Sadomba, 2011; Hanlon et al. 2012; Mbiba 2017). Any power

that planning may have (any or all forms described above) is in the gift of the state. When the state suspends operational laws and planning regulations, ignores planners and dis-empowers bureaucratic institutions of urban development and in their place inserts armed soldiers, youth militia, land barons and ruling party aligned cooperatives (Muchadenyika and Williams, 2017), a different 'governmentality' (Gordon, 1991) is in place. To call that planning as is done in representations of OM is to fetishize planning as elaborated below. Beyond the state and planners there are manifold agents/actors and aspects of power at play in urban planning processes (Mantysalo, 2008; Mbiba, 2017; Muchadenyika and Williams, 2017). Institutions, businesses and activists may use their power to influence planning decisions or even to corrupt the system. The aspects of power outlined above are not exhaustive but will be used as a sensitising reference point for the discussion. The view in this paper is that the primary power relations relevant to analysis of OM in Zimbabwe are those at the state –planning interface.

The idea of a fetish and fetishism
In their reviews, both Ellen (1988) and Dant (1996) identified three broad traditions in the usage of the concept of fetish and fetishism; namely the religious sphere dominated by anthropological writings, the sphere of sex dominated by psychology and that of political economy dominated by Marxists. Anthropological usages have origins in medieval times, and use fetish as a term to refer to witchcraft and the worship of inanimate objects as reported by early Portuguese sailors following travels to West Africa. Fetish and fetishism is '… when an object is believed to be a spiritual force in itself' (Ellen, 1988: 218), hence the veneration of charms (the fetish). Theorisations of fetishism of this nature tend to designate it as a pure condition of un-enlightenment (Pietz, 1993: 136) practiced by 'primitive' peoples. 'Proprietors' of the fetish perceive it as a bearer of powers beyond the ordinary when in reality such power is materially non-existent. In the context of this paper, even though it may suit us to believe or wish that planners and planning have power, they become a 'fetish' if we ascribe to them powers which in reality they do not have.

In the psychological literature on sexual 'deviance', fetishism is about fantasy and desire (Dant, 1996) and practices in which objects are used as a substitute for the real thing: the human body. In other words, sexual fetishism describes erotic obsessions for or with objects that often act as substitutes for persons of the opposite sex; a form of sexual perversion. The way artefacts and objects become objects of sexual desire or bearers of sexual pleasure is in a way similar to how perception of power in the witchcraft objects become real to those who believe. In the case of OM did planners really have the power as claimed by scholars? Could it be the case that instead of going for the real thing where power resides (the state), planning scholars are attacking the hapless substitute?

The Marxist political economy view focuses *inter alia* on how an object, in particular a commodity assumes attributes or qualities that conceal its true meaning, value or economic function (see Marx, 1990: 125 - 244). Commodities appear in a form different from their intrinsic content; they appear as material expressions of the socially necessary labour time required in their production. But the prevailing social relations (be it slavery, night work, poor working conditions, child labour, migrant labour etc.) in the production of the commodities is concealed and hidden from the consumers. Money is the epitome of this fetishism. It seems the main difference between the Marxist view and the other two is that for Marx (1990), the fetish has real qualities (value); one aspect that is recognisable without difficulty and then another that remains hidden and is more pervasive. The three categories are not mutually exclusive and various combinations in their use are possible.

Key in all the above three conceptions or usages is the displacement of meaning of the object of desire or of value onto something else. Dant (1996: 5-6) underlies this transfer or displacement and states that

> … it is through the displacement of desire that an object acquires special social value, indicated by the reverence, worship or fascination with which it is treated. That desire may be religious, economic or erotic value…in this case, the displacement of meaning implies that there is no mistake or misunderstanding of the nature of real objects.

Power, displacement, obsession, concealment, illusion and misunderstanding are all aspects of the fetish we have to unravel in the conduct of planning scholarship *vis a vis* Operation Murambatsvina. The crux of the matter should be to unravel the power concealed or hidden behind planning. However in the context of OM, this theoretical dissection of planning scholarship will need to be prefaced by and articulated with aid of empirical clarifications. The next section deals with these matters of fact in the way some planning scholars have presented OM using Watson (2006) and Watson and Agbola (2013 as examples. It assesses the extent to which planning related texts provide an accurate reflection of what prevails on the ground. Some nuggets in the interrogation of planning's power can be noted in Kamete (2011) regarding its differential deployment in affluent spaces versus that in poor neighbourhoods. But further extensions of such analysis of power is needed in what this power represents, who really is behind it and whether phenomena such as OM should be described as planning at all. In line with power ideas given earlier spatial or urban planning is just one among many instruments available to the state in its exercise of sovereign power (Kamete, 2011; 2013). OM was a case where the state deployed alternative instruments of power beyond planning. The urban coincidence in the use of coercive power (acting on others' actions) within urban areas does not in itself make it urban planning.

Operation Murambatsvina was not about planning: it violated planning procedures.
Writing a promotional piece for the Association of African Planning Schools, Watson and Agbola (2013) lament the outdated and archaic nature of planning education and systems in Africa. They call for a new breed of planners that are 'innovative problem solvers'. The planning laws in Harare are singled out as outdated and an irrelevance to most inhabitants. And to illustrate the negative impacts of these outdated master plans, Watson and Agbola (2013: 2) cite the case of Operation Murambatsvina:

> … In 2005, 700 000 people were evicted from their homes in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital city. 'Operation Murambatsvina' or 'Drive Out the Rubbish' … was legitimised by the 1976 Town and Country Planning Act. This was in turn based on the UK's 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and model town and country planning laws widely implemented by the British Colonial Office in Africa and the Caribbean. State authorised evictions carried out under the auspices of colonial era legislation have become a common feature of life in African cities. Planners are often involved as the 'handmaiden of state repression'.

Empirically however, UN-HABITAT (2005: 7) clearly states that, as a result of OM, "…some 700 000 people in cities across the country … lost their homes, their source of livelihoods or both…". The figure is for 'across the country' as the phenomenon was countrywide (see Vambe, 2008) and not just in Harare as stated by Watson and Agbola (2013). Moreover, the figure is not just for housing evictions but loss of 'homes, livelihoods or both. OM was devastating to all affected - both directly and indirectly; hence the

appropriate metaphor of a social 'tsunami' (Fontein, 2009) used by locals to refer to it. Both the government's own figures (GoZ, 2005) and those of UN-HABITAT (2005) make this obvious. So there is no need for planning scholars to distort and exaggerate the original statistics. The generalisations on old colonial laws also need to be examined more closely.

Making a presentation at the RTPI Planning Convention London held 28 June - 30 June 2006 at Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London, Professor Watson pointed out that the previous year's slum clearance in Zimbabwe in which 700 000 people lost their homes or livelihoods was carried out under a 30 year old legislation. Well, the last part is not correct since the legislation has been revised many times since 1976. At the time of OM, the country was operating under the Zimbabwe Town and Country Planning Act [Chap. 29:12] Revised Edition 1996. Crucially, Statutory Instrument 216 of 1994 [SI 216] (GoZ, 1994a) under the same legislation was crafted to permit informal trading and promote small enterprises (home industries) in residential areas and parts of the city centres (hence flea markets) thus enabling more of the formally marginalized Black Zimbabweans to participate in the economy and in urban spaces previously the preserve of Whites. It introduced greater flexibility into the development control system making it possible for the Black majority to occupy livelihood spaces that previous regimes had prohibited. Similarly, SI 271 of 1994 (GoZ, 1994b), made across the board reductions in prescribed endowments payable when land is subdivided thus making it more attractive for private developers to participate in urban land and housing development. A couple of further points can be made here without having to go into a detailed review of Zimbabwe's planning legislation.

First is the fact that the planning laws in Zimbabwe are flexible and allow innovative planners and local councils to engage communities and design appropriate programmes dealing with informality including urban agriculture (see MDP, 2003). The fact that the laws may have origins in the 1947 British Town and Country Planning Act is really not a problem in itself. The issue that should concern us is not 'how old?' but whether the laws can be used to deliver productive and harmonious environments for our communities. Statutory Instruments are one of the mechanisms that enable the state to adjust the law in response to changing circumstances where repeal of the statute may be unnecessary or unfeasible. The SI 216 of 1994 and the subsequent spread of home industries illustrates that legal flexibility and its livelihood impacts. In those cases of planning maleficence, it may not be the law at fault but the way in which devious agents manipulate and abuse it at the expense of communities; in the case of OM the planning law was ignored.

At the risk of 'flogging a dead horse', one can use a UK comparison. Health and Safety in the UK is managed under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (over forty years old). However, specific 'Regulations' (at least eleven of them) have been passed periodically to help address any particular issues that the act may not have anticipated. That the act is over forty years old is not an issue in itself. Furthermore, the operations of Zimbabwe's Town and Country Planning Act have to be considered in the context all the allied statutes especially the Urban Councils Act and the Environment Act. The new Zimbabwe Constitution (2013) has also provided a new framework in which these statutes operate reinforcing the aspects of good governance. However, the harmonisation and alignment of all statutes with the Constitution is going at a snail's pace largely due to resistance from power brokers in the state.

The second point is on the political nature of OM and that no 'innovative planner' would have stopped that. Kamete (2011) and Potts (2011) acknowledge this point in some of their reviews. OM was a political phenomenon that used planning as 'rhetoric and scapegoat'.

Following SI 216 and other local authority programmes, traders, small industries, lodgers, landlords and customers alike increasingly came to see these 'informal activities' as secure, legal and legitimate. However, there was a political balancing act, as captured by Potts (2011: 717):

> … there was a political contract - the expectation was that grateful residents would vote for the ruling party ZANU (PF). They did not. As with the commercial farmers, in the end tenure security in the backyard shacks disappeared as it depended on the state's perceptions of its own interests.

Thus, from Potts's (2011) nuanced analysis in the above citation, the origins, motivations and nature of OM are located in state politics and not local authority planning. Regarding dimensions of housing, Potts (2011: 714 – 718) suggest that it was the result of the state's 'change of mind about the legitimacy of backyard shacks'. Therefore, whether the laws were colonial or not, the material political economy conditions were that OM was still going to be unleashed. We shall pursue this point latter.

From a purely procedural town planning perspective, Zimbabwe's planning legislation as such is neither archaic nor prohibitive as scholars often portray it to be. For instance, in Zimbabwe's second largest city Bulawayo, long before OM, a 2000 Master Plan[2] was already in place. Its content goes beyond traditional land use issues; a plan that is integrative, responds to current socio-economic challenges, allocates land to and promotes pro-poor activities such as urban agriculture. Individual local authorities can also craft by-laws specific to their circumstances as in the case of periodic street markets that operate in the Midlands city of Gweru.

The erroneous practice by scholars to equate OM to poor or archaic legislation has origins largely in the misdirected Tibaijuka Report (UN-HABITAT 2005). Reports of leading NGOs, civil groups and local critics of the Zimbabwe government all seem to concur that the decision to implement OM was not by urban local authorities and that the manner in which the campaign was executed was neither reasonable nor within the law[3]. Institutional key informant respondents cited in Kamete (2009) emphasized this point that local government officials and planners were nowhere near the initiation and execution of the campaign.

Similarly, the Tibaijuka report in sections 6.3.1 to 6.3.5 gives a clear catalogue of how Operation Murambasvina did not follow provisions of the Town and County Planning Act, stating for example that "… no orders were issued under the Planning Act or any other legislation" in the areas where evictions and demolitions took place. It goes further in 6.3.3. to state that for example " … the cities of Bulawayo, Mutare and Victoria Falls which are the authorities responsible for any demolitions under their jurisdiction, were not consulted when the demolitions and evictions started in their respective cities". Given that local authorities are also the planning authorities in Zimbabwe, then if they were not consulted or involved, then claims of OM being about planning are misplaced. Moreover, for City of Harare, between 1999 and 2008, the city was controlled and run by state appointed commissions and not elected councillors plus mayor as required by law (Mbiba, 2017: 9); an abnormal situation not conducive to planning. Hence any reference to 'local authority' in the case of

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[2] Bulawayo's second Master Plan since independence in 1980. Since 1980, nearly all Master Plans in Zimbabwe have been prepared by local experts and the 2000 Bulawayo Plan had the greatest citizen and stakeholder involvement.

[3] Most of these reports can be found at **http://www.sarpn.org.za**/ (search for *murambasvina* on that site) [last visited 30th June, 2017]

Harare should underline the illegality and state nature of the authority at the time of Operation Murambatsvina; it could be argued that whatever an illegal and illegitimate authority presided over would be illegal and illegitimate[4] as well.

Furthermore, Potts (2011: 717) correctly notes that Zimbabwe's planning legislation stipulates that in the event evictions are necessary, it is additionally important that affected people have sufficient warning and receive adequate compensation (see also Auret, 1994). In OM, neither proper warning nor compensation was given. In this respect, OM was a replay of previous evictions such as Churu Farm (Auret, 1994) when evictions proceeded using the military and in violation of both planning procedures and High Court injunctions in favour of the evictees. In section 7.2.4, the Tibaijuka report suggests that there was 'no collective decision making with respect to conception and implementation' of OM but advice by a few architects of the operation. We are not told who these few individuals are (were) but the report clearly impresses on readers that this as well as the police and military involvement was (is) outside planning law.

After giving an eloquent description of how OM was outside the Town and Country Planning Act, the Tibaijuka report somersaults and somehow comes up with bizarre recommendations to "suspend outdated laws", calls for an "immediate revision of the outdated Town and Country Planning Act and other relevant Acts to align the substance and procedures of these Acts with social, economic and cultural realities facing the majority of the population, namely the poor" (UN-HABITAT, 2005: 8). Unfortunately scholars have propagated these recommendations as a 'truth' when in fact the Tibaijuka report has no compelling evidence to back up such a position. As mentioned earlier planning and planners in Zimbabwe have moved a long way from the 'colonial inheritance' and Bulawayo City is a good place to go if anyone wants to find how town and country planning has evolved in response to the needs of the poor. Yes, it is not perfect but it is neither based on 30 year old laws and nor should it be equated to the framework for OM. If the prevailing planning procedures had been followed at the time of OM, the operation would not have been as brutal or widespread at it turned out - at least in cities like Bulawayo, Mutare and Victoria Falls as implied in the Tibaijuka Report.

The Fetishisms of Planners
The empirical detail in the above section points to a marginal role (if any) for planners and planning in both the origin and execution of OM in contrast to what scholars (Watson, 2006; Watson and Agbola, 2013) ascribe to them. As Harris (2011) reminds use, planning operates through statutory control and enforcement to achieve compliance not punishment. OM was about punishment not compliance. Furthermore, the material and institutional capabilities of planners and planning would not have stopped OM as implied by Watson and Agbola (2013). As both a misunderstanding of and obsession with planning, the scholars give planning powers it does not possess – it becomes a fetish. For Marx, the fetishism of commodities is that while they may have concrete material value, they also hide or conceal a culturally determined value and social relations. They conceal the socially necessary labour time deployed in their production. The import of this for our understanding of planning and planners is that planning laws and planners have value that is material to our routine needs (for developers, business, and residents). Yet, what we see in the planning laws and what we

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[4] At the time of OM, the city was run by a government appointed Commission chaired by Mrs Sekesai Makwavarara.

see of planning work conceals the real power; the power of planners and planning, if any, resides not in planners but in state power.   Scholars should strive to examine what is concealed behind the eviction actions, what they represent that appears to be planning but is not.

Consequently, where planning appears to fail, scholars should look beyond and interrogate this as failures of state power. In the case of OM, most other social scientists (e.g. Vambe, 2008; Sadomba, 2011; Potts, 2011) have done exactly that – save for planning academics and scholars typified by Watson and Agbola (2013). It is the authoritarian nature of colonial and post-colonial states in Southern Africa that make it possible for events like OM or the Marikana massacre (Alexander, 2013) in South Africa[5].   This (Southern Africa) is not (yet) a context for collaborative or participatory planning even though such state –citizen and governance relations are prescribed for in national constitutions and planning laws.

The academic or scholarly discussions of planning and power are well-intentioned partly to improve the profession's status. However, planning is a subtle, implicit form of state power and domination. To the extent that planning represents and conceals state power, it is a fetish. The real power (political, economic, financial, and social) that shapes cities lies elsewhere outside of planners and planning. For planning academics to dilute this point leads them to ascribe and attribute to planning and planners' capacity they do not have.   Planners and planning in Zimbabwe had no capacity to neither institute nor to stop OM just as much as they could neither instigate nor stop *jambanja* a few years earlier. Their existence is as tools or instruments used by those in power. Hence the government rhetoric that OM was about restoring order in the planning system should be viewed as such namely, the state using /abusing its tools - planning. In a way Kamete (2009) was correct to characterise planners and planners as the handmaidens of state repression.   This and Potts (2011) seem to be the more analytically correct interpretations which planning scholars should deepen.

For those engaged in fetishism, the things they venerate appear real and not illusions. Kamete (2013) repeatedly castigates the authorities for having a fetish about informality that is fuelled by an obsession for modernity. In this sense, the fetish has elements of 'delusion' and 'desire' (Pietz, 1993: 136).   However it is not explicit whether reference to authorities in Kamete (2013) also means planners or whether it is an acceptance that power resides beyond planning and planners. Authorities could be central government or the state.   On the face of it, it appears true that planning and planners in Zimbabwe (and Southern Africa) seek an urban order inspired by what prevails in the colonial metropole (Kamete, 2011: 17). But this may be missing the point of what happens behind and beyond planning or for whom cities are planned; fetishism in the sense of what is concealed. "Where does the power lie?"

 It appears that for Southern Africa, state-capital forces are more significant than 'citizen' forces. Cities like Harare, Maputo, Johannesburg and Lusaka may exhibit production and consumption patterns that are materially poor relative to London and New York. Yet inherently, they all are capitalist cities. They are products of the capitalist system and their form and function – both real and imagined – as well as planning and planners, should be understood in this context. Concepts of processes of capital accumulation help explain the

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[5] Abundant media articles and videos include The Guardian (2015) "Marikana massacre: the untold story of the strike leader who died for workers' rights" https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/19/marikana-massacre-untold-story-strike-leader-died-workers-rights [last visited 3rd July 2017]

contradictory existence (Harvey, 2014) of modernist projects like Westgate (in Harare) or Manda Hill (in Lusaka) and Sandton (Johannesburg) alongside desperate poverty and the recurrence of evictions of the poor even in countries deemed more democratic than Zimbabwe – Zambia, Tanzania and South Africa included. In other words, the material and institutional conditions of cities on one hand and the nature of planning and planners are intertwined with the contested roles they (have to) play in the local and global processes of capital accumulation.

Another aspect that remains unexplored is about how community cultures, aspirations and perceptions are implicated in OM. Official media and government responses to the global backlash against OM presented positive views of what the operation intended to achieve (Vambe, 2008). These views in relation to the nature of planning and desired role, form and function of cities has not been empirically examined at the community level. In particular whether it is possible that 'behind the scenes' urban residents in Zimbabwe despise 'filth' and that other than the violence, they may aspire for the cleanliness and the modernist principles allegedly behind OM. Several observations help to underline why this is an important question to pose. If one looks at 2006-2009 pictures of Mbare hostels at the height of Zimbabwe's political economic crisis and poverty (**See photo Figure 1**), the people and neighbourhood look poor. Yet also conspicuous are metropole and global products such as satellite dishes. Clearly, they may be poor, but their desires and consumption aspirations are no different from those of middle classes and elites in the western world. Could it be likely that these desires extend to desires for middle class physical environments and if so how should planning and planners respond?

Furthermore, when going round Zimbabwe's countryside and looking at anthropological vignettes of village life from before colonial intrusion, the Zimbabwe homestead appears as smart, well layered out, with separate zones for different uses including designated places for rubbish disposal. This 'rural psychology of cleanliness' is organic and not a colonial import. When rural inhabitants come to cities, what becomes of this 'psychology of cleanliness', how do planners respond to it and how much of it was implicated in OM and people's ex-post view of the campaign some years later? These empirical questions are posed here to suggest that there is much more that planning scholars should be exploring beyond the basic colonial inheritance argument.

Figure 1: A Section of Mbare Hostels, Harare

To recap, interrogating planning power (Kamete, 2011) seems to be an enduring world-wide concern for planning scholars (for example Gordon, 1991; Mantysalo, 2008; Harris, 2011; Karki, 2015; Grange, 2016; Dobrucka, 2017). In the case of contemporary Zimbabwe, the real power resides in the state; somewhere in ZANU (PF) the revolutionary ruling party[6] and its instruments of power; the military, secret service, prisons, police and youth militia. Somewhere among these were the brains behind the military-style execution of OM; the internet is awash with videos showing this military presence.

Moreover, after 'weighing relevant empirical evidence', Kamete (2009: 1) rightly observed that planning and planners had no role in the instigation and design of Operation Murambatsvina. Also correct is the view that while planners could be accused of not standing up to politically voice opposition to the campaigns (Kamete, 2007: 166) the conclusion remains that the state had made up its mind and nothing would stop it. A perusal of most planning statutes and handbooks shows that planning equates to what Kamete (2012) describes as normative and pastoral use of power. Consequently, when the form of power in operation is sovereign and disciplinary (and not pastoral), the operation ceases to be planning as was the case in OM. This is the consistent message that should be underlined. The question to examine is why at different times or critical moments, the state intervenes with sovereign power in ways that marginalise normative pastoral power; in other words, what determines the nature of 'governmentality' (Gordon, 1991).

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[6] Party activists now prefix 'revolutionary' in any reference to the ruling party and sections of the Zimbabwean media seems to have taken it up partly as a mockery.

In addition, what is often forgotten, is that the majority of planners in Zimbabwe are civil servants (see Kamete, 2009; Mbiba et al. 2015) or as scholars and consultants, are dependent on the state for their livelihoods (see Dobrucka, 2017). At the peak of Zimbabwe's decade of economic crisis (post 1999) planners did not (and still do not) have the luxuries enjoyed by foreign and diaspora commentators; standing up against the state, resistance politics (or fearless speech as suggested by Grange, 2016) would and will lead not only to loss of a livelihood but even life itself. In their critique of planners and planning in Zimbabwe, planning scholars should pose and ask what they would have done had they been in the position of a frontline local authority or private consultancy planner in Zimbabwe in June 2005.

Conclusion: the deadly tasks ahead
This paper contributes to enduring debates about the nature of planning and its relation to power from the specific context of Zimbabwe's (in)famous 2005 Operation *Murambatsvina*. Planning is a fetish in that its institutional, procedural and technical portrayal conceals prevailing forces of state and capitalist power. It also can be a fetish when scholars ascribe to planning and planners powers which they do not have. These lead to analytical lapses into misplaced understanding of urban processes and the role of planning in post-colonial Southern Africa and in particular phenomena such as OM in Zimbabwe. The narrative presented here has sought to illustrate and reinforce the fact that OM was neither planning nor were planners the drivers as portrayed in planning scholarship (see Watson , 2006; Watson and Agbola, 2013).

Between them, Kamete (2007, 2009) and Potts (2011) have made some notable contributions on the Murambatsvina debates. However, there are gaps and often a lack of consistency in the analysis. Empirically, beyond interviews with local councillors and planners in different cities, more needs to be done. First, a number of key actors remain to be interrogated; namely then Police Commissioner (Mr Chihuri), then Minister of State Security (Hon. Dydimus Mutasa); then Minister of Local Government (Hon. Ignatius Chombo); members from the military/security Joint Operations Command (JOC) (including General Constantine Chiwenga – now Vice President of Zimbabwe) and members of ZANU (PF) at national, provincial and district level. Second as argued elsewhere (Mbiba, 2017) is the need to use internal institutional archives from key institutions as a source of information to enrich planning scholarship (see also Manytsalo, 2008), to illustrate empirically the dynamics of power in and around planning. Third, the fetish and fetishism of planning and planners can only be revealed and abandoned if planning scholarship steps outside of planning to utilise insights and frameworks from other disciplines; crucially to recognise political economy dynamics that shape planning. What these dynamics are was not a central concern for this paper although pointers have been provided of what this may look like.

The paper argued that as compliance oriented statutory control and enforcement process, Zimbabwe's planning is flexible and not as bad as it is often made to appear. Once the fetish with planning is exposed, it can be recognised that on a practical level and given the political and military DNA of OM, scholars should stand up and 'attack' the state, military and security establishment that were clearly behind the phenomenon and remain behind much of the ongoing abuse of urban planning laws in Zimbabwe. Such a pathway is deadly; a key point that should be kept in mind when giving critical commentary about failures of planners and planning in the country. Probably, and in order to accomplish much of what planning is allegedly failing to do in Africa, more planners should enter real politics where significant power resides (Karki, 2015).**References**

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