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**An Actor Oriented History of Mbare Musika Fresh Produce Market, Zimbabwe,  
1930-2019**

By

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## Declaration

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DEGREE/QUALIFICATION   PhD in Development Studies

TITLE OF THE THESIS: An Actor Oriented History of Mbare Musika Fresh Produce, Zimbabwe 1930-2019

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. Where secondary material was used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the university requirement. I understand what plagiarism is and I am aware of university policy and implications in these regards.

... Stephen Hahlani .....

Signature

...11 Dec 2023.....

Date



## **Dedication**

To my late father Stephen Luvombo, my mother Leah Chitema, my wife Rosemary Chivunga and children (Fikani and Felani). I know you are proud of me and this work.



## Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Wegerif for your unwavering support throughout this project. I remember the encouraging first response, "certainly the Mbare Market is a very interesting site worthy of further research," you sent me when I suggested this project and requested your supervision. Since that day, your insights, time, patience, and various forms of support have made my PhD journey a fruitful one. You have been more than a supervisor, and I will forever appreciate the immeasurable part you played as I celebrate this milestone.

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## Abstract

This thesis is an account of Mbare Musika Fresh Produce Market, in Harare, Zimbabwe, since 1930. The study is a response to the dominant notion in literature and media that Mbare Musika is disorganised and chaotic. It assumes that if this was true, Mbare Musika would have collapsed long ago; in contrast, it has grown to be a huge market. Consequently, the thesis's main aim is to account for the resilience of Mbare Musika and how it feeds people in Harare and beyond. Mbare Musika has remained invisible in mainstream policy, and its activities are largely unrecorded. Mbare Musika is also noticeably absent from Zimbabwean historiography as a result of an overreliance on archival material that is skewed towards white, colonial, elite, and formal sector activity. To fill the gap, the study used historical and ethnographic methodologies to gain insights into the history of Mbare Musika and the actors' contemporary experiences. Oral histories were gathered through interviews, and ethnography was essential to contemporary practises and interactions in Mbare Musika. The thesis initially investigates the history of horticultural production and marketing to contextualise Mbare Musika. The horticultural sector experienced acute production and marketing challenges from the onset and did not get much state support. Mbare Musika was built through the efforts of African farmers and traders, especially women, from the vicinity of Harare (then Salisbury), who produced and sold produce in the city during the early colonial period. The Salisbury Municipality disliked the growing African participation in produce marketing in the city and adopted a plethora of measures to curtail its growth. After a period of confrontation, the Salisbury Municipality recognised African markets in the 1940s by building structures at Mbare Musika. Mbare Musika was expanded after the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 by relocating it to a bigger space and expanding the market infrastructure. The expansion of the market did not meet the demand for stalls as the number of traders continued to rise. The market remains an important source of food in Harare and income generation for women and young people who cannot find jobs in the formal economy. My research found that both economic and non-economic forces contribute to the market organisation and functioning. Networks built on *ukama* and trust contribute to the flow of produce, credit, information, and other resources. Mbare Musika resembles a symbiotic food system in which actors both collaborate and compete to achieve individual goals. My argument is that Mbare Musika has a deep-seated order based on *ukama* and trust that is invisible to casual visitors. The market's cultural and social forces influence Mbare Musika's functioning and contribute significantly to its resilience. Mbare Musika is a central market for produce farmers and contributes significantly to Harare's food needs and income generation.

## Key Words

Zimbabwe, Mbare Musika, horticultural, urban food supplies, food markets, food systems, *makoronyera*



## Acronyms

AREX	Agricultural Research and Extension
BVTA	Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association
CAS	Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship
CBD	Central Business District
DA	District Administrator
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department of International Development
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EU	European Union
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GNU	Government of National Unity
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JOC	Joint Operation Command
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NAVUZ	National Vendors Union of Zimbabwe
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NFM	New Farmers Market
OFM	Old Farmers Market
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
RTGS	Real Time Gross Settlement
US\$	United States of America Dollar
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZUPCO	Zimbabwe United Passengers Company
ZWMB	Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank



## Key Shona Words and Phrases

Chema	Money/goods contributions for funerals
Chikoronyera	Selling produce on behalf of farmers
Hesi/Mhoro/hallo	Greetings
Jaggers	Porters, push carters or loaders/offloaders
Mai	Mother
Koronyera	Farmers' agent (the literal meaning is of a con artist or con man but it means farmer's agent in the context of Mbare Musika and other markets)
Kuberekana	Carrying each other on the back
Kuchokocha	Buying and selling
Kufire	Advertising produce or things are well
Kuhodha	Stocking produce for resale
Kuhodhesa	Selling produce in large units at low prices
Kukenduza	repackaging produce in smaller packages before reselling
Kusuma	Passing information while clapping hands
Kuvimbika	Trustworthy
Lobola	Bride price
Machanga	Buyers agents (the clever ones)
Madzimai/mbuyadzematsvanda	Women satellite traders
Mafireman	Young man who advertise produce in the market
Magunanzi	Gifts of produce actors at Mbare Musika take home





Mahwindi	Touts
Makoronyera	Farmers agents (literally con men)
Maround	Rotation savings clubs
Mukando	Savings clubs
Masorotsa	Solicitors-buying agents
Mbasera	Add-ons
Misika	Plural for musika (marketplaces)
Musika	Marketplace/buying and selling produce
Ndedzemudanga	Belonging to the same kraal
Ropa rakanaka/maoko akanaka	Good luck (good blood/good hands)
Sandak	30kg tomato crates
Tazvijaira tave kuziva	We are used to it, we know it
Tinochemana	We assist each other
Tswanda	Reed basket
Ukama	Kinship relations
Vemasaga	Traders who sell sacks
Varimi vangu	My farmers/ farmers I am connected to and sell for
Zvakadhakwa	Business is low in the market (things are drunk)



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## I. Chapter One: Introduction - The Enigma of Mbare Musika

*Feeding cities takes a gargantuan effort; one that arguably has a greater social and physical impact on our lives and planet than everything we do. Yet few of us...are conscious of the process. Food arrives on our plates as if by magic, and we rarely stop to wonder how it got there (Carolyn Steel 2008).*

### I.1. Interest in Mbare Musika

My interest in Mbare Musika started with the stories that my mother narrated<sup>1</sup> after her visit to sell reed mats in 1992 and later with the portrayal of the market in literature and the media. We spent several months in our village making the reed mats. We had no idea what our mother was thinking until one day she asked for accompaniment to Neshuro Township for a bus to Mbare Musika in Harare. She travelled with my aunt, who had also made her reed mats. This was my first time hearing about Mbare Musika, and we were left in hope, suspense, and anticipation of our mother bringing us good things from the city.

The two women travelled close to 500km from our rural home to the capital city, Harare, for the first time. They spent close to a week in the city, where we had no relatives. She narrated how, upon arrival at Mbare Musika, several *mahwindi* (touts)<sup>2</sup> jostled and scrambled to carry their mats. They went to Charter House<sup>3</sup> where they were accommodated and sold their wares. They bought food and washed at the crowded house. She narrated the terrifying stories of thieves snatching wallets, *mahwindi* harassing people, the huge terrifying crowds, the dirty, noisy, cold nights, and hot, dusty days in Mbare Township. On their final day at Mbare Musika, they had the same experience with *mahwindi* who forced them to travel in separate buses. She brought the whole family some second-hand clothing at Mbare Musika, maybe she remained with some few dollars which I was not privileged to see or ask about. The journey was a real adventure, it shows the sacrifices many poor people make to earn incomes. She

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<sup>1</sup> My mother, narratives of Mbare Musika she repeated several times since her visit to Mbare Musika in 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Mahwindi (touts) are young men who work at bus terminus and ranks who load buses, minibuses, and taxis for a fee. They are widespread in Harare and are regarded by officials and many travelers as a menace though at times they assist travelers.

<sup>3</sup> Carter House is a council owned house in Mbare Musika that offers accommodation to farmers who visit Harare to sell their produce. The house also works as a market for grain crops like maize, beans, and ground nuts and many other items brought by farmers.



repeatedly narrated her experiences and stories about Mbare Musika that paint a place that is frightening and full of wonders.

The experience of my mother and aunt is not unique to them; farmers, including women and children, from rural areas visit Mbare Musika every day to sell their produce. Traders, mainly women satellite traders in Harare, and shop owners visit Mbare Musika from many parts of Harare to stock produce for resale (*kuzohodha*). Middlemen working at Mbare Musika commute daily from across Harare and surrounding areas and have established enterprises to tap the lucrative produce marketing business. Many urban food eaters<sup>4</sup> also visit Mbare Musika to buy produce for their use each day. Dhewa (2016) estimates that Mbare Musika is visited by 1,000 farmers daily, houses 5,000 traders, offers a market for 900,000 farmers, and supplies food to 4, 2 million people.

Mbare Musika provides opportunities for people to engage in various business activities to generate incomes; it gives urban residents access to relatively affordable food; and it is a key market for farmers' produce (Chadya 2007, Dhewa 2016, Chikulo et al. 2020). Farmers encounter several challenges, such as lack of accommodation, poor sanitary facilities, theft of produce, and uncertainty, but they continue to visit the market for its invaluable role. In a poem entitled Mbare Musika, Wensislaus Mbirimi captures the enigma of Mbare Musika:

Hate it you might, Dirty you call it and you will be right; Being a link of anywhere in Zimbabwe, see you there soon...; Mbare Musika the work place for many; At Mbare Musika everything is gold as everything is sold, Sadza *nenyama* [meat] you can't go hungry at Musika or you are crazy...<sup>5</sup>

Mbare Musika is a popular market and the biggest in Harare. It is a place where people meet from many parts of the country. Money and goods change hands, and deals are sealed quickly. Some make a fortune, and some lose in the same market. Mbare Musika has many stories; some are frightening and discourage some people from coming to the market, and some are

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term eater instead of 'consumer' in this research to avoid presenting a linear and cold understanding of food (Carolan 2022). The use of a linear and market based analysis of food markets assume we are 'consumers' seeking to make best deals ignoring that we are entangled in social relations. The supplies of produce through Mbare Musika is influenced by social and familial relations. I use the term eater to avoid assumptions on the acquisition of food and food itself prevalent in the concept 'consumer' (Carolan 2022, Wegerif 2017). People acquire produce through many strategies in Mbare Musika. There is no constant market value for produce, but multiple values shaped by complex social relations and practices. The aspect of choice stressed in the term 'consumer' is often absent in food transactions in Mbare Musika (Wegerif 2017). Complex interactions and networks embedded in social relations operate in Mbare Musika, making the use of 'consumer' too reductive. We are not 'consumers' exclusively (Corolan 2022).

<sup>5</sup> W. Mbirimi, (2014), Mbare Musika [poem], 8 December, [accessed 17 August 2022], available from: [www.poehunter.com/poem/mbare-musika/](http://www.poehunter.com/poem/mbare-musika/)



hopeful and attract many people. Whatever the stories shared, Mbare Musika continues to thrive because, for different reasons, more people, money, and produce converge at the market.

Many people have presented themselves as authorities and experts on Mbare Musika; they said what should be and what should not be. Mbare Musika attracted a lot of attention and generated many comments and articles in the mainstream media and recently on social media. Many people cannot pass the market without making a comment or posing for a photo. Some newspaper articles narrate stories of women travelling with carts from Mahusekwa, Beatrice, Seke, and other adjacent areas to sell produce at Mbare Musika since the early days of Salisbury (now Harare). They acknowledge that Mbare Musika grew in leaps and bounds and provided opportunities to people in urban and rural areas alike.<sup>6</sup> Some articles emphasise the negatives and view the market as unhygienic and a risk factor, especially during pandemics. Comparing Mbare Musika and Aspindale Park Farmers Market<sup>7</sup>, Mafe writes:

In Mbare Musika and Lusaka Market in Highfield fresh produce changes hands through disorganised, fragmented, and not so transparent value chains, most of the time undermining the farmer. While places like Mbare Musika are notorious for chaos and insecurity, the new market is a break from the old way of doing things where markets were always seen to be dingy and derelict.<sup>8</sup>

Mbare Musika was exposed to criticism during the cholera, typhoid, and Covid-19 outbreaks. It earned the status of a "ticking health time bomb", spreading fear among urbanites and farmers who rely on the market. Indeed, waste management is a serious problem at Mbare Musika, but the calamities forecast many times never materialised. A lot has been said about Mbare Musika, but as Dhewa (2016) notes, little is known about its functioning and continued growth.

Mbare Musika has been a central produce market since its inception during the colonial period. It distributes produce to satellite markets in Harare and other towns in Zimbabwe. The popularity of Mbare Musika is accounted for by its location, it is a transit area for thousands

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<sup>6</sup> The Zimbabwean, (2012), Mbare: From pioneers to overpopulation,[online], 14 August, [accessed 22 June 2022], available from: <https://www.the Zimbabwean.co/2012/08/mbare-from-pioneers-to-overpopulation/>

<sup>7</sup> Aspindale Park Farmers Market is a produce market built by Old Mutual in Kambuzuma, Harare and was opened in 2012.

<sup>8</sup> E., Kafe, (2019), Market structures need face lift, Sundaymail, [accessed 22 June 2022], available from: <https://www.pressreader.com/zimbabwe/the-sunday-mail-zimbabwe/20190210/20181917364333460>





of people in Harare and other towns who commute daily (Brand 1986). In 2012, a Newsday article reported that:

Following a decade-long unforgiving economic crisis that predicated a significant shrinkage of formal businesses, Mbare Musika - populated by informal traders - has emerged as a centre for profitable engagements. An estimated 80% of the country does not have jobs and informal trade has become a major source of livelihood for many families.<sup>9</sup>

Mbare Musika's resilience and role in agriculture, urban food supplies, and livelihoods cannot be underestimated.

My resolve to document the history of Mbare Musika was strengthened by funding support from the Human Economy Programme in 2019. The human economy approach centres on what ordinary people do for themselves, their aspirations, and challenges in their response to inequality and poverty (Hart 2008). The human economy is traced from Polanyi's concept of embeddedness and view of the economy as an instituted process (Polanyi 1944). The concept states that the economy is not autonomous, as it is seen in economic theory, but is subordinated to politics, religion and social relations (Polanyi 1944). The human economy's main aim is to solve inequality that resulted from centuries of capitalism and neoliberalism. According to Hart (2008), "[b]y calling the economy 'human' we insist on putting people first, making their thoughts, actions and lives our main concern." The human economy is concerned with what people do and think in economies dominated by large-scale organisations. The human economy is also premised on the view that an economy based on narrow self-interest is non-existent and does not reflect what is best for humanity. According to Hart et.al (2010), the idea of an impersonal economy is fictitious, rather the economy is made and remade by people in their everyday lives. The human economy and the actor-oriented approach discussed below shaped and focused this study in a major way. From these I seek to give a voice to the actors, the people who take part in the activities and processes at Mbare Musika.

The actor-oriented approach emphasises the notion of human agency. This notion attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life even under the most extreme forms of coercion (Long and van der Ploeg 1989). The actor-oriented approach recognises the ability of social actors to shape their lives in spite of prevailing structural conditions. This helps in explaining the functioning and resilience of Mbare

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<sup>9</sup> Newsday, (2012), Mbare Musika early morning mad rush,[online], 26 April, [accessed 16 June 2020], available from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/amp/news/article/217027/mbare-musika-early-morning-mad-rush>



Musika despite the control measures in place. The actor-oriented approach assists in revealing the lived experiences and internal strategies people adopted in response to their socioeconomic and political environment to improve their lives (Long 2001).

According to Long (1992), social actors are a knowing, active subject, who problematise situations, process information and strategise in dealing with others. This understanding was essential in analysing the interactions and relationships of actors in Mbare Musika. For Long (1989), these later include not only actors present in given face-to-face situations, but also those who are absent, but who nevertheless impinge upon such situations, thus affecting both actions and outcomes. Social actors therefore have a quality of human agency, which attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life. Within the limits of existing information, uncertainty and other constraints, social actors are both knowledgeable and capable to influence social change processes. All actors including those who are subordinated to others, such as women, are seen as having some power and agency and are therefore capable of influencing social change and are part of the same wider structures. The actor-oriented approach views actors as active participants who respond to development from above and existing rules by creating space to further their interests (Long 2001, Hebinck et al. 2001).

This approach recognises that development in general does not progress in clear, linear and straightforward ways. Instead, it is bubbling with change, disorder and complex processes. Many social processes take place at the same time and place all moving in different directions. As Long and van der Ploeg (1988:37) argue, it is “many sided, complex and often contradictory in nature. It involves different sets of social forces originating from international, national and local arenas. The interplay of these forces generates specific forms, directions and rhythms of change”. This is central in this study in trying to show the various processes that shaped the resilience and functioning of Mbare Musika over the years.

The actor-oriented approach also stresses the interaction in social situations wherein social conduct is contingent upon the social conduct of others, not the individual per se. The approach therefore emphasises that in any analysis there is need to take account of the influence of various sets of social relationships in which the individual is embedded. Long (1989) terms these “intermediate structures” and examples can be social networks based on such criteria as kinship or patron-client ties, farmers’ organisations and cooperatives.



The positive and negative stories about Mbare Musika weave it into an enigma. A lot has been said about Mbare Musika, but it remains complex and puzzling. Many commentators continue to hold the belief that all non-capitalist markets like Mbare Musika are insignificant or dying out; they have no influence in the modern economy and therefore are not worth theorising (Kerblay 1986). Most of the remarks made in the media and literature are not based on empirical evidence and have remained unsubstantiated. The resilience of Mbare Musika, as demonstrated by its continued operation, is unaccounted for in literature and media narratives. This thesis argues that Mbare Musika has a deep-seated order based on trust and *ukama*, invisible to many commentators, that contributes to its organisation, resilience and functioning. I further argue that Mbare Musika is a symbiotic food market where cooperation, collaboration, and other mutually beneficial arrangements are present and competition though present is marginal. I developed the concept symbiotic food market by drawing from the symbiotic food system (Wegerif 2020).

## **1.2. What is Mbare Musika?**

Mbare Musika is a fresh produce market located a few kilometres south of Harare's Central Business District (CBD), as shown in Figure 1. The market is built in Mbare Township, the oldest African township established by the colonial government in 1907, and it is owned by the City of Harare. The market is classified as an 'informal market' because, though the state and council regulate it, they are not directly involved in the actual marketing of produce (Smith 1989). During the 1980s, the Harare Council referred to Mbare Musika as a people's market, reflecting its dominance and control by the people. The City of Harare classifies Mbare Musika as a social market (open air market). In its Informal Sector Development Policy, "social markets are social-service driven and targeted at the underprivileged members of the Harare community who include vulnerable individuals such as widows/widowers, child-headed families, the chronically sick and the physically disabled."<sup>10</sup>

Mbare Musika is often referred by people in Harare simply as *musika*. *Musika* (*misika* plural) is a shona term that refers to a marketplace where goods and services are exchanged. It is commonly used to refer to council-owned markets and unapproved markets where vendors and traders sell produce. The term *musika* is sometimes used to refer to the actual buying and selling of produce. It is common to get responses like "*ndinoita zvemusika*" (I buy and sell

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<sup>10</sup> City of Harare, Informal Sector Development: Promoting sustainable economic empowerment, development and growth.

for a living) in Harare. In this thesis, *musika* is used to refer to the marketplace and the actual trading of produce, and the two are related. The thesis uses the term in relation to fruit and vegetable marketing, though several products like traditional medicine, grains, indigenous dried fruits, electrical goods, and uniforms are also sold at Mbare Musika.

This thesis defines Mbare Musika to include areas of its influence, such as produce sources and destinations. The approved council produce market is divided into the Old Farmers Market (OFM), New Farmers Market (NFM), and Wholesale, and Retail sections. Mbare Musika, however, has spilled over to include open air markets such as the potato market that keeps on shifting positions around the main official market, the street markets (*paspeed*)<sup>11</sup> outside the main market, the Chicken Cooperative Market, and the two privately run Banana Markets in Mbare.

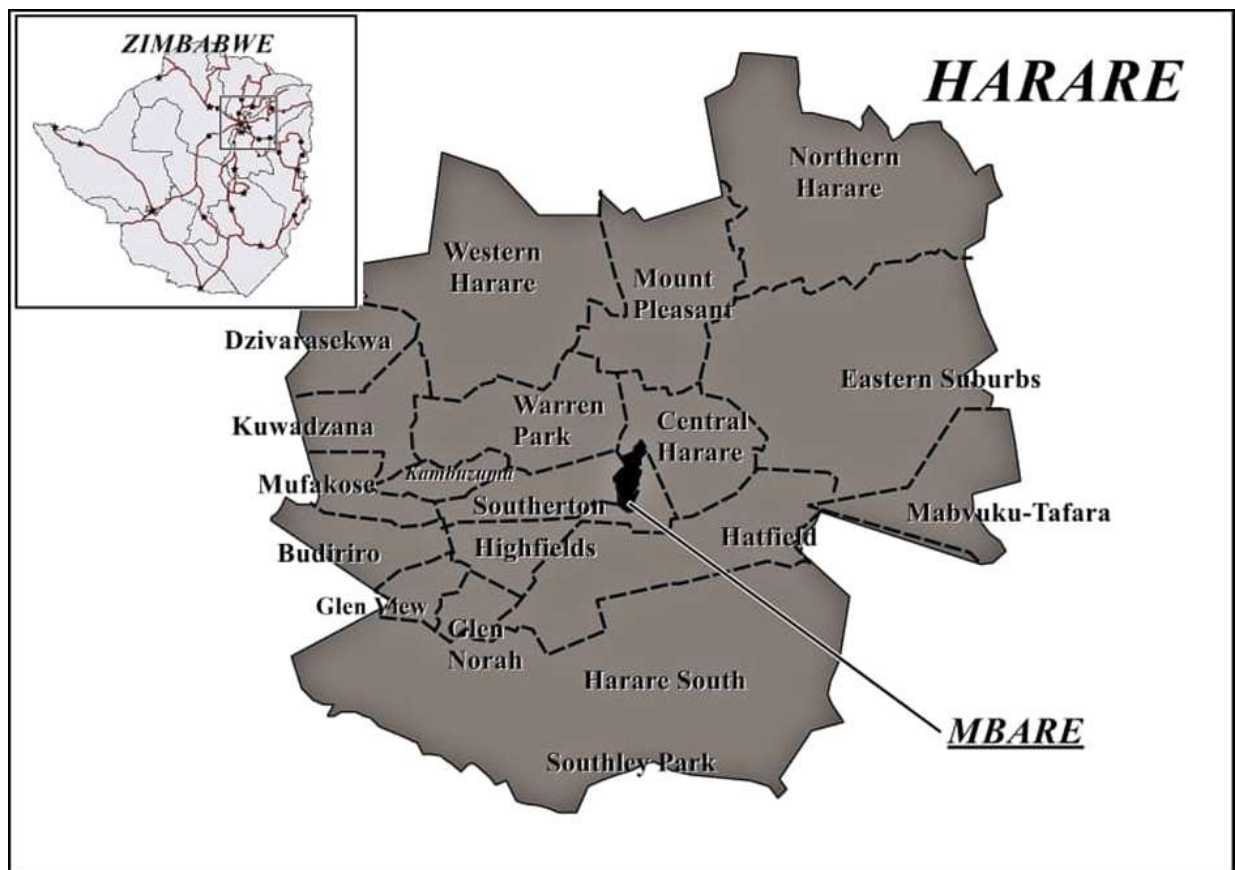


Figure 1: Map of Harare showing Mbare Musika and suburbs it supplies produce (source Author).

<sup>11</sup> *Paspeed* refers to a street market usually in front of supermarkets where there are many passers-by. Around Mbare Musika refers to the street markets outside the market walls. Sales at this market are quick and high. The vendors intercept people before entering the market and open for long hours compared to the Farmers Markets where they are mostly based. This type of market is common in all high-density residential areas in Harare and there is a cat and mouse relationship between the vendors who sell and police who often try to move them and demand bribes.



Mbare Musika is the biggest *musika* in Harare and Zimbabwe, and it is the main source of produce for other *misika* (satellite markets) in and outside Harare. Many produce traders visit the market early in the morning to stock produce that they later sell in their suburbs. Dormitory towns like Chitungwiza, Epworth, and Ruwa got produce supplies from Mbare Musika for a long time.

As a guest columnist, Charles Dhewa, founder and director of Knowledge Transfer Africa (eMkambo), a market research organisation, reports that Mbare Musika is a distribution hub and feeder market for small towns and markets in Harare.<sup>12</sup> Produce from Mbare Musika also reaches other towns such as Bulawayo, Mutare, Kadoma, Chinhoyi, Victoria Falls, Beitbridge, Zvishavane, Hwange etc. The growing cities and mining towns offered lucrative produce markets for farmers since their establishment after 1890 (Phimister 1977, Palmer 1977, Schmidt 1992, Mlambo 2014). Fresh produce from Mbare Musika is marketed in neighbouring countries, mainly South Africa, Mozambique, and Zambia. These countries are also sources of some produce that is sold at Mbare Musika. Mbare Musika is at the centre of produce supplies in Harare and beyond. Figure 1, a map of Harare, shows the location of Mbare Musika and the suburbs it supplies produce to.

Large-scale and small-scale commercial farmers have been supplying fruit and vegetables to Mbare Musika since the colonial period. Farmers, mainly from Mashonaland provinces and Manicaland province, supply produce to Mbare Musika. Adjacent areas such as Seke, Mabvuku, Domboshava, Epworth, and Beatrice were the first to supply produce to Harare. Later, faraway places such as Mutoko, Murehwa, Marondera, Macheke, Nyanga, Honde Valley, and Chimanimani joined the supply of produce to Harare. Figure 2 shows the sources of produce and their final destinations.

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Dhewa, guest column, The musika-covid-19 dilemma: closing markets will save lives, but it will also ruin them, newZWire, March 27, 2020, [online], [accessed 27 October 2021], available from: <https://newswire.live/guest-column-the-musika-covid-19-dilemma-closing-markets-will-save-lives-but-it-will-also-ruin-them/>. Knowledge Transfer Africa (eMkambo) is located at Mbare Musika and it gathers and circulates information (including broadcasting produce prices) on informal markets in Zimbabwe. Dhewa wrote a plethora of short articles on Mbare Musika and other markets he calls mass markets.

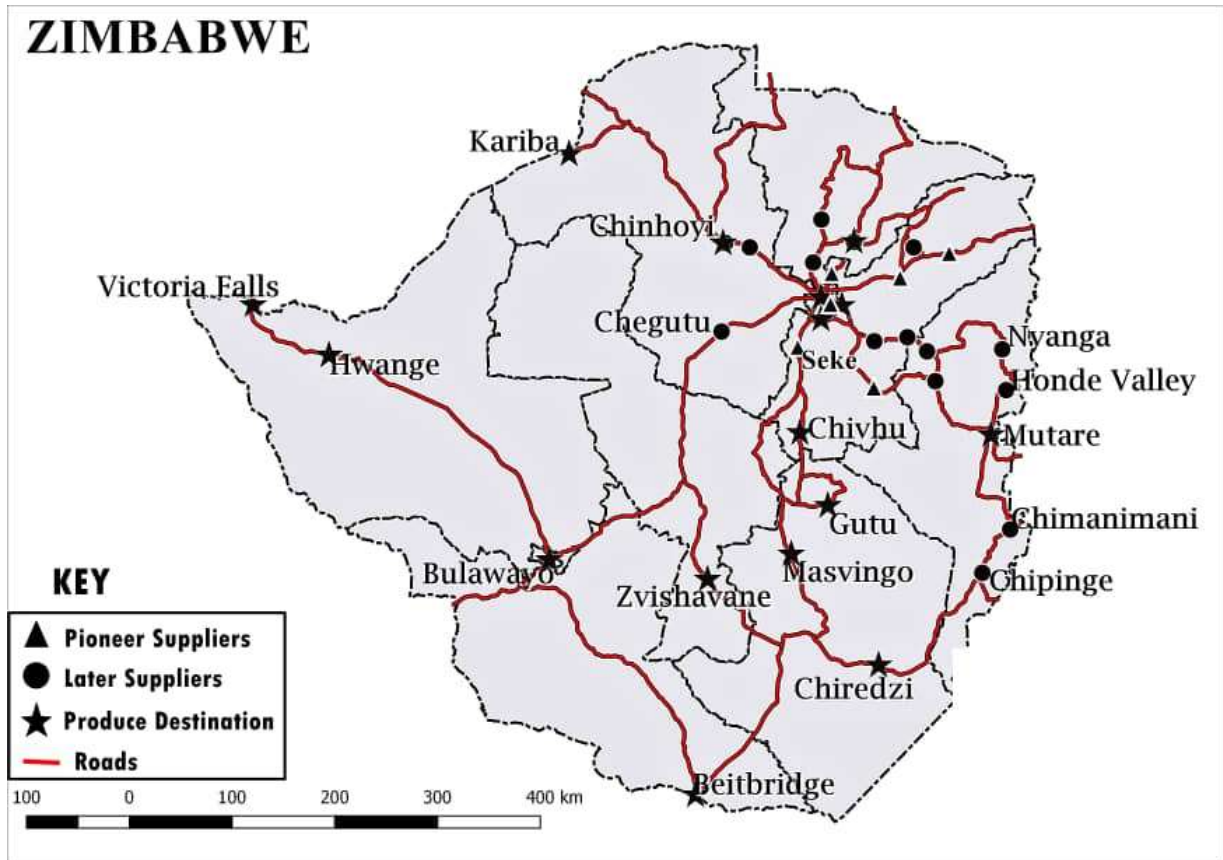


Figure 2: Map of Zimbabwe showing produce sources and destinations (Source: Author).

Mbare Musika has been a source of income and livelihood for many people, especially unemployed women and youth. They have engineered market roles such as *makoronyera* (farmers' agents), wholesale and retail traders, *jaggers* (porters), transporters, council officials, *vemasaga* (package traders), cooked food vendors, *machanga* (the clever ones referring to buying agents), and many others who work at Mbare Musika. The market includes retail traders who work in the retail section and satellite retail traders. Some supermarkets rely on Mbare Musika for produce and closing it would adversely affect them and their customers.<sup>13</sup> Mbare Musika contributes immensely to urban food supplies and food security in many ways. It is the main source of some produce eaten in many homes in Harare, hotels, restaurants, universities, schools, hospitals, and other institutions. Mbare Musika plays a crucial role in the marketing of horticultural produce and the overall development of agriculture and the economy. The vibrant market has attracted and supported many other economic activities, such as agriculture input suppliers and the metal industry around it.

<sup>13</sup> C. Dhewa, (2020), The *musika*-covid-19 dilemma: closing markets will save lives, but also ruin them.



### **1.3. Positioning Mbare Musika in Harare**

Mbare Musika remains an understudied and misunderstood subject, though a lot is written about it. Soon after the colonial encroachment and the establishment of Harare (then Salisbury), some African farmers closeby engaged in produce hawking, among other activities, to generate incomes (Musoni 2010). Despite the long history of Africans in produce marketing, their markets such as Mbare Musika received scant attention and are often misconstrued. Vambe (2007), writing on Mbare Township, argues that the question of Africans' experiences in urban spaces is under-theorised and sometimes distorted. Little is written about urban food history in Zimbabwe compared to other topics like housing, transport, and manufacturing, despite the immediate impact of food shortages on the poor, markets, and the state (Smith 1998).

Wiskerke (2015) claims that neglecting food issues in cities is a serious omission. Steel (2008) points out that most people are ignorant of the effort it takes to feed cities. This is a serious gap since, as Steel (2008) notes, "...cities are not just made of bricks and mortar, they are inhabited by flesh-and-blood humans, and so must rely on the natural world to feed them. Cities, like people, are what they eat." Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) argue that food issues are neglected because they are considered as mostly agricultural issues grounded in rural settings. This situation is surprising since food is a basic need and is embedded in our lives (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 1999). Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) note that food studies should gain more attention since,

in addition to the health of individuals and households, the food system is implicated in the health of the local economy; to local land use and transportation; preservation of agricultural land; to solid waste problems of cities; and to the quality of water, air, and soil.

The study of Mbare Musika is essential because it is part of the system that supplies food in Harare.

In the Zimbabwean historiography, horticultural produce marketing received little academic attention in correspondence to the colonial and post-colonial governments' crop hierarchy approach. Doro (2020) calls it crop hegemony and it gave much importance to tobacco and other exported crops. This approach sidelined and "ignored" horticultural crops and traditional grains (Kauma 2021). The tendency to view highly ranked crops as major cash crops for farmers (Zvobgo 2009) ignores the contribution of horticultural crops to food security and farmers' incomes. In Zimbabwe, horticultural marketing is considered



'uncontrolled' because crops are not marketed through statutory marketing boards and official information on production, marketing, and consumption is nonexistent (Smith 1989). Horticultural produce marketing was different from major export crops like tobacco, beef, and maize, whose marketing was through statutory marketing boards. Farmers and traders were free to find their own marketing channels, unlike the marketing of controlled crops undertaken through statutory marketing boards.<sup>14</sup> Partly for that reason, Mbare Musika is absent from the colonial and post-colonial state documents and this influences research.

Dhewa contributes immensely to understanding *musika* in Zimbabwe through his research and information dissemination. Dhewa (2016) argues that produce markets "are barely understood from an empirical point of view." Horn (1994) further contends that actors at Mbare Musika are hardly consulted in data collection; they are not given attention by researchers or the state as serious business people. Schmidt (1992) argues that the reconstruction of Zimbabwean history suffers from an overreliance on testimony filtered and distorted by colonial and missionary agents. Mbare Musika is a glaringly missing part of the Zimbabwean historiography, despite its importance in agriculture and food supplies.

The contribution of Mbare Musika to urban food and nutrition security, incomes, agricultural growth and overall economic development, as well as the experiences of the actors involved there, are marginalised (Horn 1994). In fact, since the colonial period, *misika* was unwelcome in Harare. Chamlee-Wright (2002) states that the colonial government's response was aimed at ensuring that the move towards a peasant economy and market trading as a principal source of cash income was short lived. Initially totally prohibited in the location, African trade has, since the late 1930s, become part of its social and economic life (Wild 1991). Actors in *musika*, however, strongly demonstrate that they are neither political nor cultural dupes nor hapless victims of colonial tight controls; they challenged colonial hegemony by engaging in various activities to generate income in segregated urban spaces (Musemwa 2012, Vambe 2007). The integration of 'traditional markets' into the urban agenda and planning has remained a key challenge. Kinyanjui (2014: 1) notes that "economic informality abounds in Africa... While

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<sup>14</sup> I visited the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Settlement seeking permission to study Mbare Musika. I was surprised to be told that they do not have authority over Mbare Musika. By extension they were saying they are not involved in the marketing of produce in urban areas, though, maybe they are encouraging the farmers to produce more.





economic informality provides livelihood and employment to a majority of the urban population, it has been a major source of conflict with modernity and order in the city."

Mbare Musika received attention from some scholars, but mostly in a superficial and brief manner, while writing on different subjects. In the study of town and rural interaction looking at Harare and Goromonzi, Makombe (2013) gives the background to the birth of markets in African townships. Makombe (2013) and Mudeka (1997), among others, locate the birth of Mbare Musika in the 1940s. This thesis considers African farmers and traders who hawked produce in Salisbury and the "illegitimate" gatherings of African farmers and traders selling produce in Mbare Musika as the embryonic stages of the market. These early produce marketing activities, although they were considered illegitimate, formed the basis of Mbare Musika and were later acknowledged by the Salisbury Municipality.

Writers have also commented on the nature of the produce traded and how it shaped the birth and people's view of Mbare Musika. It has been argued, though questionable, that Mbare Musika, evolved from a dumping site for surplus produce from white farmers before 1980 to a place of opportunities for many (Chikulo and Hebinck, unpublished paper). Sena (1997) presents Mbare Musika as a residue for low quality produce that could not be exported. Mudeka (1997) and Mborera (2019), in their honours' dissertations make the same assertions indicating how this has become a widely held view. This view is reconsidered in this thesis on the basis that Zimbabwe had a small share of and struggled to penetrate further the export market. The comments that link the poor quality of produce to the birth of Mbare Musika ignore the involvement of Africans who responded to the opportunities offered by the growing food demand by produce marketing soon after the establishment of Harare. They also make the wrong assumption that African farmers were unable to produce quality produce and ignore the white settler farmers who resorted to sell at Mbare Musika because they had no links to corporate and exports markets.

Scholars also comment on the organisation and operation of Mbare Musika, but again many of their portrayals of the market are not convincing. The common portrayal of Mbare Musika is that it is chaotic and fragmented, and is made up of disorganised vendors (Jaricha 1979, Njaya 2014, Mborera 2019, Mudeka 1997). For instance, Njaya (2014: 39) says that Mbare Musika and Machipisa produce markets in Harare are "highly disorganised, overcrowded, and lack appropriate storage facilities." Chikulo and Hebinck, suggesting a different view,



remarking that the hustle and bustle, noise, and commotion at the market, make Mbare Musika appear chaotic and disorganised from the surface but that there is a deeper order at work. In this study, I further investigate the history of Mbare Musika to find out how the market is ordered and the contribution of the order to its resilience and functioning for close to a century. The orderless market assumption points to a weak structure which does not explain its long lifespan.

Interestingly, Mbare Musika has recently attracted direct inquiry from Chikulo, Matondi, Kinsey and Slootheer who documented important aspects of its operation. They are the first academic researchers to focus mainly on Mbare Musika and to provide empirical evidence from the activities at Mbare Musika. Chikulo et al. (2020) account for the resilience of Mbare Musika in its nested form and refer to its distinct organisational dynamics and social infrastructure. Matondi and Chikulo (2015) argue that small actors are dynamic and creative, but still, their systems are fragile and speculative, and they struggle to sustain livelihoods and eradicate poverty. They also highlight the importance of cooperation, collaboration, and competition in markets.

Scholars also define *makoronyera* and their role in produce marketing in Mbare Musika. Based on the shona meaning of *makoronyera* as con artists or tricksters, many view them in negative terms as produce thieves. Makombe (2013) notes that the expanding African produce markets led to a negative sub-culture among unemployed youth known as *makoronyera*. He defines *makoronyera* as produce thieves or spivs. Njaya (2014) highlights, that farmers are exploited by *makoronyera*, who pay them low prices for their produce, hoard crops, and put high markups on reselling. Recently Slootheer (2020), correctly notes *makoronyera* as a contested group by both vendors and in literature for their influence in high produce prices. Slootheer (2020) gave a balanced assessment of *makoronyera* by acknowledging their positive roles. Slootheer (2020) ran into the same problem of failing to define who *makoronyera* are and confusing them with traders at Mbare Musika. This study re-examines *makoronyera* and *chikoronyera* contributing to their redefinition and providing a balanced assessment of their role, power and vulnerabilities and evolution over time.

The growth in produce marketing is captured in literature in relation to the provision of trading spaces by the council. Makombe (2013) points out that by 1970, the demand for trading places outstripped the available stalls. In the 1990s, Mbare Musika proliferated due to



high population in Harare and Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) that led to trade deregulation, food scarcity, and rising costs of living (Njaya 2014). Matondi and Chikulo (2015) overemphasise the role of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in transforming markets in Zimbabwe. This study further explores the forces that shape the operation of Mbare Musika throughout its long history. The thesis seeks to close the gap in literature by making Mbare Musika the main subject of study and making its complex story visible.

#### **1.4. 'Traditional' Markets in Africa**

The neoclassical theory of markets is criticised for failing to capture the diversity in markets. Hill (1963) argues that African markets operate differently from Western markets, and therefore it is erroneous to interpret them as backward and retrogressive. Clark (1994), in her study of Kumasi Central Market in Ghana, reinforces the argument that assessing enterprises in terms of their compliance with modernity, competitiveness, capitalist orientation, legality, or scale conceals their diversity and strengths. Many markets in Africa are also understood as 'informal' markets. This follows Hart's (1973) application of the term 'informal' economy to refer to economic activities outside state regulation and control. 'Informality' underlines the non-formalised structure, lack of traceability, and unregistered nature of markets and their participants (Warshawsky 2018).

The belief in the value and universal applicability of the Western ideal of self-regulating economies informed the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s implementation of ESAP in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, with disastrous effects. On the basis that market forces are supreme and their adoption promotes economic growth, ESAP prescribed the opening up and deregulation of the economies of 'third world' countries in exchange for loans. In contrast to the promises of prosperity, ESAP worsened the economies and deepened poverty in borrowing countries (Mlambo 1997). ESAP failed to solve poverty and inequality because it stressed efficiency over social justice (Sachs 1992). The failure of self-regulating markets in Africa justifies state intervention to grow and stabilise economies and markets (Hodgson 1994). The failure of ESAP demonstrates that there is no single path to economic organisation and that the local context and diversity are important considerations (Sachs 1992).

The application of the 'informal' economy concept to African markets has been questioned by many scholars (McGaffin and Kihato 2013, Meagher 2005). There is no distinction between



'informal' and formal markets, the so-called informal markets are intertwined and connected to the overall economic system (Cheater 1979, Wegerif 2020). Cheater (1979) emphasises that like formal markets, 'informal' markets are taxed, legitimate, registered with councils, and products move through formal and 'informal' markets before their final use. Also, Battersby et.al (2016) and Meagher (2005) submit that informal economic activities are pervasive and deeply interconnected with official economies rendering the informal economy concept questionable. Myers and Murray (2006) argue that the notion 'informal' economy works as a heuristic device, but it is slippery and imprecise when used as a conceptual tool. The concept portrays markets, such as Mbare Musika, as undesirable and temporary implying that they should be eliminated. Wegerif (2020) proposes abandoning the term 'informal' since it describes people and their enterprises by what they are not, perpetuating the belief that they are insignificant compared to formal enterprises that are superior.

Some argue that African markets and trade emerged in response to external forces. According to Hodder (1965), traditional marketplaces were concentrated in West Africa due to trans-regional routes that passed through it, whereas they were missing in other regions such as Southern Africa. Some researchers document the presence of markets in Africa prior to colonisation (Beach 1980, Garlarke 1973, Birmingham and Martin 1983). African markets are often referred to as traditional markets to depict their being not western, and instead being backward and indigenous to Africa.

There is also a debate on the role of social networks in African markets and economic organisation. Fukuyama (1995) and Bayart (1999) cast doubt on the ability of Africans to create useful social networks due to cultural incapacities, the impact of colonialism, and rapid urbanisation. Bayart (1999) believes that African social networks are embedded in cultural repertoires of clientism, trickery, corruption, witchcraft, and the absence of morality and therefore constitute a social liability. In contrast, Meagher (2005) underlines that African trade networks possessed institutional resources to strike a balance between 'too much' and 'too little' embeddedness, and the success of the trade networks therefore owes much to their commercial rather than criminal acumen. In Harare, for instance, migrants forged new urban cultures and social networks that were useful for opportunities and mutual aid (Vambe 2007, Yokushini 2007). This research further investigates the role of socio-cultural networks in produce marketing at Mbare Musika.



Food markets, such as Mbare Musika, are often referred to as wet markets. Nadimpalli and Pickering (2020) define wet markets as marketplaces where meat, seafood, produce, and sometimes live animals are sold and butchered in the open air. The term open air markets has also been used to describe street markets that operate without market buildings. In Europe, open air markets were replaced by covered markets to separate them from the streets for easy control and surveillance (Manuel and Oyon 2018). The Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security (CSM) (2016) employs the term territorial markets to define food markets that are located in and identified with specific areas (territories). Food markets like Mbare Musika are also referred to as public markets and people's markets, but little is done to define what these concepts mean. Considering the polysemy and lack of a clear definition of fresh produce markets in literature, I use the term *musika* to refer to fresh produce markets because this is the commonly used term in Harare and Zimbabwe.

The study of Mbare Musika and other food markets in Africa is important given the pressing question of how to feed rapidly expanding cities in the context of shrinking economic opportunities in Africa. According to Wiskerke (2015), due to rapid population growth, urbanisation, and nutrition change, the biggest societal challenge is how to feed the world's growing urban population. The first answer to this challenge was to increase production, as happened during the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution, however, failed to end hunger and food supply bottlenecks. Bernstein (2010: 2) notes that "while more than enough is produced to feed the world's population adequately, many people go hungry much or all of the time." Alternatively, improving the marketing side of the food economy can enhance food security (Wiskerke 2015). Understanding and improving the existing food systems already feeding cities is an important starting point for figuring out how to feed growing cities (Wegerif 2017).

The role of *musika* in feeding a growing urban population is questioned by many writers in the wake of rapidly expanding supermarkets. Food from *musika* and other small suppliers is alleged to be expensive, unhygienic, a nuisance, and expensive, and can be easily outcompeted by supermarkets. Though supermarkets sell produce in Harare, Chikulo et al. (2020) and Dhewa (2016) stress that Mbare Musika is booming, resilient, reliable, and competent. Weatherspoon and Reardon (2003) and Blekking (2017) point out that while supermarkets are expanding throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, public markets remain vital for family food security. Siebert



(2019) asserts that the harsh capitalist accumulation process has impoverished many people, who have resorted to partial self-provisioning to survive. This study explores the contribution of Mbare Musika to urban food security, income generation, and the marketing of produce among other issues.

#### **1.4.1. Research Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of this thesis is to document the history of Mbare Musika and its contribution to urban food supplies and security. The thesis explores the history of horticultural produce marketing in colonial Zimbabwe that forms the background to unravelling the forces that shaped the emergence and development of Mbare Musika. The thesis also seeks to investigate the functioning of Mbare Musika and how it moves produce from farms to Mbare Musika, and on to satellite markets and homes where it is eaten. It explores the organisation and structure of Mbare Musika to reveal how the market works and where its strengths and weaknesses lie. The thesis also examines the personal histories, experiences and motives of actors in Mbare Musika to document what determines their actions and how they joined Mbare Musika. The thesis explores the activities undertaken in Mbare Musika to uncover the economic and non-economic practices in Mbare Musika and their contribution to market resilience. It also examines the role of women in produce marketing in Mbare Musika.

#### **1.4.2. Research Questions**

The main research question of the study that inform this thesis is: Why has Mbare Musika survived for such a long period and how does it work and what is its contribution to produce marketing and food supplies? The thesis asks the following sub-questions to assist in investigating the main question:

- a) How did Mbare Musika emerge and change over time?
- b) How is Mbare Musika organised?
- c) What are the activities and practices found in Mbare Musika?
- d) How do actors interact in Mbare Musika?
- e) What are actors' motives, sources of capital and skills?
- f) What are the experiences of actors in Mbare Musika?
- g) What is the contribution of Mbare Musika to people and the economy?



### **1.5. Thesis Structure**

This thesis has ten chapters that explore different themes. These chapters revolve around Mbare Musika's organisation, functioning and resilience throughout its history. Chapter One is an introduction showing the enigma, complexity, and puzzle in Mbare Musika. It spells out my interest in the research subject, defines Mbare Musika, gives a brief literature review and outlines the research aims and objectives and questions.

Chapter Two reviews the theoretical ideas and debates on markets advanced by neoclassical economics, Marxism, economic sociology, and anthropology. The review shows that neoclassical economists' emphasis on economic factors does not fully describe activities in markets. Non-economic forces also shape markets and the actions of actors involved. The symbiotic food system analysis selected for the study emphasises the embeddedness of economic action in social relations and captures the economic and non-economic forces in Mbare Musika. Chapter Three is an account of the research methodology used in the study. The chapter underlines the inadequacy of written sources for studying Mbare Musika and argues for a mixed-methods approach to uncovering the experiences of ordinary people. The study triangulated data gathered through ethnography, oral history, ride-alongs, and written sources.

Chapter Four examines the development of the horticultural industry in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) from 1930 to 1979. It gives the background to the birth and development of Mbare Musika by underscoring the opportunities and challenges that were experienced in the horticultural sector since its formative years. The colonial policy aimed to eliminate Africans from the so-called European horticultural markets, and this contributed to the birth and development of Mbare Musika.

Chapter Five starts by giving a brief background of produce marketing in Harare (then Salisbury) as the immediate environment that shaped the rise and development of Mbare Musika. The chapter highlights that efforts to eliminate Africans from produce marketing in Harare failed. African produce markets were acknowledged by municipal authorities in African township as a mechanism to control the growth of African produce traders. African produce markets benefited from the disagreements among the colonial officials and Africans employed several strategies to survive the colonial efforts to eliminate them. The chapter stresses the role of African produce marketers in Harare before 1940 as the embryonic stages of Mbare Musika. It covers themes such as infrastructure development, the politics of the market, waste



management, and the cholera and Covid-19 pandemics. The history of Mbare Musika shows resilience, effective functioning and continued growth.

Chapter Six explores the structure and organisation of Mbare Musika. The actors are organised into groups based on *ukama* (kinship relations) and trust. These groups and networks found a form of harmony through combining contestations, collaboration, and interdependence. The chapter shows that individual interests are important, but working with others and building networks of suppliers and buyers is crucial for economic success. Long-term interests dominate short-term and exploitative interests. The chapter covers intra-group and intergroup relations, and socio-political structures emerge in addition to economic ones. The chapter also examines the controversial role of *makoronyera* and finds that it is difficult to generalise about a complex, misconstrued, contested and constantly evolving group.

The interaction of actors in the market is explored in Chapter Seven. The market is presented as more than just buying and selling produce; it also includes sociocultural and political practices. The chapter shows the practices in the market, such as credit systems and mutual aid associations that demonstrate the existence of cooperation and collaboration. These practices are an important part of symbiotic market relations, in which actors use their connections to others to achieve their aims. *Ukama* and trust are central to the practices that have been working in the market for a long period of time.

Chapter Eight examines the role of women in Mbare Musika. It sheds light on the reasons for the dominance of women in the market and the roles they play in marketing of produce. Women have been at the centre of agriculture and the marketing of produce at Mbare Musika. The chapter asserts women's invaluable role in food provisioning and how they responded to urban pressures to sustain their families. The chapter also discusses the experiences of women in Mbare Musika. It finds that women devise ways to balance domestic and marketing roles for the survival of their enterprises.

Chapter Nine analyses the experiences, aspirations and challenges of people in Mbare Musika. The chapter explains how they started, how they coped with market challenges, and the changing perceptions towards operating *musika*. The chapter draws parallels among poverty, unemployment, and falling incomes and the increasing participation in and changing perceptions towards Mbare Musika. The chapter finds that many people were pushed by the





hard economic environment they found in Harare to join Mbare Musika. Chapter Ten is an overall discussion and conclusion addressing the main findings of the thesis. The chapter emphasises the role of *musika* in urban food supplies and food security. It does so through making a short comparison of *musika* and supermarkets. It argues that Mbare Musika was invaluable in the past and is still essential today and is likely to play a significant role in food supplies in the future. Networks based on *ukama* and trust offer the market the glue that keeps it together and promotes its effective functioning.



## 2. Chapter Two: Review of Theories on Markets and Economic Action

*It is not from the benevolence (kindness) of the butcher, the brewer, or the banker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard of their own interest (Adam Smith 1776: 16).*

*Therefore, we have no doubt that the future of economic theory lies not in constructing a single universal theory of economic life but in conceiving a number of theoretical systems that would be adequate to the range of present or past economic orders and would disclose the forms of their coexistence and evolution (Basile Kerbly 1986: 28).*

### 2.1. Introduction

Mbare Musika is so integral to the lives of many people and the economy as a whole that knowing how it works, how it is organised, and why it is resilient is critical. According to Schmiel and Sander (2022), it is pertinent to ask how markets are conceptualised theoretically because understanding markets is dependent on market theories. As evidenced by the remarks above, scholars from economics, sociology, anthropology, political science, and other disciplines debate what the concept "market" entails. Watson and Studder (2006) observe increased attention to markets over time, but still we know little about why some markets succeed while others fail. This is partly because most market theories compartmentalise human experience into disciplinary boxes that fail to address challenges outside of these boxes (Tosh 2000). To explain how markets work, economists advance the rational model and market theory. Meanwhile economics is criticised for being a self-referencing discipline that fails to reflect real lived experiences (Willis and Trondman 2000). Sociologists and anthropologists are the main critics of the economic analysis and call it narrow for disregarding social connections among actors, power dynamics, the institutional framework, and cultural rules that underpin market organisation, or the habits and practical skills of market participants (Fourcade 2007).

This chapter reviews market theories and how scholars from different disciplines define and conceptualise real markets (marketplaces that sell things). In this chapter, I argue that theories that integrate the role of economic and non-economic forces better interpret markets than those that emphasise only one of these factors. The chapter relies heavily on secondary sources and focuses on orthodox economics, Marxist, sociological, and anthropological concepts of a market.



## 2.2. Economic Theory of Markets

The classical and neoclassical economic theories sparked a huge and ongoing debate on the meaning and working of a market. The concept of scarcity is central to economic theory. Economists aim to develop theoretical and practical instruments to solve the problem of scarcity (Ahmed 2010). Scarcity is based on the assumption that productive resources are finite, yet human needs and wants are infinite and insatiable (Liodakis 2016). Economists hypothesised that if all product prices were dropped to zero, the amount requested would exceed the quantity supplied, leading them to conclude that everything with a price is scarce. Scarcity of goods is natural, and the market logic, demand, and supply express scarcity. Buechner (2014) argues that scarcity is the fundamental cause of economic activity, economising, exchange, and choice. Individuals and governments cannot meet all their demands at the same time; they must weigh one thing against another and determine what to buy and what to forego.

Competition is essential for the allocation of scarce resources as well as for survival. The struggle to survive and control productive resources has pitted nature against man and man against man (Grossman and Mendoza 2003). Classical economists believe that competition fundamentally directs each individual's actions, and that production and trade in pursuit of self-interest benefit the entire society. Classical economists define competition as an ongoing rivalry between individual firms that eventually brings the market to equilibrium. Classical economists agree that competition is a mechanism that coordinates individuals' conflicting self-interests and directs them towards equilibrium (Smith 1776). The equilibrium is conceived of as an endless process of eliminating excess profits or losses and the tendential establishment of natural prices as centres of gravitation of market prices (Lefteris 2011).

Neoclassical economics sees competition as a given. Neoclassical economists are more interested in determining the forces that bring markets to equilibrium (Berry 1997). Neoclassical economists believe that markets should be in perfect competition to operate efficiently. This is based on the assumption that all actors possess complete information about the prices and costs of goods, that actors' preferences are given, and that there are no impediments to the mobility of factors of production. Individuals and corporations behave passively in a perfect competition setting; they are price takers and have no influence over prices. Changes in action, prices, supplies, and demand for produce create and maintain equilibrium (Parsons 1940, Hodgson 1994). The meddling of the state and social institutions



breaks equilibrium, resulting in imperfect competition (Hodgson 1994). Neoclassical economists claim that markets should be free from social and cultural influences to work efficiently (Sachs 1992).

The economic theory is centred on the idea of *laissez-faire*, denoting the economy as self-regulating (Smith 1776). The core idea of mainstream economics is that state regulation and centralised planning are not required for the economy to run well (Coase 1994). Markets are key institutions in capitalist economies. In the capitalist economic system, the market mechanism is the best tool for effective resource allocation, and state intervention is discouraged. Mainstream economics advocates giving economics, in the form of market forces, unfettered rein (Bratton 1987). They contend that the "invisible hand" efficiently regulates the economy. The "invisible hand" refers to a price system that emerges from the interaction of demand and supply. The demand-supply-price model is the fundamental economics tool for predicting market performance (Sachs 1992).

Neoclassical economics is based on methodological individualism (Berry 1997), in which human beings are economically rational and selfish and their primary aim is to maximise their profit or utility and material well-being (Fukuyama 1995, Lyon 2005). Gudeman (1986: 31) asserts:

The human is seen to possess scarce means and hold multiple goals. Because his desired satisfaction outstrips the possibilities for their attainment, the individual must exercise choice. The rational person acts to maximise his preferences or total utility. People calculate, so it is assumed, their rewards and costs, and then try to economise the balance between them. The individual is a decision making, economising and hedonistic person.

Fukuyama (1995) concurs that the individual calculates the costs and benefits and chooses the most efficient means to maximise profit and preferences. The theory assumes that agents are equipped with sufficient information and skills to calculate the benefits of each transaction and compare with other options. Market transactions occur between anonymous persons whose primary purpose is to maximise accumulation of material things.

Neoclassical economists contend that rational choice theory applies to all cultures, all human behaviours, and all types of human beings (Herfeld 2012). The economic approach applies to all exchanges involving money or sets shadow prices, as well as to all human binaries such as rich or poor, brilliant or stupid, men and women. Only in non-Western communities is economic analysis unsupported by evidence, and non-Western cultures are viewed as



irrational (Hindess 1994). This helps to explain why, according to Fukuyama (1995), economic analysis is an intellectual hubris obsessed with economic goals and dismissing non-economic aspirations as irrational.

Mainstream economics is criticised for overemphasising statistics in their analysis, which results in their theory missing the reality of markets. Sachs (1992) stresses that the abstraction of the market through the concept of price has reduced market relations to numerical values; the market appears as made up of strangers connected only by economic transactions and revert back to strangeness thereafter. Granovetter (1985) concludes that the anonymous market in neoclassical models is totally non-existent in economic life and that transactions of all kinds are rife with social connections. Hodgson (1994) further criticises economic theory for being implausible, arbitrary, and divorced from economic realities.

Economics overemphasises the conditions in which equilibrium can be achieved at the expense of negotiation, conflicts, and compromise that also contribute to transactions in markets (Berry 1997). Social forces are placed in the margins as the general environment (Becker and Murphy 2000). Critics of neoclassical economics agree that market agents do not always seek to maximise profits; the system would collapse if they do, and organised society would not exist as we know it today. Callon (1998) concludes that economic theory knows little about the marketplace that it seeks to understand.

New institutional economics (NIE) attempts to strengthen economic theory by incorporating non-economic issues into its economic analysis. The NIE contrasts mainstream economics, arguing that individuals and culture are mutually dependent (Lyon 2000). According to the NIE theory, transaction costs are significant in markets. As a result, an efficient economic system is not constructed solely by self-regulation but also by organisational planning (Coase 1994). NIE maintains that the tyranny of social structure does not replace individual choice; people continue to make individual decisions based on scarcity (Becker and Murphy 2000).

### **2.3. Marxist Market Theory**

Marxists are among the critics of economic theory and capitalism. The Marxist tradition can be traced from Karl Marx's response to classical economic theory. According to Skousen (2007), if Adam Smith's theory was the genesis of economics and the creator of laissez-faire, Karl Marx was its exodus and destroyer. Marxists oppose the neoclassical economists' emphasis on self-regulating economies. They emphasise the importance of the state and



central planning in markets. Shivji (2009) remarks that the state contributed immensely to the birth and continuous reproduction of capitalism. Marxists argue that the idea of self-regulating economies centralised in neoclassical economics is abstract and found nowhere in the world. Shivji (2009: 20) contends that:

An unfettered free market does not exist anywhere; it is the figment of a liberal's imagination. Behind the invisible hand of the market lies the visible fist of the state. For an invisible hand of the market to exist, one needs to have a blind eye.

Unlike neoclassical economists, Marxists believe that government intervention increases economic growth and efficiency. They believe in central market planning.

In contrast to orthodox economists, who maintain that capitalism leads to social well-being for all, Marxists contend that capitalism is defective, exploitative, and self-destructive. Marx argues that capitalism will inevitably lead to anarchy, a crisis, and succumb to its opposing forces. Marxists argue that a society's material or economic forces shape its socio-political and market superstructure (Skousen 2007). Marx defines feudalism, slavery, capitalism, communism, and socialism as forms of societal organisation that shape relationships. Marxists argue that capitalism would weaken society's foundation and cause antagonism. To Marxists, capitalism is flawed and benefits the capitalist class by exploiting the working class. It commoditises labour and will inevitably destroy itself (Skousen 2007). Capitalism's exploitation of workers would bring them together to undertake a successful workers revolution. Shivji (2009) remarks that the exploitative nature of capitalism would bring an end to the neo-liberal honeymoon. Capitalism would be replaced by communism, and finally, socialism, as the highest stage of development. A socialist society is classless and the means of production is collectively held and benefits all people.

In the Marxist conception, capitalism has inherent internal contradictions; therefore, it is self-destructive and will create permanent crises and wars. Shivji (2009) cites the 2008 financial crisis, environmental hazards, deepening inequalities, and poverty to support this view. Marxists challenge the view that capitalism is mutually beneficial and can eradicate poverty. They developed the core-periphery model to explain the relationship and disparity between developed and underdeveloped regions. The relationship is skewed and disarticulated in favour of the developed regions (core). According to Shivji (2009), accumulation at the core is at the expense of underdevelopment in the periphery. Underdevelopment in the periphery leads to rising poverty, unemployment, and unhappiness (Clarke 1995).



Marxists argue that the working class is not a natural class; it was created by the expropriation of the means of production from some people. Marxists refer to this as primitive accumulation (Harvey 2003) or accumulation by dispossession (Shivji 2009). Capitalism destroys the human potential by making people always think of work. Due to this, Marx argues that the marketplace becomes a monster, a "universal whole" that undermines the morals of people (Skousen 2007). In the Marxist view, the capitalist system's major objective is capital accumulation through lowering labour costs. According to Clarke (1995: 1):

Capitalism would appropriate and accumulate capital on unprecedented scale. The development of capitalist production is subject neither to the needs of the associated producers, nor to the needs of the latter as consumers, but to the contradictory logic of the production and accumulation of surplus value.

The capitalist class owns the means of production and money, whereas the working class must sell their labour to survive. To increase profits, the capitalist system cuts production costs by paying low salaries. Capitalists push for record-high labour productivity while lowering wages. Unfortunately, the public does not benefit from the abundance of products because increasing wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few while a large percentage of people wallow in deepening poverty (Clarke 1995).

Marxists interpret the origins of trade and the source of value in society in terms of market friction between buyers and sellers. In a market, the trade between a producer and a buyer is asymmetric. According to Engels, a fundamental contributor to Marxist thinking, trade emerged from private property, and the exchange relationship is antagonistic and made up of "diametrically opposed interests and mutual mistrust" (Clarke 1995: 5). Marxists point out that the value of produce is determined through the process of negotiation. Nevertheless, Marx claims that labour is the sole source of value and that a commodity's value is proportional to the quantity of labour -hours spent on its production. That is, the price of a unit of produce is equal to the unit labour spent in its production. Producers expect and aim to realise the value of their produce in the market (Clarke 1995).

Marx conceptualises the market as a test for the usefulness and necessity of private labour. Producers are unconcerned with who buys their products; their primary interest is obtaining the product's monetary value. A product is a social thing that becomes useful by selling it in the market. Marx further asserts that:



The act of exchange is therefore the act of social determination of the thing as a commodity, an act in which the use-value is recognised socially as a value. Buyers and sellers in a market relate not as private individuals but as socially determined individuals. Without specifying the social relation that the exchange relation expresses, the concept of exchange is a purely formal abstraction (Clarke 1995: 9).

Marxists believe that trade in markets is to some degree shaped by society since individuals are socially constructed individuals and commodity production is an embodiment of social relations (Clarke 1995).

To the Marxists, the equilibrium of demand and supply in markets is untenable. They argue that demand and supply are constantly in disequilibrium and reach equilibrium sporadically and fortuitously (Clarke 1995). They agree with neoclassical economics that in markets, supply is either too big or too small to correspond with demand. Fluctuations in demand and supply stimulate or discourage production, resulting in disequilibrium. The cycle continues indefinitely, resulting in ongoing supply-demand mismatches. Market fluctuations and volatility caused by overstimulation and flagging are viewed positively by neoclassical economists, while Marxists consider them an unhealthy state of affairs (Clarke 1995).

Marxists argue that individuals in capitalist markets do not act voluntarily on the basis of the forces immediately around them. Instead, the social character of capital is supreme in shaping action and decisions made by individuals. Competition arises because of the tendency of capitalism to produce without considering market limits. The capitalist system does not produce to meet the social needs of the population but to expand its capital (Clarke 1995). This would result in overproduction that further undermines capitalism. The Marxists do not significantly differ on the role of economic forces in shaping markets; instead, they argue that self-regulating economies are self-destructive.

#### **2.4. Economic Sociology's Theory of Markets**

Sociologists have been the most vocal critics of economics since its inception in the eighteenth century (Daoud and Larsson 2011). Sociologists such as Durkheim, Parsons, and Polanyi underline the relationship between the economy and other aspects of society. Old economic sociology was concerned with the relationships between the economy and society, as denoted in terms like social economy, economy and society, or economic sociology they used. They challenged neoclassical economic theory and pointed out the role that social forces play in markets. In the mid-1980s, a new economic sociology began to expand. The new economic sociology shifted the focus from the relationship between economy and society to economic





institutions, the social context of the economy, and the internal social construction of the economy (Daoud and Larsson 2011). The new economic sociology focuses on markets, prices, money, corporations, power, solidarity, and the integration of economic processes in society.

The new economic sociology disagrees with the central assumption of neoclassical economics, explained above in Section 2. Economic sociologists, in contrast, argue that actors and economic action are embedded in social relations and institutions. The socially embeddedness approach, borrowed from Polanyi (1944) and popularised by Granovetter (1985), became central to new economic sociology. Polanyi is believed to be the theoretical inspiration of the embeddedness approach (Lie 1997). Granovetter (1992), Smelser and Swedberg (2005) argue that neoclassical theory does not capture the reality of markets; actors' rationality and motives vary; and markets are socially constructed. Economic sociology nurtured the main critics of neoclassical economics and made a significant departure from the view of markets as operating solely in economic terms.

Polanyi (1944) identifies the formal and substantive economies as two distinct ways of viewing the market. He criticises the formalist approach for assuming that humans are purely economic agents who act out of their own self-interest to maximise utility in the context of scarcity. Polanyi (1944, 1946) contends that market-regulated economies and price-making markets do not exist in real economies, for their existence is detrimental to human well-being and would destroy mankind. In contrast, Polanyi (1944: 48) emphasises that:

...man's economy, as a rule is submerged in his social relationships. He does not act so as to safeguard his individual interest in the possession of material goods; he acts so as to safeguard his social standing, his social claims, and his social assets. He values material goods only in so far as they serve this end.

Polanyi (1944) stresses that self-regulating economies are a utopian project that, if they existed, would destroy humanity and turn the world into a wilderness.

Polanyi (1944) defines the human (substantive) economy as an instituted process; it is embedded and enmeshed in economic and non-economic institutions. The economy is submerged in relationships, and individuals are not motivated just by self-interest. According to Polanyi (1944: 49), "the human passions, good or bad, are merely directed towards non-economic ends." The market system is a mere function of social organisation. Polanyi (1944) asserts that the economy has always been embedded in social relations, and efforts to promote self-regulating economies are disembedding it from social relations. The human



economy has two main features of reciprocity and distribution that allow markets to function without written contracts and well-defined administration (Polanyi 1946).

The concept of social embeddedness is arguably the major contribution of this 'new economic sociology' (Swedberg 1997, 2005). Granovetter (1985) makes a substantive contribution to the development of the social embeddedness concept. He argues that the anonymous market in economic theory is non-existent in reality; all transactions are rife with social connections. Granovetter (1985) amplifies the idea that actors' attempts at purposive action are embedded in concrete (substantive), ongoing systems of social relations. Granovetter (2017: 15) defines social embeddedness as the "intersection of economic and non-economic aspects of society, including not only social networks and their consequences but also cultural, political, religious, and broadly institutional influences."

The social embeddedness approach is also based on the idea that markets and exchanges are not constituted by strangers, they are made up of people who are related. Social networks based on kinship, friendship, trust or goodwill support economic institutions (Lie 1997). Callon (1998: 6) asserts that, "market coordination disappears, leaving room for uninterrupted social interaction involving many different agents. The agents, no matter how much they wish to do so, are no longer able to become strangers; they are entangled." People in markets form cliques that tend to be connected to one another through weak ties (acquaintances) rather than strong ties (close friends) (Granovetter 1973, 1985). Granovetter (1973) argues that interpersonal networks are the most fruitful micro-macro bridge in exchanges. Through these networks, small-scale interaction is somehow transformed into large-scale patterns, which then feed back into small groups. Granovetter (2017) suggests that, economic action and outcomes, like all social action and outcomes, are influenced by relational embeddedness (actors' social interactions with others) as well as structural embeddedness (the total network of those relations' structure). Relational embeddedness directly shapes economic action, whereas the influence of structural embeddedness is more subtle and indirect.

In contrast to neoclassical economics, adherents of embeddedness claim that trading is a group rather than an individual activity. In socially embedded economic relations, personal experiences are inextricably linked to large-scale aspects of social structure and are beyond individuals' control (Granovetter 1973). The market does not reflect purely voluntary



transfers by free individuals (Sachs 1992). Individuals do not own social networks; they belong to a community (Meagher 2005). Granovetter (2017: 19) contends that "in ongoing relations, human beings do not start afresh each day but carry the baggage of previous interactions into each new one." He calls this temporal embeddedness and underlines the influence of history in shaping relations.

Granovetter (1973, 2017) believes that social ties are essential tools for problem solving and decision-making and weak ties contribute to information gathering and circulation. Social relations and networks help agents to take action despite uncertainty about the future (Callon 1998). Block (1990) finds that farmers in a capricious market insulate themselves partly through immersion in complex relationships of reciprocity with neighbours and traders. In his concept of strength of weak ties, Granovetter (2017, 1985, 1973) contends that acquaintances who move in different circles from close friends are our windows onto a wider world than our closest friends could reveal.

The social embeddedness theory acknowledges the significance of the state in the economy. Polanyi (1946) argues that the market, state, and society interact to govern and structure the economy. Block (1990) admits that it is a misconception, much as ignoring market forces, to believe that we can dispense with state control of the economy. Hinrichs (2000: 297) stresses the merging of economic and non-economic motives in markets, he says:

All markets then are characterized by fluctuating mixes of social embeddedness, marketness and instrumentalism, and the gray terrain where they meet needs to be explored. In other words, embeddedness rarely stands in diametric opposition to marketness and instrumentalism. A more critical view of embeddedness recognises that price may still matter and that self-interest may be at work, sometimes even in the midst of vigorous, meaningful social ties.

The continuum of marketness (instrumentalism) concerns the motives of economic actors in a market. This was in response to mainstream economic theory's hypothesis that actors respond to price signals in markets. Block (1990) uses a scale in which spot markets occupy the high end and transactions undertaken through organised hierarchies occupy the low end. In high marketness, nothing interferes with the dominance of prices, and as we move to lower marketness non-price considerations gain importance.

As actors establish personal ties or contracts, considerations shift from high marketness to lower marketness. Block (1990: 51) explains that "as the marketness of transactions diminishes, economic behaviour tends to become embedded in a more complex web of social



relations." Wegerif (2022) conceptualises this as more marketised versus more socialised transactions. Block (1990) further argues that the absence of non-opportunistic behaviour shows the importance of non-economic variables such as community norms and the strength of personal ties in shaping transactions. Personal ties contribute to the reliability of actors in a transaction, and it takes quite a large price difference for a buyer to break off a relationship with a seller of proven reliability.

The concept of social embeddedness should not be an antithesis of the market, but rather an invaluable tool to analyse markets. Henrichs (2000: 301) posits that:

If direct agricultural markets are to become sound, transformative alternatives, sentimental assumptions about face-to-face ties must be tempered. Social ties, personal connections, and community good will are often appropriately seasoned by self-interest and a clear view of prices. It is true that too much instrumentalism and marketness can sour the embedded market. But a dash of instrumentalism and marketness might well ensure a more substantial, nourishing meal.

Social network analysts challenge neoclassical and structural theories for failing to provide a full description and explanation of social and economic activities (Lyon 2000). Social influences on behaviour yield multiple equilibria since each person's actions depend on the actions of others (Becker and Murphy 2000). Marketplaces are more than just places to trade; they are also places for people to meet and build community identities. Watson and Studder (2006) argue that markets have long history as connection and interconnection hubs and for social interaction. People in the market greet, converse, joke, and exchange news. Further, Zelizer (1994) contends that money is not socially neutral, it is earmarked, and its use directly shapes the social content of economic experience.

Social relations are formed in response to specific challenges and become invaluable to the working and resilience of markets and actors in them. Social relations among market actors are invaluable compared to trade itself (Napier 2013). Trager (1981) points out that constraints of the marketing system explain the formation and maintenance of onibara ties (long dyadic ties formed between individuals in marketplaces). Callon (1998) contends that actors have to be equipped to be calculative, but the tools are neither in their brains nor socio-cultural frames and institutions. They deal with uncertainty with the assistance of a web of relations and connections they are entangled in. In this study I apply the social embeddedness concept advanced first by Polanyi and then Granovetter. I use the term



symbiotic market relations borrowing the symbiotic food system concept (Wegerif 2017) to analyse the complexity in the organisation, relations, function and resilience of Mbare Musika.

#### **2.4.1. Symbiotic Market Relations**

The symbiotic food system concept is a branch of the social embeddedness approach used by Wegerif (2017) in his investigation of Dar es Salaam's food system. The symbiotic food system concept emphasises the manner of ordering and structure of economic and social ties seen in food markets (Wegerif 2020). In a symbiotic relationship arrangement, actors compete, yet there is a high degree of collaboration, cooperation, interdependence, and reciprocity for mutual benefits (Wegerif 2017, 2020, Wegerif and Kissoly 2021, Chikulo et al. 2020). Wegerif (2020) stresses how market participants share, assist, and cooperate for their mutual benefit. Wegerif (2020) acknowledges the existence of inequalities and disputes, but relationships are not predatory and purely destructive.

According to McGaffin and Kihato (2013), few markets are driven only by pure profit motives; even highly profit-motivated markets involve transactions structured by social interactions and institutions. In markets, social interactions between traders and customers influence who they transact with far more than prices, as evidenced by traders who sell similar produce at the same price next to each other (Wegerif 2020). They assist each other to sell and the motive is not to outcompete each other. Transaction agents are of relatively comparable socioeconomic standing; they know each other, which decreases the likelihood of exploitation and greater power imbalances (Wegerif 2020). It should be noted that markets have unequal power relations; producers rely on traders more than traders rely on producers (Kaas 1993). Despite this, every economic action is based on complementary and shared interests that sustain commercial agreements (Hart 1988). Market participants prioritise the desire to continue successfully in business and avoid actions that interfere with their reputation and longer-term success (Macaulay 1963).

Symbiotic relations are useful to explain market resilience, stability, and functioning. Wegerif (2017: 239) asserts that:

Social relations are providing the glue that holds the system together, and the symbiotic ordering principles are setting parameters within which economic decisions are made; just as the economic ordering principles are setting parameters within which socially-embedded relations are maintained.



The symbiotic food system is built around how people organise themselves without corporate, state, or donor support (Wegerif 2017, 2020). Small-scale players maintain their independence and work together through customs, shared cultural repertoires, and interpersonal ties. Symbiotic relations lower management and overhead costs and the surplus is mostly invested in reproduction or back into enterprises. Personal ties facilitate security for all and equitable benefit sharing (Wegerif 2020). Food markets expand through replication, rather than scaling up individual enterprises (Wegerif and Kissoly 2021).

#### **2.4.2. Social Capital and Trust**

The critique by sociologists of the economic theory as a way to explain economic action is further upheld in the concept of social capital. The view of social capital as the benefits that can accrue from membership and participation in groups is traced to Durkheim and Marx (Portes 1993). Bourdieu, Coleman and Putman contributed significantly to the social capital analysis. The concept of social capital centralises the role of social structure, social networks, and norms of reciprocity and trust in determining economic action (Coleman 1988, Fukuyama 1995, Gambetta 1988, Putman 1993). Portes (1993: 1323) defines social capital as “those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behaviour of its members, even if the expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere.”

The idea of social capital was promoted within the sustainable livelihood framework in the early 1990s by the Department of International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom government. The poor were seen to develop their livelihood strategies based on a set of critical resources (capitals) in the sustainable livelihood framework (Haan 2012, Hebinck and Bourdillon 2002). The sustainable livelihood framework identifies five capitals: financial capital; human capital; natural capital; physical capital; and social capital. Hebinck and Bourdillon (2002) identify three components of social capital: trust, reciprocity, and exchange between individuals. These are often embedded in local forms of organisation and shaped by cultural repertoires, connectedness, networks, and groups. Access to larger institutions are part of this as are so-called distant actors, along with rules, norms, and sanctions, which are frequently, but not always, mutually agreed upon.

Portes (1993) identifies four types of social capital, namely value introjection, reciprocity of exchanges, bounded reciprocity, and enforceable trust. In value introjection, actors behave in ways contrary to naked greed and have a shared value in communities and a particular



resource. Reciprocity of exchange entails the accumulation of “chits” based on the community members reciprocating good past deeds to others. Agents pursue self-interests not based purely on money, but rather on social intangibles. Bounded solidarity illustrates a situation in which people with common problems collaborate based on the norms of mutual support in pursuit of individual aims. Finally, enforceable trust is based on the premise that individuals suppress their interests in favour of collective expectations for the long-term benefits of group membership. Individuals balance their interests with those of the broader social groupings to which they belong, such as families, neighbourhoods, and networks (Fukuyama 1995). Vonneilich (2022) portrays social capital as the property of groups and a characteristic of habitats and communities based on experienced reciprocity and trust.

Social capital, as a network-based process, provides benefits via norms of trust (Durlauf and Fafchamps 2005). Social capital enables participants to generate and have direct access to resources or increases cultural capital through encounters with experts or refined individuals (Portes 1998). Trust has long been recognised as a key component of social capital. Dasgupta (1988) claims that the presence or absence of trust profoundly determines what we choose to do and can do. Moore (1999) views trust as fragile and elusive, but a useful tool in economic analysis. To Levi (1996), trust underlies the belief in the reliability of the other person in a risky situation and it emerges from shared values, institutional sanctions, past information on the conduct of people, faith, and an actor’s reputation. Trust is inherent in human beings and people have the inclination and feel morally obliged to trust when trusted (Khalil 1994). Time and experience are important in determining whether to trust or not (Lorenz 1988). Putman (1993: 169) believes that “[s]ocial networks allow trust to become transitive and spread: I trust you, because I trust her, and she assures me that she trusts you.” Trust grows when it is nurtured by more trust and collapses when starved by distrust and cheating.

People rely on trust because it is impossible and expensive to be rational about every small detail and decision in life (Fukuyama 1995). Successful cooperation cannot be achieved through rationality because accurate information about the actors and a reliable enforcement strategy are always absent (Putman 1993). Information about prices and products is limited and expensive to gather compared to the potential benefits. Trust is, therefore, an important tool that assists people to make decisions quickly and in the absence of enough information for purely rational economic decisions. In such scenarios, reliability and honesty become essential forces that shape transactions (Putman 1993).



Trust contributes a lot to economic performance and market resilience. Fukuyama (1995) asserts that social capital is centred on trust and contributes to the health of an economy. In most cases, trust enables economic agents to operate more efficiently by agreeing to stop hostilities (Fafchamps 2006). Social capital reduces business costs through contributing to sociability and strengthening of networks. Khalil (1994) and Hossain et.al (2013) add that gaining the trust of the market participant is imperative for a seller's long-term success. Dasgupta (1988: 49) argues that "trust is central to all transactions and yet economists rarely discuss the notion." Putman (1993: 171) claims that "trust lubricates cooperation. The greater the level of trust within a community, the greater the likelihood of cooperation. And cooperation itself breeds trust."

Dasgupta (1988) and Fukuyama (1995) agree that trust is essential for the smooth operation of the economy and for stimulating production and trade. In Fukuyama's (1995) assertion:

...trust has a very important pragmatic value, if nothing else. Trust is an important lubricant of a social system. It is extremely efficient; it saves a lot of trouble to have a fair degree of reliance on other people's word.

Moore (1999) and Gambetta (1988) emphasise that social capital that involves high levels of trust supports institutional efficiency, enterprise, and economic growth. Fukuyama (1995) hypothesises that lack of trust explains underdevelopment in some parts of the world.

The concept of social capital received much criticism, sometimes from researchers who initially embraced and applied it in their researches (Geiser et al. 2011, Long 2001). Long (2001) argues that social capital remains a too broad and sometimes illusory or empty concept. The idea of social capital has also been criticised for disregarding resources obtained from outside one's social networks and non-commoditized resources (Hebinck 2007). Proponents of social capital believe that it contributes positively to market organisation and actor relations while downplaying negative aspects of social capital such as competition, conflicts, and exclusion (Long 2001). According to Haan (2012), the sustainable livelihood framework makes no significant departure from economic theory because it emphasises trade-offs between 'capitals' and material elements such as production and income. These criticisms are valid, but Long's (2001) findings that many studies fail to go beyond adding social capital to other capitals and that few exceptional studies dissect in detail how particular circumstances, institutions, or networks work as social capital, does not appear to criticise





the concept as such, rather it is a critique of it being applied in too narrow a way. This demonstrates the concept's potential usefulness in market analysis and interpretation.

## **2.5. Markets as Culture and Politics**

Anthropologists and historians conceptualise the market as a marketplace, a place where people exchange goods (Fusfeld 1946). They criticise economic theory for assuming universal applicability and argue that comparative diversity in markets necessitates alternative interpretations (Lie 1997). Anthropologists deny that there is a single "true" model of the market, but multiple, meaningful formulations within particular cultures" (Gudeman 2001: 4). Hill (1963) questions economists' surveys and censuses on African markets for presuming that markets can only be conceptualised statistically and for neglecting market history. For these reasons, Hill (1963) proposes for an economic analysis of the real workings of a market and the economic activities of those who serve and link them as crucial. Anthropologists argue that economic behaviour in many societies does not always mirror the rational actor. Instead, economic action is not independent; it is inseparably intertwined with cultural and social forces (Gudeman 1986, Abolafia 1998). Anthropologists and historians contributed theoretically and methodologically through empirical investigations into the real functioning and structuring of markets, particularly in Africa and other developing economies.

Gudeman (2001) employs the concept of market and community to account for actors' action in markets. The community type of economies is dominated by impersonal trade in which people undertake economic action to maintain community and accumulation takes place within social relationships. In the market realm, self-interest of the individual, family, or corporation forms the main motive and value. The market realm draws on community since it relies on socially constituted units and relationships. Gudeman (2001) underlines that the two realms of community and market are complementary; no trade can take place without the support of communal agreements like language, similar ways of interacting, and implicit understanding. The culture of a community is important in understanding the operation of markets. Abolafia (1998: 69) underlines that actors in markets engage in:

...repeated interactions or transactions showing their own distinct set of mutual understandings. These understandings are both enabling and restraining, i.e., market participants use them both to pursue their interests and to limit the range of alternatives available to each other. These understandings emerge in interaction but become institutionalised.



Gudeman (2001) reiterates that a market is institutionally and tactically interwoven into trade partnerships and long enduring relationships reflecting both communal and commercial motives. Actors in markets balance their self-interest with maintaining relationships with fellow actors.

The market as culture approach emphasises three issues: the constitutive rules or roles; local rationality; and the dynamics of power in market governance (Abolafia 1998). Constitutive rules are informal and formal rules based on norms and values embraced in the market to guide and regulate the behaviour of sellers and buyers. Fligstein (1996: 659) argues that:

Market actors live in murky worlds where it is never clear which actions will have which consequences. Yet, actors must construct an account of the world that interprets the murkiness, motivates, and determines courses of action, and justifies the action decided upon... No actor can determine which behaviours will maximise profits (either a priori or post hoc), and action is therefore directed toward the creation of stable worlds.

Abolafia (1998) remarks that unlike economists, who see a calculative actor, anthropologists see an astute participant who uses a toolkit of strategies that is culturally available in the market. Fligstein (1996) uses the term conceptions of control to refer to actors' subjective understandings and world view of how markets work. A conception of control is a set of cultural stories actors create and use to interpret their worlds and control situations. Abolafia (1998) calls the cultural stories local rationality, which is in the form of scripts used by market makers to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity. Local rationality involves the governance structures in the form of rules and roles and tacit agreements that set parameters for cooperation and competition in exchange (Fligstein 1996). Governance structures are used repeatedly to justify and reproduce action and are imparted to new recruits to build a successful market.

Fligstein (1996) further explains the process of establishing market rules. In the new environment, there are no commonly accepted rules; they are established through actors' interactions. Abolafia (1998) states that market culture reflects the efforts of powerful actors to shape and control their environment, though they are controlled and shaped by it. Actors in markets are political and build local cultures to regulate their actions (Fligstein 1996, Geertz 1983). Fligstein (1996) defines a stable market as a small set of firms that share a conception of control. Markets that standardise the conception of control quickly are likely to succeed, while those that fail to standardise and remain with multiple conceptions of control fail.



## 2.6. Nested Market Analysis

In reaction to the pure economic model, the concept of nested markets was developed to analyse markets. It focuses on the creation and governance of new markets (Van der Ploeg et al. 2012, Van der Ploeg 2015). The nested market concept emphasises the idea of the marketplace and social interactions within marketplaces. According to Van der Ploeg (2015: 16):

Markets are the places where, or structures through which goods and services are exchanged. Markets connect producers and consumers directly or indirectly and in straightforward or highly complex ways. They are the places where transactions and the associated flows of commodities occur...In that case we are facing complicated networks that organize commodity flows that go from one time-space location to another, often through complex and interrelated transactions. Equally the markets involve social relations, which can either be directly visible or highly anonymous.

The marketplace is a concrete place where people meet face to face to buy and sell goods (Van der Ploeg et.al. 2016). The buyers and sellers engage in concrete transactions following concrete infrastructural patterns (Van der Ploeg et.al. 2014, 2016).

The nested market analysis emphasises that new markets emerge and are reproduced as a social struggle against the hegemony of globally controlled markets. According to Van der Ploeg et.al (2012), the development of new markets is involuntary, it is promoted by large agriculture markets controlled by large food empires. New nested markets emerge as counter-developments, responsive struggles, and local market actors' strategies and efforts to address inherent market failures in main markets. Van der Ploeg (2012: 139) remarks that "the increasing gap between the prices received by agrarian producers and the prices paid by consumers materially creates space to do so. This space allows for the construction of by-passes". The by-pass forms a bridge across structural holes and re-patterns the flow of commodities and rearranges the sequence and nature of transactions (Van der Ploeg 2015). The local governance frameworks and cultural repertoires are crucial in the formation of new markets.

Van der Ploeg et al. (2012) identifies four aspects of nested markets. These are: a) demonopolisation of existing markets; b) the construction of new connections between existing markets; c) the creation of new markets; and d) the development of new governance structures for both existing and new markets. These newly created markets are nested in wider markets that they are part of but also differ from (Van der Ploeg et.al 2012, Van der Ploeg 2015). They differ from the main markets in their dynamics, interrelationships, forms of



governance, price differentials, distributional mechanisms, and overall impact. Nested markets are embedded in normative frameworks rooted in social movements, institutional frameworks, and policy programmes from which they emerge (Van der Ploeg 2015).

The nested market analysis emphasises the role that unconventional markets play in food marketing. Van der Ploeg (2015: 27) emphasises the strength of nested markets in his argument that:

Newly emerging, nested markets might seem, at least at first sight, like David pitted against the Goliath of the general markets for food and agricultural products. In mainstream thought this often translates into ‘powerful and promising’ versus ‘insignificant and marginal’.

The small-scale activities in nested markets contribute significantly to feeding rapidly growing cities since nested markets create bridges to link production, marketing, processing, and consumption independently from globally controlled networks (Van der Ploeg 2015). Nested markets rely on new forms of governance; they are nested in new networks and supported by new social-material infrastructure. This means that the strength of nested markets is not in their magnitude, it is their confinement that contributes to their strength (Van der Ploeg 2015).

## **2.7. Conclusion**

The concept of the market has many meanings, and it has generated intense debates. Economists, Marxists, sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars from other disciplines have been involved in the debates and theorisation of markets. Economists view markets as purely economic institutions in which rational actors seek to maximise their utility. This view is challenged by scholars mainly from sociology and anthropology who emphasise the role of social and cultural forces in markets. The economic analysis does not capture the full picture and reality in marketplaces. Zelizer (2011) calls for a “multiple” markets model that balances the interaction of economic, social, political, and cultural forces in shaping markets.

In this study I follow the “multiple markets” model as suggested by Zelizer (2011). A multiple markets model is an invaluable alternative to avoid a one-dimensional idealist or instrumental interpretation and disciplinary compartmentalisation that undermine the usefulness theories of markets. The multiple market model is integrationist, and it precludes economic absolutism, cultural determinism, and socio-structural reductionism in interpreting markets (Zelizer 2011). The approach is also invaluable since it shifts the theoretical focus from correcting the



economic model to underscoring the role of non-economic elements in economic life (Zelizer 2011). This approach is also in line with Granovetter's (2017: 14) argument that a "fruitful analysis of human action, including economic action, requires us to avoid the atomisation implicit in the theoretical extremes of under-and over socialised views." Markets such as Mbare Musika have economic, social, cultural, and political elements that need investigation to fully comprehend their workings.



### 3. Chapter Three: Research Methodology

*As critical scholars, our task is to make history present, to make the future present, to undo the present (Norman K. Denzin 2012: 86)*

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses how and where data was collected for the study. The study used qualitative research methods for both data collection and analysis. Historical and ethnographical approaches were the main methods used in the study. Mbare Musika has received little attention from both the colonial and post-colonial state officials, therefore there is a dearth of written documents. The dearth of written sources requires applying interdisciplinary approaches to get insights into Mbare Musika's past and present. Data was collected using written sources, oral sources, and observation. Following the human economy approach, the research documented the activities of people who work in Mbare Musika and the forces they responded to (Hart et.al 2010, Hart and Sharp 2015). In light of the human economy approach, the methodology was designed towards documenting what people do and what they aspire to in their lives (Wegerif 2018). This chapter argues that combining historical and ethnographical methods is fruitful to document the history, practices, relations, and daily experiences of marginalised subjects.

I borrowed a lot from the interpretive ethnography approach popularised by Denzin (1998). According to Denzin (1998: 401) interpretive ethnography is, "an ethnography which refuses abstractions and high theory. It is a way of being in the world that avoids jargon and huge chunks of data." This kind of ethnography is driven by goals and purposes. It celebrates the local, the sacred, and the act of constructing meaning. As an ethnographer, I seek to make visible societal challenges, people's experiences and how they mutually interact and come together in their struggle to make meaningful lives (Denzin 1998).

Thompson (2010) suggests oral interviews are invaluable to explore the dynamics of peasant communities given that state records paid little attention to social and agricultural change in African communities. In the same vein, the bulk of the history of Mbare Musika is absent in official documents because it was not state regulated, and officials considered it illegitimate for some time. As such, documenting the history, experiences and activities at Mbare Musika and its contribution to urban food supplies requires innovative ways that largely tap the memory bank of the individuals and groups who have long constituted the market.



### 3.2. Fieldwork Sites

Data was collected mainly at Mbare Musika where different actors visit. Mbare Musika was ideal for building connections with potential informants and as a space for observations. Many actors meet daily at Mbare Musika to market produce. I conducted small talk, participated in some market activities and observed actors transacting in Mbare Musika. Focusing mainly on Mbare Musika enabled the study to deal with the subtleties and intricacies of complex social interactions (Denscombe 2010). Mbare Musika was the rallying point where I visited regularly and become immersed in the market and its people.

Mbare Musika, however, is a crowded and noisy place to conduct interviews. The respondents were tense, and it was impossible to have private interviews at Mbare Musika in the presence of many people. Sharing information with outsiders is risk at Mbare Musika and my respondents were not prepared to share information in public. Temporary visitors like farmers and satellite traders were also busy and reluctant to make time for long interviews with strangers at Mbare Musika. I used chats (small talk) with respondents and observations to overcome these challenges. I built links with farmers and satellite traders and later followed them to their homes for interviews.

The research was also conducted in sub-fields that are linked to Mbare Musika. The sub-fields are the farms that supply produce to Mbare Musika and satellite markets (*misika*) in Harare that source produce from Mbare Musika. Activities performed on farms and satellite markets are influenced by the situation and practices at Mbare Musika. Connections, relations, networks, and interfaces of transactions stretch beyond the physical boundaries of Mbare Musika. The interdependence and recurrence of parts of a market is crucial to explain market unity and stability (Polanyi 1946). Limiting the research within Mbare Musika's physical boundaries would have missed some aspects undertaken in the marketing of produce through Mbare Musika.

I conducted research on farms in Ruwa, Goromonzi, Murehwa, Mutoko, Honde Valley and Nyanga. I followed farmers and middlemen I made connections with at Mbare Musika to farms where they sourced produce. Data collection was carried out in *misika* around Harare where traders sell their produce. I also collected data along supply routes used by traders and farmers as I accompanied them in their journeys to and from Mbare Musika. I also conducted interviews with key informants in other convenient places in Harare.



The research conceptualised Mbare Musika as a “place and an identity” (Chikulo et.al 2020: 24) whose influence and networks transcend the physical market borders. Mbare Musika shapes identities and practices by actors on farms and *misika* that form its marketing network. I was able to observe the processes and journeys undertaken to supply and distribute produce through Mbare Musika. Researching in these different places was costly, but it was necessary to get the voices of other key participants. These sites were useful to gain insights into the influence of Mbare Musika on production, marketing, and consumption of produce. Also, it was relatively easy to talk to farmers, traders and food eaters in sub-fields that are not uncrowded and are not too busy and more comfortable spaces to talk to strangers.

### **3.3. Entering the Field and the Responses of People in the Market**

The way researchers arrive in fieldwork sites is important in shaping how they are seen, what they are allowed to hear and see and even to determine approval or disapproval (Wegerif 2019, Truesdell 2001). On arriving in the field, I introduced myself as a PhD student from the University of Pretoria intending to document the past and present produce marketing developments of Mbare Musika to account for its resilience and role in feeding Harare. The research was primarily for meeting the requirements of my PhD course. I explained that I could not promise my studies would assist but that I would be grateful if the study contributes to making Mbare Musika appreciated by the Zimbabwean community, especially officials, for its contributions, especially in urban food security and agricultural marketing.

I was initially well received by some marketers, who genuinely assisted me and introduced me to many other people in the market. As I entered Mbare Musika, I approached a young man who was selling tomatoes in the OFM. He indicated to me that he knows little about Mbare Musika and referred me to Ishewedu, whom he believed knows much about Mbare Musika. I approached Ishewedu who was also selling tomatoes, introduced myself and I was well received. Ishewedu committed himself and he took me around Mbare Musika showing me its sections and introducing me to people he believed could be helpful in my research.

However, I was not welcomed all the time, some people I approached had many questions about my intention and were suspicious of my aims. They believed that I was disguising my true identity and I was a Central Investigation Department (CID) agent, or a journalist from the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC). This was because I asked questions about people’s lives and, in their views, moved aimlessly around Mbare Musika. They argued that in the past they saw people who came, and asked questions like I was doing and some people





were in trouble thereafter. Some asked how they were going to benefit from taking part in the study and asked for payment. I explained to them that they might benefit from people developing a positive attitude towards the market, but I could not promise direct benefits, nor pay them for their participation. I emphasised that I would appreciate their voluntary assistance.

With time, I became a familiar figure at the market and many people's attitudes gradually changed. They appreciated my purpose and introduced me to some other people who market produce at Mbare Musika. I undertook small talk in the marketplace and conducted long interviews on farms, satellite markets, and while walking with actors outside the market for privacy. I spend more time at Mbare Musika with some *makoronyera* who became my friends and opened up the research field for me. I became the familiar "chief" as many people in the market later referred to me.

My presence and approaches shaped the research process and the nature of data that I obtained. I dressed in a blue overcoat or some clothes that do not distinguish me much from participants at the market. Schmidt (2013) stresses the positionality of the researcher and respondent in shaping the narratives that emerge. Data collection involves communication with interlocutors with their interests and positions that alter the creation of memory and how it is captured. The message that the respondent seeks to convey is not the same as what the researcher would understand (Schmidt 2013). Gender greatly affected the research process and data I collected. As a man, it was a challenge to recruit young women into the research as they rejected my request to interview them presumably because they misconstrued my aim and did not want to be seen talking to me.

Pre-existing values, ideas and biases shape research and objectivity is elusive and even undesirable. Scott (1985) put forward that:

If it is true that events are not self-explanatory, that they do not speak for themselves, it is also, alas, true that human subjects do not entirely speak for themselves. If they did, it would suffice merely to turn on the tape recorder and offer a complete transcript to the reader.

In qualitative research, reality and experience are socially constructed, value-laden and given meaning by the researcher and the researched (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). I concur with Riessman (2008) who believes that data does not speak for itself, the researcher and respondents interpret and construct narratives and meanings during data collection, analysis



and writing. Shopes (2013) points out that the past is a co-creation and interpretation of both the respondents and the researcher. As Geertz (1973), further affirms, narratives are the researcher's own construction of other people's constructions; research involves explicating other people's explications. Human experience is a text that can be read, interpreted, deconstructed and analysed (Tracy 2013). It is key to assert that in qualitative research, the truth and reality are perspectives, contextual and multiple (Bresler 1995).

In qualitative research, "objective reality can never be captured. We only know a thing through its representations" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 4). Carr's (1961) claim that "facts are not like fish on a fishmonger's slab, history is interpretation" remains influential today. The choice of the study, questions asked, selection of participants, and data collection and analysis methods reflect the researcher's background and interests. The researcher's role is vital because there is no single story on a subject, but a confusion of multiple stories (Geertz 1995). Besides, the sources used in research have shortcomings that shape the narratives. Informants in oral and written text select, forget, omit, and choose not to share certain parts of the story. Data collected also reflects the shortcomings of memory and the data collection process. The memory is social, provisional, and selective (Schmidt 2013, Tosh 2002). Geertz (1995) further maintains that:

The accounts are concocted out of available notions, cultural equipment ready to hand. But like any equipment it is brought to the task; value added, not extracted. If objectivity, rightness, and science are to be had it is not by pretending they run free of the exertions which make or unmake them.

The narrative is closely linked to the shortfalls and biases in the sources and research processes. Research is an interactive process shaped by personal history, biography, gender, class, race, and ethnicity of the people involved (Denzin 2012). There are plural stories that can be told about a particular subject depending on the sources and methodology used.

Anderson and Leach (2019: 141) stress that objectivity is untenable since knowledge is socially constructed and that strong objectivity entails the researcher's "...humility, reflexivity, and the capacity to hear and respond to the challenges to one's cherished assumptions." Self-reflexivity includes an honest and authentic reflection on the researcher's identity, approach and considerations of the participants, members and other stakeholders (Tracy 2013). Self-reflexivity is a declaration of the researcher's background and how it shaped the research. In my case, the stories narrated by mother, as shared in Chapter 1, about Mbare Musika after



her visit in 1992 and my affiliation to the Human Economy Programme influenced my choice to study Mbare Musika and these possibly influenced the research process and theoretical approaches. Riessman (2008) encourages students to keep a diary or a log of decisions and inferences, and their subsequent impact in all research stages to foster methodological and critical self-awareness of how the research was carried out. Writing in the first person, in such qualitative research, is not only allowed, but encouraged to constantly remind the reader of the presence and influence of the researcher (Tracy 2013). I applied an iterative approach in the study to reflect my interests, current literature, granted priorities and various theories brought to the data analysis (Tracy 2013).

### **3.4. Selection of Interviewees**

The research involved forty-five interviews made up of thirty-five primary actors and ten key informants. Primary actors are involved in the actual production and marketing of produce such as farmers, *makoronyera*, traders, transporters, and food eaters. Key informants refer to old citizens, farmers and middlemen who were in the market for more than forty years and witnessed many developments of the market. They have in-depth information about the market. Key informants also refers to council officials and policy makers with specialised information about Mbare Musika. Key informants were selected through purposive sampling and primary actors through snowballing.

The initial selection of participants was through a scoping exercise. Scoping involved visiting the market to identify a few selected respondents, establishing rapport with these respondents who later assisted me to recruit more respondents. Scoping gave me an overview of Mbare Musika and the range of the actors that I wanted to involve in my study. From the contacts I identified during the first few days of my fieldwork, I employed snowballing sampling method to recruit more respondents. The people I initially contacted in the scoping exercise purposefully or indirectly introduced me to other research participants. For instance, I met Mula and Majoni in the afternoon at an eating place in Mbare Musika. Mula and Majoni later introduced me to their fellow *makoronyera* from Murehwa, some of whom I later interviewed and observed. Members in the group introduced me to farmers, for instance, Chibhanzi and Muchena, whom they are connected to. Recruiting respondents in this way was essential to quickly get their trust and deal with the suspicion about me that was shown during the early stages of my research. Through snowballing, I was introduced to key informants, farmers,



transporters, jagers<sup>15</sup>, retail traders and other actors in the market and the networks they are part of.

While in the market, it became necessary to mainly focus on primary actors dealing in potatoes, tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, and bananas. In my assessment, these were the major produce in terms of quantity (as shown by the space they occupy) sold in Mbare Musika. I mainly focused on these produces for an in-depth study of their supply and distribution networks. Focusing on few crops was essential for convenience and to save time. Many of the interviews, observation, and ride alongs were conducted with actors dealing in these produce. It was impossible to totally ignore actors who deal with other crops and in some cases, actors deal in a variety of produce. I interviewed retail traders who deal in a variety of produce and actors who perform many roles. Also, agents commonly switch to other produce depending on what “their” farmers are delivering. A variety of produce is loaded in a single truck to Mbare Musika in most cases and this enabled me to gain insights on how farmers organise themselves.

From key informants, I wanted the views of the officials and older respondents on the origin and development of Mbare Musika since the colonial period. I interviewed and observed council workers to shed light on the role of the council in the day to day running of the market. Older respondents at Mbare Musika, especially those who were working in the market for more than forty years, provided useful insights into the market’s past developments. Members of the market committees also offered useful information on the governance of the market.

Key informants were selected through purposive sampling. I selected older people, former and current committee members and council officials for the experience and knowledge they possess about Mbare Musika. I learnt about these people from the interviews I had with primary actors and recruited them for interviews. For instance, Ishewedu introduced me to several people who have been in the market for a long period, and he believed they “know” the history of Mbare Musika. Ishewedu introduced me to Muzvinabhizimusi, Mudhara, Ngwena and Matapi, all of whom I later interviewed. These referrals were important in selecting key informants who were in the market for a long period. Key informants’ oral narratives

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<sup>15</sup> The term ‘jagers’ is used in Mbare Musika to refer to people who carry, load and offloads produce from trucks and buses. They use push carts or their heads to carry produce to different places in Mbare Musika and other close by destinations.



contributed immensely to the recovery of the market's history and origins of practices and roles in Mbare Musika today.

### **3.5. Data Collection**

The study used a mixed methods approach to collect data. Written records, oral history, interviews, observations and ride alongs were useful in data collection and documenting developments in Mbare Musika. The marketing of produce at Mbare Musika is largely unrecorded and undocumented in written documents. The paucity of written sources on Mbare Musika has discouraged its study and relying on many sources helped overcome this limitation. The study triangulated historical and ethnographical data for a comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon (Bruce 2001, Carter et.al 2014). Denzin (2012) asserts that triangulation is an alternative to validation reflecting an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Triangulation assists to obtain a more substantive, better, and richer picture of reality (Bruce 2001). I found triangulation invaluable in the study of Mbare Musika mainly to broaden and strengthen findings.

The study used the actor-oriented approach to identify relevant actors and then following up with ethnographic exploration of their practices and relationships (Hebinck, Ouden and Verschoor 2001). In this study, actors constitute the human and non-human elements of Mbare Musika integral to its day-to-day functioning. Human actors are the people such as farmers, *makoronyera* and traders. I collected data from individuals and groups of actors. Non-human things consist of market buildings, trucks, packages, push carts, money and produce. Non-human actors form important indelible marks of past developments and practices in the market.

The methods used in data collection are elaborated below:

#### **3.5.1. Written Records**

The study used archival documents from the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ), City of Harare, Herald House, and online newspapers. The archival documents I used include state official reports, meeting minutes, correspondences, and letters. The research also used published books, journal articles, and unpublished material, such as dissertations. Newspaper



cuttings and online newspapers were consulted in the study. The written sources on Mbare Musika are scanty and unreliable.<sup>16</sup>

Written documents, however, partly reveal the early colonial activities of African traders, mostly women, who marketed produce in Harare from adjacent areas. The sources uncovered the official views and responses towards these early produce marketers. These documents give a general picture of the dynamics in horticultural production and marketing in colonial Zimbabwe. The written documents give the socioeconomic and political environment in which Mbare Musika was born and flourished. They illuminate the specific struggles that African traders went through in marketing their produce in Harare. However, it was impossible to construct a full narrative about Mbare Musika from written documents alone.

### **3.5.2. Oral histories**

Narratives about participants' experiences and what they witnessed played a crucial role in the study. Field (2007) defines oral history as a research methodology that records oral stories drawn from the memories of first-person witnesses. I collected oral history from people through interviewing them. Field (2007) declares that oral history challenges the domination of written sources and their biases towards the experiences of the powerful officials. Like many oral historians, I focus on marginalised people in Mbare Musika whose voices are silenced and experiences are unrecorded. The life experiences and transactions of ordinary people in Mbare Musika are undocumented and unrecorded in written documents generated by state officials (Schmidt 1992, Thompson 2010, Barnes and Win 1992, Horn 1994). Oral histories give voices to historical actors at the margins such as women. Written sources were criticised for being incomplete and androcentric (Schmidt 1992, White, Miescher and Cohen 2001).

Oral history collected from eyewitnesses is useful to complement silences in written documents (White, Miescher and Cohen 2001, Truesdell 2001). Oral histories go beyond the supplementary role stressed by many scholars. Field (2007) holds that oral history has the capacity to uncover new knowledge and provide new challenging insights into mainstream

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<sup>16</sup> Written documents are classified into primary and secondary sources. A primary source is a first-hand account of an event or original work from the participant who witnessed the event. In contrast a secondary source is a second-hand account of an event from another writer's perspective.



knowledge. The oral stories are an indispensable part of the lived daily experiences. Oral history relies on memory as data banks to make sense of the lived experiences (Tosh 2002).

I collected oral histories through interviews with primary and key informants from June 2019 to September 2022. I used semi-structured interviews and an interview guide (Appendix 5) with forty-five respondents selected broadly to cover women and men and all the major roles in Mbare Musika (See Section 3.2 for the selection and total interviewees). The interviews averaged thirty minutes in length. I tape-recorded some interviews and in cases where I was denied recording permission, I wrote notes in a notebook.

Small talk or chats are inevitable in fieldwork and they provide useful insights that are difficult to obtain in interviews (Driessen and Jansen 2013). The “chats” were short interviews, including follow up interviews with research participants that were key to my data collection. Driessen and Jansen (2013) view small talk as integrated with interviews and as a continuum of communion between the fieldworker and interlocutors. I generated more field notes from the “chats” than I had from interviews with many people in Mbare Musika. Many times, I listened to actors talking and treated this as an important form of knowledge. Field (2007) states that many forms of talking like conversations, gossip and hearsay are important aspects of memory.

Regardless of the fallibility of the memory, the stories told, woven together, yielded a tangible account of Mbare Musika. Barnes and Win (1992) see oral history as key in enriching the history of Zimbabwe through capturing the experiences of ordinary people such as farmers and traders in urban markets. Barnes and Win (1992: 2) point out that:

Oral history is not an exact science. For many people, remembering the dates for events which happened up to fifty years ago can be a difficult or even impossible task. Also, the comments made by our interviewees often contradict each other and sometimes themselves. However, each person who ‘spoke’ to us told us ‘the truth’ about the past as he [or] she remembered having experienced it. From adding up all these ‘truths’, we can get a sense of what life in the past was like for most people... There is a huge opportunity to enrich our knowledge of Zimbabwean history in this way.

Denscombe (2010) further asserts that oral history gives a thick description of individual lives and an insider’s view of life. Oral history enables researchers to deal with the life-worlds of people who witnessed or were involved in the past (Schmidt 2013). The experience in this study further bolsters oral history as a main source of historical knowledge. I learnt much

about the actors' personal histories, motives, accomplishments, practices, relations, and past events in Mbare Musika from oral histories.

### 3.5.3. Participant Observation

Participant observation was the other main ethnographic method used in data collection. I participated in and observed activities on farms, at Mbare Musika, and satellite markets where I conducted my research (Figure 3). To observe the different activities that are undertaken at different times, I visited the market at varying intervals of the day (including during the night), week and month. I was at the market many times and made follow up visits for repeated observations to confirm initial observations and ask further questions.

Participant observation involved participating in many market activities like loading and offloading produce, selling, and buying produce, and visiting farms and working alongside farm workers. Participant observation enabled me to engage in chats and partly experience the



Figure 3: Author involved in market activities.

actors' worlds. It brought me closer to observe how actors interacted, their practices and relations, things difficult to see from a distance. I gained the trust of some of my subjects who gossiped with me and shared sensitive information.<sup>17</sup> As a participant, I learnt how the actors

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<sup>17</sup> I did not share information I gathered from my informants in the market with their fellows. I started every interview or discussion as someone who is ignorant of anything in the market.





behave, transact, relate with each other, the opening and closing<sup>18</sup> of the market for trade, how produce arrives in the market and is sold to buyers. I closely observed and analysed the language and communication methods used in the marketplace. The non-verbal forms of communication were also rich symbols reflecting the interaction of actors in Mbare Musika. I noted the events I observed in my notebook and used my mobile phone to take pictures and videos.

#### **3.5.4. Go-along/ride-along.**

Another ethnographic method I used to collect data is the go-along, ride-along or 'walking interviews.' The go-along is a form of in-depth qualitative method where the researcher accompanies informants on outings in their familiar environments, natural outings or routes of their regular trips that occur without the researcher (Carpiano 2009, Kusenbac 2003, Kinney 2017). The go-along involves production of knowledge through co-learning and co-navigating the host's space and the researcher interacting with informants and the surroundings (Duedahl and Blichfeldt 2020). Mackay et.al (2018) further view the go-along as an interpretive walk and talk method of data collection undertaken by the interviewee and interviewer as they walk together, and their conversation is stimulated by buildings, objects, people, animals, and natural landscapes that they pass. Ride-along is a type of go-along that involves travelling with research participants using the same means of transport (Wegerif 2019).

Taking a similar approach, I moved with informants around Mbare Musika and accompanied traders to and from Mbare Musika. I also accompanied *makoronyera*, farmers, farm workers and transporters on farms and on their way to Mbare Musika. I undertook ride-alongs and shared transport with farmers and *makoronyera* to Acturus, Murehwa, Mutoko, Honde Valley and Nyanga. I observed and interviewed actors I accompanied. I took field notes, pictures and videos of the places and actors doing their activities. We made the journeys by trucks and buses that transport farmers and produce, sometimes sitting in the back of trucks on top of produce with farmers. Considering that go-alongs can take a few minutes to many hours

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<sup>18</sup> Mbare Musika functions throughout the day, every day, and all week. However, different sections of the market open and close for trade at different times. The farmers sections are opened for trade from dawn to 11:30am, it is then cleaned, and produce is delivered from 2pm. The wholesale and retail sections open at 6am and close at 6pm. This pattern was interrupted by Covid-19 that set new and shifting operating times.



(Kusenbac 2003), I unconsciously did many in Mbare Musika while accompanying middlemen collecting produce and payments and people buying produce and, on their way, to bus stops.

Accompanying participants while they performed their activities was invaluable for it enabled me to walk through people's lived experiences (Carpiano 2009, Duedahl and Blichfeldt 2020). I observed and asked questions while actors were doing their errands leading to an in-depth examination of their experiences, and interpretations of their actions and practices (Carpiano 2009, Kusenbac 2003). This was particularly important at Mbare Musika where it was almost impossible to schedule interviews and sit down to talk to actors who are busy throughout the day.

The go-along offers an opportunity to contextualise qualitative research and broaden data collection techniques to yield different perspectives and angles available (Carpiano 2009, Kusenbac 2003). In my case, the go-along proved essential to compare what actors say and what they do, for instance, many satellite traders say they only buy directly from farmers, but I witnessed them buying from *makoronyera* as well. Thompson and Reynolds (2019) assert that the go-along enriches data through physical disruptions and serves to illuminate narrative inconsistencies and contradictions, drawing attention to what is said and done and how narrative and context intersect. This is mainly because the go-along is an excellent way to observe actors' social and working lives (Wegerif 2019).

The go-along enabled my informants to relax and share sensitive information that they could not share in the marketplace among fellow actors. The go-along was the best way for participants to recall memories or experiences, stimulated by the journey and observations along the way, in a manner that is impossible with sedentary interviews (Kinney 2017). According to Kusenbac (2003), go-alongs have power to unearth mundane details too trivial to think and talk about during more formal research occasions. Go-alongs were also key in developing rapport and closeness with informants. This empowered informants and narrowed the gap between me and them because it reduced tension and enabled the recruitment of new and otherwise unavailable participants (Carpiano 2009, Wegerif 2019). Riding-along with women carrying *tswana* (reed basket)<sup>19</sup>, in lorries or as they harvested onions in the field narrowed the gap between us. As we shared these different experiences, they 'naturally'

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<sup>19</sup> *Tswana* is used to carry farm produce. It is commonly used by women traders who visit Mbare Musika early in the morning to buy produce for resale in different suburbs in Harare. This has earned them the name *mbuyazvetswanda/madzimai ematswanda* (mothers who carry baskets) in the market.



shared their personal stories in a touching manner that revealed more about their social lives than interviews. Ride-along empowers informants through offering a chance to express their perceptions and interpretation of their everyday experiences that reduce over-reliance on the researcher's imagination and biases by providing independent and empirical evidence on a phenomenon (Kusenbac 2003).

### **3.6. Methodological Challenges**

Studying *musika* and any marginalised subject, such as Mbare Musika has many methodological challenges. The dearth of primary written sources is a critical issue in studying Mbare Musika for both the colonial and post-colonial period. I searched for archival material at the NAZ, but could hardly find anything that speaks directly about Mbare Musika. It was difficult for me to access the City of Harare library for their reports as I was constantly referred from one office to another. An inscription on a stone at the NAZ that reads “behind every man there is history” encourages researchers in my situation to explore other methods to recover the past.

In the interviews you meet people of different characters that require the researcher's patience, quick adaptation, and negotiation skills. Many actors were sceptical about sharing information with strangers and were worried about their personal protection, which made conducting research quite tricky. Many times, interviewees were concerned about recorded interviews demonstrating their fear of sharing sensitive information. For instance, Mudhara, a key informant withdrew his consent a few minutes into the interview due to suspecting I was recording him. Manyama, a council official, constantly threatened to immediately end the interview if he discovered I was recording him.<sup>20</sup> Market authorities stood as gate keepers and committees attempted to censor who I could speak to or not. Gender was a major factor that limited my data collection. Many women refused to talk to me in a manner that showed insecurity based on concerns about what people would say if they were seen with me, or doubting my real intentions.

The research participants were careful about what information to share, and it was difficult to ask for some private information. For instance, I could not ask what happened to people's

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<sup>20</sup> I asked the consent of actors to conduct interviews and record interviews separately. In the given examples the interviewees agreed to have interviews but turned down the request to record the interviews. In the first example we were in a noisy crowded marketplace and recording was not an option at all. Given the security concern that emerged from these examples I dropped recording interviews and instead used my notebook to note what interviewees shared with me.



marriages, an aspect that was important to understanding why women joined Mbare Musika. Through my interviews, it was clear that “the memory pool of a given community is not equally accessible. Access to the recounting of the past is privileged and closely linked to gender, age, and social status, as well as the professionalisation of the memory trade” (Schmidt 2013). For instance, the council officials at Mbare Musika refused to share their experiences and duties at the market arguing it was the duty of the council spokesperson to talk to researchers.

Worse still it is difficult to schedule interviews with people who are always busy in the market. The marketplace is crowded, and it was difficult to conduct an uninterrupted interview, where the interviewee, especially primary actors were relaxed and comfortable. In a market where people are careful of what they say or do, some informants weighed what to tell me or not. This is likely due in part to the dominance of ruling party supporters and informers and the victimisation of those deemed to be opposition party supporters.

My fieldwork and data collection exercises were seriously affected by Covid-19. Some few months into my fieldwork, the Covid-19 pandemic spread rapidly across the world leading to national lockdowns to manage its spread. The pandemic affected the way I did my research, and some places became totally inaccessible. The hard lockdown measures that lasted until the end of 2021 in Zimbabwe made it difficult to visit the field(s) for data collection. I also could not carry on with my search for written documents at NAZ and the City of Harare library because they were closed. Officials postponed scheduled interviews citing the Covid-19 pandemic. They kept on postponing interview appointments until I finished my fieldwork.

I was also careful not to contract the virus, consequently, I was hesitant to visit crowded places such as Mbare Musika even after its re-opening in early April 2020. I was not an “essential worker” therefore could not get an exemption letter to visit the market.<sup>21</sup> Public transport with Harare and intercity buses were banned from March 2020 to around mid-2022, making it more difficult to travel to conduct fieldwork. To minimise these challenges, I used digital platforms like Whatsapp, Twitter (now X), and Facebook to maintain communication with some respondents. I met some of the buyers physically in the market and some from farmers’ social media groups I joined. I did a couple of interviews on Whatsapp

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<sup>21</sup> Exemption letters were issued to essential workers under the lockdown rules to allow them to pass police checkpoints. Some farmers and *makoronyera* at Mbare Musika were issued these letters by the police and agricultural extension officers as supplying food was an essential service.



and followed discussions on Mbare Musika that took place on Twitter and Facebook. I followed council meetings that were broadcast live on their Facebook page as face-to-face meetings that involved directly interacting with actors was risky. On returning to Mbare Musika, I took precautions such as wearing my mask and sanitising my hands despite many actors trivialising these measures.

### **3.7. Analysing Data**

As is common in highly qualitative research, data analysis was an on-going process involving thinking about the data and reflecting upon the emerging themes and adjusting research questions and methods (Dawson 2009). The process involved transcribing notes from audio recordings or field notes from my notebook into my computer. After every visit to the market and interview, I would use the evenings or early mornings to analyse data. Data analysis also involved reading my notes and listening to audio recordings and making comments on my field notes. The process was demanding, actually it stretched my mind and was quite a workout (Tracy 2013).

Analysis involved systematically preparing and organising data (Tracy 2013). I labelled and classified data into archival, interviews, observations, go-along notes during data collection and transcribing. I organised it chronologically starting with the data I collected first. Tracy (2013) argues that this is vital in showing the analysis process and reflecting on how data was collected and how interpretations changed over time. I used an inductive approach in identifying the themes and sub-themes to avoid imposing themes on my data (Dawson 2009). I also compared notes and transcriptions from different sources to identify emerging themes until I could not find new dimensions. The data organising process was an interpretive activity (Tracy 2013), that enabled me to identify and classify salient data.

I coded the data through labelling it with different colours and those that feed into the same theme with one colour. I further labelled and commented on data to identify and classify it. I recoded the data and examined the initial descriptive codes into second level coding. According to Tracy (2013), second level coding, instead of simply mirroring the data, explains, theorise, and synthesis data. It involves interpretation and identifying patterns, rules, or cause-effect progressions.

Bruce (2001) conceptualises data analysis as social action and human activities treated as symbols expressing layers of meaning. To make meaning of my data I immersed myself into it



through reading it several times. Discussing my findings, especially with my supervisor, was an invaluable strategy for data immersion and opening other avenues of inquiry. I considered Tracy's (2013: 188) recommendation that:

Researchers submerge themselves in the entire breadth of the data by reading and re-reading them, listening to them, and thinking about them. During this data immersion phase ...researchers should talk to others about their data and emerging findings. Talking to others about your data aids in sense making and in considering a variety of interpretations. In all immersion activities, the goal is to absorb and marinate in the data, jotting down reflections and hunches, but reserving judgment.

Reviewing literature on markets and the history of Zimbabwe was essential to the process of data immersion and interrogating data to open areas of further inquiry.

### **3.8. Limitations of the Study**

The study was mainly qualitative, and I could not collect accurate statistics on the quantities and value of produce supplied in the market. The study draws the links between Mbare Musika, supermarkets and other produce markets without an in-depth study of how these other food markets work. The resilience and contribution of Mbare Musika to produce marketing would ideally be fully understood if studied in conjunction with alternative produce marketing channels, but this was not possible within the time and resources available for this study.

The lack of financial statements and the reluctance or inability of respondents to give information on their costs, revenue and incomes also undermined the ability of the study to make bold conclusions on their incomes. The study instead relied on qualitative statements from informants to construct general narratives about their economic activities that potentially overlooked the specificity and heterogeneity of actors' experiences. The study relied on estimates of how much the farmers, *makoronyera* or traders are making and losing. The study relied on qualitative evidence to demonstrate that the market is growing and resilient.

### **3.9. Ethical Considerations**

As I started my fieldwork, I was aware that it was my responsibility as the researcher to safeguard the interests of all people and organisations involved in the study. It is my duty as the researcher to report my findings accurately and truthfully and make a careful reflection on my respondents to increase benefits and minimise harm (British Psychological Society 1996, Bresler 1995). I asked myself questions like: What should I say or do in the market?



With whom should I share the information I collected? Is it ethical to pay actors, give respondents gifts or receive gifts from them? Should I get involved in some market activities? I found that getting involved in some market activities brought me closer to respondents who began to appreciate my true identity and aim. It gained me their trust and provided insights that a distant researcher could not access.

My research was approved by the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria (Appendix 1). I also sought and obtained permission to undertake my study from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, Harare City Council and NAVUZ (Appendix 2-4). I also introduced myself to respondents as a PhD Student and sought their consent before an interview. Some respondents signed the consent forms, some gave verbal consent and some turned down the request. I offered no payment or gifts in return for partaking in the study. In small talks, I indicated to the respondent that what they were doing or saying was interesting for my research and sought their permission to elaborate and use it in my research.

During the research and writing process, I upheld my respondents' right to dignity, privacy, confidentiality and avoidance of harm (Glesne and Peshkin 1992). During my fieldwork, I made sure I did not share what interviewees shared with me with their fellows to maintain their privacy and confidentiality. I did not share the data I collected with any media house or social media platform. I would have liked using respondents' real names to celebrate the invaluable role these ordinary people make in food security, like what happens with powerful people, but I could not guarantee their safety. Therefore, I anonymised my respondents by discarding their real names and other names they use in *musika* and replaced them with pseudonyms to avoid any potential harm to them. In this research, I applied my compassion, sought a deeper understanding of Mbare Musika rather than to condemn or take sides, to cultivate curiosity rather than blame and to emphasise strength and contextual value (Bresler 1995).



## 4. Chapter Four: Horticultural Production and Marketing in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-1979

*If the objective of economic activity is to raise the standard of living of those involved in this activity, then not only is cooperation in the field of trade highly desired, but the greater the degree of this cooperation the better for all concerned (William Margolis, 1970).<sup>22</sup>*

### 4.1. Introduction

The potential for Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) to develop a large horticultural industry was stressed during the early colonial period. The horticultural industry, however, remains quite small even today despite the efforts that were made to develop the sector. At the end of the colonial period in 1979, the horticultural industry was comparatively small and several production and marketing challenges undermined the sector. The domestic market was small, and the country faced difficulties to penetrate the export market. This chapter explores the production and marketing challenges that undermined the efforts to set up the horticultural industry on a sound footing. The chapter also explores the tensions and agreements among state officials, municipal authorities, farmers, traders, food eaters, transporters, and other stakeholders in the quest to develop the horticultural industry. The production and marketing of horticultural produce in colonial Zimbabwe was largely a contested terrain and it was within this background that Mbare Musika emerged and grew.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section explores the production of horticultural crops in colonial Zimbabwe between 1930 and 1979. It captures mainly the voices and experiences of colonial officials and settler farmers as these are the ones recorded and available in archival records. The second section explores the debates and contests around the marketing of horticultural produce through the voices of state officials and white settler farmers. The third section covers experiences of African farmers, traders and eaters in the horticultural sector. Africans were the pioneers of the horticultural industry in Zimbabwe and later the colonial state intervened to eliminate them.

### 4.2. Horticultural Production in Southern Rhodesia 1930-1979

Southern Rhodesia was well suited to the production of a variety of horticultural crops. Large-scale commercial farmers and small-scale farmers were involved in the sector. In 1978 Mupawose estimated that over 20, 000 hectares of land was under horticultural production.

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<sup>22</sup> William Margolis was the chairman of the Agricultural Marketing Authority.





He emphasised that horticultural production required careful planning and market study since some crops take long to become productive. Horticultural production is suitable in ecological regions i, ii and iii, in the Highveld where rainfall is high and soils are fertile. This covers areas in Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Harare, Manicaland and some parts of Midlands provinces.

White settler farmers and African farmers were all involved in horticultural production. They produced in urban and peri-urban areas and farms on distant from the main markets in Salisbury and Bulawayo. Vegetables, mainly tomatoes, potatoes, onions, cabbages, leafy vegetables, cucumbers, paprika, lettuces, green beans, peas, and fruits such as bananas, oranges, apples, lemons, and mangos are some of the crops produced in Zimbabwe. The perishable nature of these crops required immediate disposal or sophisticated storage. Initially production was in the hinterland of cities close to the market, but with improved transport areas far away supplied cities.<sup>23</sup>

The potential to develop a horticultural sector in Zimbabwe was emphasised in responses to a growing number of prospective farmers' inquiries to Agricultural Officers about the prospects for establishing horticultural farms in the country. In 1909, Eric Nobbs, the Director of Agriculture, concluded that:

Market gardening was a legitimate and deserving branch of the great agricultural industry, but there were many parts of the country inaccessible to the market gardener, who must be necessarily, be near a town or close to lines of communication, and where the farms might well supply the local mines.<sup>24</sup>

In 1951, Mr Guy a prospective farmer, inquired about the prospects of growing vegetables. The Agricultural Research and Specialist Service responded stressing that vegetable growing was very profitable and estimated average gross return at around £300 per acre per year, and a cost of production of about £120 per acre per year.<sup>25</sup> In the responses, agricultural officials underlined that there was always a ready market for good quality vegetables throughout the year, though prices drop especially during the winter season due to gluts caused by many

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<sup>23</sup> USAID Final Report, (1995), Zimbabwe horticultural sector assessment and analysis of programming options, by Richard D. Abbott, Cheziya J. Clarke, Anthony T. Mushipe, and P. Muramba.

<sup>24</sup> E. A. Nobbs, (1909), The mines as a market, the crops required for native diet. Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, 7(1).

<sup>25</sup> NAZ, S2703/6, Agricultural improvement 1950 August 11-1951 December 31, letter from the Department of Research and Specialist Services to Mr T. E. Guy (a prospective farmer), 27 June 1951. In the Southern Rhodesia currency system, there was the pound (£) made up of 100-shilling, shilling (/) and pence (d). After 1965, Rhodesia used the Rhodesian dollar.



farmers taking advantage of the availability of water to produce vegetables.<sup>26</sup> Emerging towns and mining centres provided a considerable local market to stimulate horticultural production. Nobbs stressed that the 1908 compulsory ration for African workers to include vegetables in their diet was hailed as a boon to farmers because it offered a ready market for cultivation of horticultural and other crops, which was a great advantage in the economic working of a farm.

White settler farmers were undermined by capital shortages and the sector was not well established by the 1960s. Many of them were retired workers and financed their horticultural enterprises from savings and pensions. In 1963, A. H. Tooke, the Secretary for Agriculture, estimated that:

An economic unit for fruit production was estimated to be populated by between 3,000 and 5,000 trees. The development of an economic unit costs an estimated £275 per acre, or £2.75 per tree. This would give a total of between £8,250 and £13,750 capital requirements. To this it was also calculated that in the first three unproductive years of the tree's life maintenance and care is approximately £1.0 per tree, giving a total of £3,000 to £5,000. The total orchard development cost was estimated to be between £11,250 and £18,750 per running unit.<sup>27</sup>

Farmers had to pay labour and integrate technology placing a heavy capital demand on their shoulders. Training fruit pickers and packers was expensive, and a farmer mentioned his intention to import three families from Cape Town for this work.<sup>28</sup> The issues were raised to justify extending loans to farmers to assist in the establishment of horticultural farms.

Big investors were essential to develop the horticultural sector, unless farmers were given loans. It was asserted that without loans to the farmers, the industry was more suitable for company development, as companies were more capitalised and making progress in their agricultural investment projects.<sup>29</sup> The 1963 report further asserted that the fruit sector had passed the pioneering stage and the entry of several progressive and adequately capitalised new companies augurs well for the future.<sup>30</sup> It was hoped these companies would replace inefficient smaller producers to further develop the fruit industry.<sup>31</sup> The state approached the British South Africa Company (BSAC) to set up a model and experimental deciduous fruit

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing, letter from A. H. Tooke (For Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture) to the manager, The Land and Agricultural Bank of Rhodesia, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1963.

<sup>28</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing, report of a visit to the deciduous fruit growers in the Eastern Districts, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1963.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



farm. The BSAC turned down the request arguing that it had financial and investment commitments to establish Mazoe Citrus.<sup>32</sup>

The fruit industry remained dominated by smallholder farmers who produced vegetables and undertook livestock projects to earn incomes before fruit trees became productive. Commenting on fruit industry financing, Tooke revealed that “some of these costs carried by the farmer by intercropping his young orchards with vegetables. However, it must be stressed that vegetable production, while profitable, would be unable to finance orchard development of this scale.”<sup>33</sup> Incomes earned this way assisted farmers to meet their immediate costs. Most fruit farms were not profitable during their early stages, with the hope that they would become profitable as yields increase when the trees matured and produced more fruit.<sup>34</sup> R. A. Griffith, a Ministry of Agriculture official, agreed that farmers survived from incomes earned from cropping between trees, but farmers required special orchard loans with no interest or redemption for the first six years, until orchards came into commercial production.<sup>35</sup>

The Land and Agricultural Bank of Southern Rhodesia agreed to offer loans to fruit farmers, but differed on the terms suggested by the Ministry of Agriculture. The bank considered farmers’ loan applications on their merits and used land to guarantee loans. The Bank Manager stated that:

A period free of capital redemption would also be considered, but would unlikely exceed three years as it is considered that fruit farmers have other sources of revenue even if their own capital is relatively small. Interest would be paid annually since the bank must pay interest on its funds. I regret that at this stage I cannot be more specific as not much is known of the industry and its economics, but should several applications for assistance be received, it may be possible to work out a reasonable scheme.<sup>36</sup>

The loan conditions were not as favourable to the fruit farmers as those given to farmers who produced tobacco and beef that earned more foreign currency. Again, the fruit farmers were not well organised and lacked power to exert much influence on the state.

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<sup>32</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. a letter to C. A. Murray, Secretary for Agriculture on behalf of Lord Malvern, 4 June 1963.

<sup>33</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. letter from A. H. Tooke (For Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture) to the manager, The Land and Agricultural Bank of Rhodesia, 19 July 1963.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. letter from the acting secretary of Agriculture (R. A. Griffith) to the manager Land and Agricultural Bank of Southern Rhodesia, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1963.

<sup>36</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. letter from the manager (LADB) to acting secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, 21 June 1963.



The farm management survey undertaken in Manicaland in 1963 found that fruit and vegetable farmers performed badly between 1958 and 1961. A team from the Ministry of Agriculture consisting of Mr. Teague, Mr Cassidy, Mr MacKinlay and Mr Anderson investigated the reasons for the poor performance. They found that the poor results were typical of the industry at that time and were caused by lack of knowledge, poor planning, lack of irrigation, and capital, and in some cases poor management.<sup>37</sup> The farmers lacked sufficient basic knowledge of suitable varieties, soils, climate, water requirements and pests and diseases leading many farmers to fail and slowing the progress in the industry. A few farmers survived on trial and error and their success demonstrated the horticultural potential in the country. The team concluded that availing advisory services, long term loans, adequate transport facilities and market outlets would promote a healthy and profitable produce sector.<sup>38</sup>

The team also acknowledged that information from pioneer farmers was essential to the future development of the horticultural industry. The information contributed to extension work for new growers to establish farms and improve existing ones. Specialists in horticulture were deployed to offer advisory services to the farmers. They were regularly offered in-service training and visited South Africa to acquaint themselves with new developments in the horticultural sector.

The investigation team found that many farms produced poor quality crops due to absence of irrigation facilities. Integrating irrigation into the farms was required to improve produce quality. Irrigation was required since, marketing high quality produce was not a problem for farmers. Under good management about 20% of the fruit would be under grade on irrigated farms and under dry conditions could be 60%.<sup>39</sup> The team pointed out that apples production in unirrigated orchards averaged 2 bushels per tree while it was 10 bushels per tree under irrigation. This represented an income variation of £2.10/-to £12.10/- per tree for apples.<sup>40</sup> In the 1960s, many farmers were realising the importance of irrigation and integrating it no their farms. Old farmers, who treated farming as a form of retirement, resisted advice from the research and advisory personnel and experienced serious challenges.<sup>41</sup> On the eve of

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<sup>37</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. report of a visit to the deciduous fruit growers in the Eastern Districts, 18 April 1963.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



independence, Robinson (1978) described the horticultural sector as small and risky, restricted by limited markets and research and primarily oriented to the European farming sector.

### **4.3. The Marketing of Horticultural Produce in Colonial Zimbabwe**

In as far as horticultural production in Southern Rhodesia was important, it was the marketing of produce that dominated debates on how to improve the horticultural industry. Marketing of horticultural produce was not through statutory boards as in other crops hence it was not state regulated (Mackenzie 1978). In 1964, John Burrows, an economist in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, underscored the invaluable role of markets in his remark:

In any programme of agricultural improvement, marketing must play a pivotal role since it is at the point of sale that the profitability of new agricultural techniques would ultimately be judged by the cultivator and, unless the marketing system can reward the progressive farmer for his initiatives, the extension services would be less effective than they might otherwise be.<sup>42</sup>

In 1909, Nobbs reported that the greatest challenge in the marketing of produce was determining the price that produce could be profitably sold for in the market whilst balancing it to keep the cost of living low.<sup>43</sup>

The marketing of produce was unstable and was affected by the seasonal variations. As remarked by Taylor (1978), the horticultural marketing in Zimbabwe was prone to price fluctuations, gluts, and scarcities. There was a glut of many vegetables during the summer followed by shortages in the dry season. Produce price changes in accordance to changes in demand and supply (Mackenzie 1978). Nobbs contended that:

A supply of one and the same kind of vegetables throughout the whole year is neither possible nor desirable, and there is no occasion to insist upon it. Prices of produce are high during the period of shortage and low during the glut times. For produce to be sold at reasonably low prices it was essential to increase production to tons or acres instead of the garden beds or patches.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> John R. Burrows (economist), *Agricultural marketing and the peasant farmer: a review of the problems of marketing in the subsistence sector*. Ministry of Internal Affairs, Salisbury, January 1964.

<sup>43</sup> E. A. Nobbs, (1909), *The mines as a market, the crops required for native diet*. *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, 7(1).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*



Produce such as onions enjoy a relatively stable market throughout the year since production is lower than demand. Onion farmers were encouraged to dry onions to prevent gluts and benefit from high prices during the shortage period.<sup>45</sup>

Coordinating supplies and demand was a challenge in the sector. According to Taylor (1978) finding reliable markets was a major challenge for horticultural farmers. Farmers were unable to sell their produce while at the same time buyers complained about produce shortages. Nobbs further commented that though the law of demand and supply regulated the horticultural trade in its own way, an artificial stimulus was essential for the law to be operational.<sup>46</sup> It was the attempt to find the “artificial stimulus” that sparked endless debates and contests on how to market produce in Southern Rhodesia.

Adding to produce marketing challenges was the small domestic market. Robinson (1978) described the internal market for horticultural products as small, seasonal, and easily oversupplied. Taylor (1978) stated that few people were willing to pay, for instance two dollars for an avocado pear, like in the foreign markets. The domestic market was small partly because many African workers received wages insufficient to maintain them (Devittie 1974). Produce was marketed in municipal markets mainly in Bulawayo and Harare. Processing companies also provided a market for fresh produce. For instance, beans and peas from Chimanimani, Chipinge and Nyanyadzi were sold to Mutare Processing Factory.<sup>47</sup> In Harare, EF Greens bought and marketed bananas.<sup>48</sup> Companies dealt with limited amount of produce and were particular about absorbing only high grade produce.

The production of fruits and vegetables was regulated by the 1951 Fruit and Vegetables (Urban Areas) Regulations that gave the councils powers to inspect land on which fruits and vegetables were grown even if it was outside its jurisdiction. The inspection of land was to make sure produce was grown under safe conditions for human eating. Using human waste or other substances that make produce dangerous for human eating was prohibited and crops grown under such conditions were prohibited in markets. The act also stipulated the conditions under which produce should be transported, stored, and marketed to avoid

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<sup>45</sup> NAZ, S2703/7/1 Vol. I, Fruit growing and marketing 1949 December 19-1951 January 2. letter from the Acting Government Horticulturalist to N. G. Neeteson Lemkes. 11 September 1950.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. Memorandum. transport of deciduous fruit: Ref 8.4.16/200

<sup>48</sup> Interview, Ngwena, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.



spoilage and protect eaters. It was the responsibility of the farmers to make sure produce was safe for human eating by cleaning premises, vehicles, conveyances, and receptacles used for handling produce.<sup>49</sup> Failure by farmers and traders to adhere to these requirements led to the council confiscating and destroying the affected produce without compensating the owner.

The Certificate of Registration and Fruit and Vegetables (Urban Areas) Regulations, 1954 required all fresh produce traders to have licences. Licences were aimed at regulating and controlling the growing, handling, hawking, storing, and selling of fruits and vegetables. A licence was valid for a year and renewable every year. The council could deny the application for a licence with an explanation for its denial. A licenced produce dealer was issued a certificate with the name, address of the holder, and a serial number. A licence was inscribed “Registered Fruit & Vegetable Grower”, “Registered Fruit and Vegetable Hawker” or “Fruit and Vegetable Vendor”. The licence was required to be displayed in large and legible characters in a conspicuous place on the premises or on the vehicle or conveyance used for storage, sale, or transportation of fruit and vegetables.<sup>50</sup> It was unlawful to share the certificate with other users and only those with valid certificates were allowed to produce and sell fresh produce.

Southern Rhodesia exported produce to neighbouring countries where production was inadequate and processing too little to meet demand. Agricultural officials were aware of the potential of exports markets and their contribution to expanding the horticultural sector. Taylor (1978) illustrated the lucrativeness of international markets in his findings that:

A small cardboard box of wild orchids collected near Chipinge and sent to America, realised about \$250. Similarly, in Dublin a punnet of strawberries was sold for \$380, if a punnet can fetch this price in a poor country like Ireland, it is mind boggling to think what a strawberry-hungry oil sheik might pay.

Southern Rhodesia proposed a single marketing channel and strict produce quality control to build a good name and reputation for produce from the country. According to Taylor (1978),

the surest way to kill a potential export industry might be illustrated with avocados: go out in the back garden when you have more avocados than you and your friends can eat, fill an old cardboard box with them and send them to Covenant Garden. Our

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> NAZ, F242/400/5/2, Fruit and Vegetable Act from January 1954. Fruit and Vegetables Act (Urban Areas) Regulations. 1954.



avocado addict friend is not going to maintain his addiction after paying two dollars for an under ripe or worm-infested fruit.

The state employed health inspectors dealing with diseases, pests, and phytosanitary certificates to control the quality of exported produce so as to enhance the competitiveness of the country's fresh produce in export markets.

The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 and the imposition of sanctions by Britain and the United Nations complicated Rhodesia's attempts to penetrate export markets. Margolis argued that the relying on the local market alone would restrict the growth of agriculture and the whole economy.<sup>51</sup> For that reason, Margolis stressed that the "the challenge of export markets must be met. This situation will apply irrespective of whether sanctions remain or not."<sup>52</sup> M. D. P. Malianga in his address to a Horticultural seminar in 1987 revealed that:

Although relatively underdeveloped then, before 1965 Zimbabwe's horticultural industry compared very well with that of other African countries like Kenya. It was during the UDI era that its performance fell behind that of other African countries after sanctions closed the market for crops from Southern Rhodesia.<sup>53</sup>

In response to sanctions, the Rhodesian state reorganised agriculture to focus on production for the local market.

In 1953, the Agricultural Marketing Council consulted farmers, distributors, importers, food eaters, representatives of the railway administration and officers of the Department of Agriculture and Lands and of Native Affairs in Mutare, Bulawayo, Masvingo and Salisbury on the state of produce marketing. There was consensus that the existing production and marketing of fresh produce was inefficient. Municipal markets were criticised for being insufficiently organised and a dumping ground for imports. Produce prices were unfair to the farmers and inspection by health officials was inadequate. The markets opened for few hours and dispatching sales notes were delayed by several days despite them being more important for farmers than market reports through radio.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The Rhodesian Herald. 8 February, 1969.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Horticultural Promotion Council, Proceeds of the horticultural seminar held on 13-15 May 1987 at the Monomotapa Hotel. Harare.

<sup>54</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on Fruit and Vegetable Production and Marketing, The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.





The white settler farmers who were consulted suggested that plot holders should be prohibited, and only regular farmers should be allowed to deliver produce for sale at municipal markets. They alleged that plot holders and part-time growers disrupted the market causing adverse effects on the interests of professional growers. Also, part-time farmers were blamed for marketing sub-standard produce that competed with high standard produce and depressing prices. In contrast, some sections acknowledged the “praiseworthy efforts” part-time farmers were making through supplying high quality vegetables, reducing the cost of living and relieving shortages of produce in the market.<sup>55</sup> Regular farmers also wanted produce importers to be banned from selling produce in municipal markets. Urban food eaters and officials disagreed arguing that imported produce competed with local produce to stabilise prices. Farmers suggested that auctioning should be promoted in markets to prevent the formation of retailers’ rings.<sup>56</sup>

Agricultural Marketing Council officials visited selected markets and found evidence for some complaints made by farmers. The officials confirmed that farmers’ good quality produce was sold at ridiculously low prices during gluts, though retail prices remained the same in shops.<sup>57</sup> They observed tremendous variations in packing, selection and degree of ripeness, much of the produce was graded badly or not at all, packed unsuitably, damaged in transit, or had quite evidently been unsalable before packing and despatch.<sup>58</sup> The officials were concerned that farmers had too many complaints, but many farmers never visited the market to see for themselves the condition in which their produce arrived.<sup>59</sup>

In 1953, farmers suggested that municipal markets should be closed entirely and replaced by the cooperative system. Cooperatives paid relatively high prices to farmers even in times of gluts to avoid side selling. For instance, in 1950, the Salisbury Municipal Market paid 4/ per bag for green and wet onions, the prices later rose to 22/6 per 120lbs net bag of high-grade onions compared to 30/ per bag paid by the Salisbury Farmers Co-op to its members.<sup>60</sup> The Agricultural Marketing Council opposed the suggestion in favour of reforming municipal

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> NAZ, S2703/7/1 Vol. 1, Fruit growing and marketing 1949 December 19-1951 January 2. letter from the Department of Research and Specialist Services to the Secretary Department of Agriculture and lands. 12 December 1950.



markets to improve their operation. The council recommended that municipal markets should transfer market intelligence to farmers on time, improve grading, packing, grading and sell by weight.

Farmers' cooperatives were essential in the marketing of produce in colonial Zimbabwe. The cooperative legislation of 1956 resulted in rapid development in primary marketing and supply societies (Dunlop 1970). The Salisbury Farmers Co-op, Manicaland Farmers Co-op and Fruit Growers' Co-op are some of the cooperatives that existed in Southern Rhodesia by 1978. Cooperative unions were established for centralised buying and offered other facilities to members to stabilise produce prices. Cooperatives encouraged farmers to comply with voluntary grading regulations passed by the government and inspected produce from members to control produce quality in markets. Farmers' cooperatives evened out supplies extending the supply of seasonal produce for longer periods, even without cold storage (Taylor 1978).

Farmers' Cooperatives were undermined by their inability to control the activities of non-members. Farmers were organised into voluntary pools, for example the Eastern District Fruit Producers' Pool for Farmers' Cooperatives in Mutare and Harare. The farmers' pool system attracted few members and could not control non-members who continued to market low grade produce. Pool members were frustrated and withdrew their membership. They began to market sub-standard produce and engaged in side-selling.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1950s the Central Food Production Committee advocated the extension of "organised marketing" to cater for African farmers. The committee aimed to remove intermediaries to enable African farmers to earn high incomes from their produce.<sup>62</sup> The committee proposed the integration and close coordination in marketing produce to avoid competition detrimental to both European and African farmers.<sup>63</sup> The committee argued that centralised marketing channels would result in greater economy and efficiency undermined by independent and conflicting African and European Co-operative Organisations.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing, memorandum from the secretary of agriculture (A. R. Godwin) to the treasury. 16th March 1964-marketing of deciduous fruits.

<sup>62</sup> NAZ, S955/208, Native Production and Trade Commission, written evidence submitted to the Native Production and Trade Commission by the Central Food Production Committee in reply to the former's questionnaire.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



In 1965, Majongwe, Member of Parliament (MP) for Inyazura,<sup>65</sup> applauded cooperatives for assisting African farmers to market their produce. Majongwe stressed that there were inadequate marketing facilities for African farmers to sell their produce. African farmers were producing vegetables and fruits and connecting them to markets would alleviate the hardships they faced and improve their lives.<sup>66</sup> Many African farmers marketed produce through traders who paid low prices. He suggested that the state should find ways to connect financially insecure African farmers to urban markets to promote orderly marketing and ensure they receive maximum prices for their produce.<sup>67</sup> This would incentivise African farmers to increase production and adopt better farming methods.<sup>68</sup>

Connecting African farmers to urban markets would coordinate and even out supplies in the whole country. Majongwe further submitted that:

I find it very surprising because you meet a chap coming from Bulawayo and he tells you that there are hardly any vegetables on the African market, yet we come to Mashonaland, and we find there are vegetables available, but there is no avenue through which the vegetables can reach those people who really need them.<sup>69</sup>

He proposed that the state establish small marketing depots as experiments to market fresh produce. Majongwe underlined that he was not criticising the government, but “all we wish to see is the exploration for the expansion of all markets so that the country really gets the benefit from all its agricultural enterprises.”<sup>70</sup> He further urged the state to re-examine the marketing opportunities available to small African farmers and the matter was urgent and should be treated with the earnestness and seriousness it deserved.<sup>71</sup> Advancing marketing

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<sup>65</sup> Majongwe once one of very few African members of parliament that got seats due to complex negotiations between the British and the white Southern Rhodesian Government. The British enjoyed reserved powers to veto laws that were passed in Southern Rhodesia to protect Africans. This were irksome to the Southern Rhodesian Government that wanted the reserved powers to be removed. A conference was called partly to discuss the removal of the reserved powers. The British were not prepared to surrender the reserved powers without widening the franchise to include Africans and it proposed the Hirsch plan that wanted to give Africans 10 seats in the legislative Assembly. The conference was attended by the Sandys (representatives British Government), Southern Rhodesian Government representatives led by Whitehead and Nkomo and Sithole (National Democratic Party (NDP) representatives). The 1961 constitution that resulted from it reserved 15 seats for Africans out of the total 65 seats in the Legislative Assembly. The first African legislative representatives were elected in October 1961.

<sup>66</sup> Mr A. C. Majongwe, MP Inyazura, Marketing of agricultural products. Southern Rhodesia, Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. 60, 1965.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



opportunities to African farmers was vital in increasing their income to expand and stabilise their operations.

In 1951, the colonial state examined and considered the possibilities of establishing a Deciduous Fruit Marketing Board to market fruits and stimulate production. The marketing board was aimed at regulating marketable fruits, prices for produce and collect production and marketing statistics. H. L. Greyling, the Assistant Manager of the South African Deciduous Fruit Board, was invited to investigate whether a formal marketing board was necessary in Southern Rhodesia. Greyling recommended the introduction of a Deciduous Marketing Board and proper grading to keep sub-standard fruits off the market.<sup>72</sup> In 1961, the Agricultural Marketing Council also supported the idea of a Fruit Marketing Board. There was initial commitment to pass laws towards the establishment of the board. In 1963 the proposal was shelved because of uncertainty of commitments following the dissolution of the federation and the financial shortages that were being experienced.

In 1964, Mr Godwin, the Secretary for Agriculture, was redirected to draft the legislation to establish a Fruit Marketing Board. Godwin showed committed to implement the proposal on the basis that:

There would be little development in the production of deciduous fruit without some system of orderly marketing. ...no opportunity of exploiting the potential in the industry should be lost, even if this does impose a small charge on public funds in the initial period.<sup>73</sup>

Godwin referred the matter to the Southern Rhodesian Government to assess the financial implications of establishing the marketing board.<sup>74</sup> P. A. Donovan (Director Research and Specialist Services) argued that the Fruit Marketing Board would promote orderly marketing and the expansion of the fruit industry.<sup>75</sup> There was consensus among officials and farmers that the fruit industry in Southern Rhodesia had great potential and a modicum of control was necessary at that stage to get the industry on its feet.<sup>76</sup> R. A. Griffiths gave an example of

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<sup>72</sup> F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. memorandum from the Secretary of Agriculture (A. R. Godwin) to the Treasury. 16 March 1964-marketing of deciduous fruits.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. correspondence A. R. Goodwin to Mr Donovan. 12 February 1964.

<sup>75</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. a letter from P. A. Donovan (Director Research and Specialist Services) to Under Secretary (E&M) attention Mr A. R. Goodwin-proposed Fruit Marketing Board, 2 March, 1964.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.



small, malformed, ungraded and blemished apples that were sold directly to an eater by a Fruit Pool member. The sample earned the most unfavourable publicity and it was argued local fruit samples should be advertised to counter the negative publicity.<sup>77</sup> A Fruit Marketing Board was needed to address these challenges and farmers were advised to be prepared to fund it.<sup>78</sup>

Farmers supported the proposal since they were dissatisfied with the uncoordinated marketing of fruits. They believed that the marketing board would improve prices for quality fruits and promote farmers' confidence to invest more money in deciduous fruit production. In 1962, the total national production value of deciduous fruits was £29,100 and far below the country's needs valued at £428,000.<sup>79</sup> The marketing board was considered vital to stimulate local production to meet the domestic needs and cut imports. Merchants and produce eaters supported the proposal to avert irregular supplies and low-quality produce sold at high prices.<sup>80</sup> The Internal Affairs division did not contribute to the debates arguing that they deal with the marketing of African produce and African farmers produce negligible amounts of fruits and would not use the board.<sup>81</sup>

The proposal to establish a Fruit Marketing Board was turned down mainly based on difficulties to finance it. The cost of the board would be met from a levy on the fruits sold, other than through canneries, and the balance would be subsidised by the government until at a point the board was self-supporting. Initially, Mr Donovan doubted that the board could be established at the estimated costs submitted to the government.<sup>82</sup> The cost of establishing the board was assessed as prohibitive and a levy could not meet the cost of running the board. This was because more than one inspector was needed and the revenue from the levy was not likely to increase from the estimated £2,400 as suggested.<sup>83</sup> The cost of establishing the

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<sup>77</sup> F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. minutes of the committee of the Fruit Growers Pool held in the B.E.S.L. Clubhouse on Wednesday 20 February 1963 at 10am.

<sup>78</sup> NAZ: F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. extract from conclusions of a meeting held in the office of the Minister of Economic Affairs on Thursday, 18 April 1963.

<sup>79</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. memorandum from the Secretary of Agriculture (A. R. Godwin) to the treasury. 16th March 1964-marketing of deciduous fruits.

<sup>80</sup> NAZ: F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. extract from conclusions of a meeting held in the office of the Minister of Economic Affairs on Thursday, 18 April 1963.

<sup>81</sup> NAZ: F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. letter from S. E. Morris (Secretary for Internal Affairs) to the Secretary Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 1 July 1963.

<sup>82</sup> NAZ: F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. a letter from P. A. Donovan (Director Research and Specialist Services) to Under Secretary (E&M) attention Mr. A.R. Goodwin-proposed Fruit Marketing Board. 2 March, 1964.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



board would be initially close to £6,000 decreasing to nil in three to five years.<sup>84</sup> Mr Griffith estimated that the fruit industry sold £35,000 worth of fruit in 1962 and at this level could not meet the cost of an expensive Fruit Marketing Board. The board in its simplest form would cost a minimum of £4,500 per annum to operate, and it was agreed that farmers could not afford this amount.<sup>85</sup>

The Treasurer weighed in against the proposal, arguing that:

The industry is far too small at a production value of some £30,000 per annum to justify the setting up of a statutory marketing board. It would involve overheads costing of about 20 per cent of the value of production and these would be quite disproportionate to the benefits it would confer.<sup>86</sup>

Farmers countered this argument by stating that the number of trees planted had increased over the past few years and the value of the sector would increase by 75% in a few years.<sup>87</sup> This did not convince the Treasurer who proposed a different solution to expand the fruit industry. In 1964, Walters, the Secretary for the Treasury wrote,

it does seem that the real cause of the present unsatisfactory position is the inability of growers to establish common grading and packaging standards and to keep the sub-standard fruit off the market. In these circumstances and in the light of the comments made above, the Treasury suggested that control should, at this stage, be limited to the regulation of grading and packing and the prohibition of the sale of any fruit which does not come up to the prescribed standards.<sup>88</sup>

The Treasury agreed that lack of grading and opportunist selling were undermining the fruit industry and approved an additional £1,400 for fruit grading and inspection for the 1964-1965 allocation. The proposed Deciduous Fruit Marketing Board died a stillbirth though it was heavily supported by farmers and some officials.

The Agricultural Marketing Council found many cases where produce marketing was satisfactory, but overall, the standard of marketing was neither satisfactory to producers nor urban food eaters. The most controversial issue was how to raise the farmers' income and

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. minutes of the Committee of the Fruit Growers Pool, held in the B.E.S.L. Clubhouse on Wednesday 20 February 1963 at 10am.

<sup>86</sup> NAZ: F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. letter from B. Walters (Secretary for the Treasury) to the Secretary for Agriculture. 16 April 1964.

<sup>87</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing, memorandum from the Secretary of Agriculture (A. R. Godwin) to the Treasury. 16 March 1964-Marketing of Deciduous Fruits.

<sup>88</sup> NAZ: F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. letter from B. Walters (Secretary for the Treasury) to the Secretary for Agriculture. 16 April 1964.



maintain a low cost living. Farmers complained that middlemen were exploiting them by paying low prices and exploiting the eaters by selling to them at high prices. In 1951, Mr Marshal, the local government officer, reported that:

produce of a certain grower was sold for three pence less 10% in the market. The grower followed his produce to the barrow, where it was resold to him for one shilling and three pence. Divide this between the grower and then public, then retail and grower's price would be ten pence half penny. So let the auctioneers twang be replaced by the cry of "Buy them from the grower."<sup>89</sup>

Farmers and the Agricultural Marketing Council agreed that the producer to eater sale system has distinct advantages such as eliminating unnecessary hawking and promoting a desirable personal relationship between the farmer and food eater that obliges the farmer to maintain supply under adverse conditions.<sup>90</sup> Margolis (1970) and Taylor (1978), contended that a high level of cooperation was vital to solve marketing challenges that undermined the horticultural sector.

In pursuance of their desire to eliminate the middlemen, Mr Marshall, and Mr Coates, attended a meeting organised by the Health, Housing and Native Administration Committee in 1951. They proposed to erect 12 canvas covered stalls on a vacant stand for farmers to sell their produce directly to food eaters and to later establish a wholesale market for agents to sell on behalf of farmers to the public.<sup>91</sup> In their submission, this was not to compete with the municipal market, but to eliminate agents in order to increase farmers' incomes.<sup>92</sup> Council officials agreed with the two representatives that marketing produce in barrows was unhygienic, but rejected their proposals to make direct sales from producers to eaters in municipal markets.<sup>93</sup>

In 1953, farmers, middlemen, food eaters, and state officials agreed that the marketing of fruit and vegetables had many shortfalls, but differed on ways to address them.<sup>94</sup> One of the main problems of municipal markets was that they broadcast inaccurate and inadequate price

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<sup>89</sup> NAZ, LG191, Sale of fruit-vegetables. newspaper cutting, Herald 18/12/1951-E. W. Marshal responding to 'grower'.

<sup>90</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.

<sup>91</sup> NAZ, LG191, Sale of fruit and vegetables. minutes, Health, Housing and Native Administration Committee, 06 December 1951.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.



information. The Agricultural Marketing Council proposed to organise a central intelligence system by setting up a central receiving depot in each town for all produce to pass through.<sup>95</sup> Farmers disagreed with the proposal because it would eliminate direct sales to the public. Alternatively, the Economics and Markets Branch would organise an information system on a voluntary basis using telephoned or telegraphed information to gather information from municipal markets, some farmers, conservation officers, cooperative organisations, and other agents. This voluntary approach was proposed since collecting statistics from all growers was costly and not feasible.<sup>96</sup> Collecting market information before production was essential for local markets to regulate supplies and prices and to penetrate export markets.

The position of imports was also a controversial topic among stakeholders. The Department of Research and Specialist Services pointed out that the country relied on imported produce to augment insufficient production.<sup>97</sup> Southern Rhodesia experienced artificial gluts in October and November as farmers supplied green fresh onions to cash in soon after harvesting. This was followed by a shortage that pushed up prices to justify imports from South Africa and Cyprus. In 1963, the Ministry of Agriculture reported that:

There is still consumer resistance to Eastern Districts fruit and every effort must be made to break this down. The fruit trade has been built up on the basis of South African quality produce and this has handicapped the disposal of the local crop which necessarily includes a proportion of small fruit and other varieties. Small sized fruit (of counts of 200 to 288 apples per bushel) is not necessarily inferior in quality and organised outlets are needed.<sup>98</sup>

Farmers requested protection from produce imports dumped in local markets that undermined local farmers. In 1950, Hargreaves, a farmer, complained of challenges to sell his onion crop because the government allowed the importation of onions from South Africa and

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> NAZ, S2703/7/1 Vol. 1, Fruit growing and marketing 1949 December 19-1951 January 2. letter from the Department of Research and Specialist Services to the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands. 12 December 1950.

<sup>98</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. report of a visit to the deciduous fruit growers in the Eastern Districts. 18 April 1963.





Cyprus.<sup>99</sup> The Umvuma District Farmers Association shared the same view that onions were being dumped from neighbouring countries to the detriment of the local growers.<sup>100</sup>

The Federal Minister of Agriculture stressed that the purpose of controlling imports was to give the local producer the benefit of the local market (Hahlani 2012). In 1963, farmers and the Agricultural Marketing Council agreed that the period of imports control should be extended to give a greater degree of protection to local farmers.<sup>101</sup> The state took a cautious stance regarding imports from South Africa, arguing that South Africa would retaliate by closing the market for tobacco and beef that earned much foreign currency. In 1963 Griffith stressed that restricting onion imports was unnecessary since production was still too low to meet the country's annual needs.<sup>102</sup> The 1948 Trade Agreement with South Africa prevented Southern Rhodesia from restricting or banning onion imports from South Africa.

The Department of Research and Specialist Services further dismissed calls by farmers to restrict onions from South Africa arguing that onion imports were not depressing market prices as purported by farmers. The Secretary for Agriculture further argued that onions were not dumped in the country since they were sold for profitable prices to the farmer and exports from South Africa were not state subsidised.<sup>103</sup> South Africa restricted onion exports in 1950 due to drought and food eaters in Southern Rhodesia paid high prices as a result of the shortage that followed.<sup>104</sup> Farmers who complained about difficulties in selling their onions either expected a higher than the prevailing market price or were impatient, by the time the Department of Agriculture approached them, they would have sold their onions.<sup>105</sup> Produce imports augmented local production that could not meet the domestic needs and checked the cost of produce from rising that benefited food eaters.

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<sup>99</sup> NAZ, S2703/7/1 Vol. 1, Fruit growing and marketing 1949 December 19-1951 January 2. letter from the Department of Research and Specialist Services to the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands. 12 December 1950.

<sup>100</sup> NAZ, S2703/7/1 Vol. 1, Fruit growing and marketing 1949 December 19-1951 January 2. letter from the Umvuma District Farmers Association (Secretary H. Holden) to the Secretary. Department of Agriculture, 8 November 1950.

<sup>101</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. memorandum-Minister (Per the Secretary) from R. A. Griffith. 21 June 1963.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> NAZ, S2703/7/1 Vol. 1, Fruit growing and marketing 1949 December 19-1951 January 2. reply to Umvuma District Farmers Association. 6 December 1950.

<sup>105</sup> NAZ, S2703/7/1 Vol. 1, Fruit growing and marketing 1949 December 19-1951 January 2. letter from the Department of Research and Specialist Services to the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands. 12 December 1950.



In the 1940s arrangements were made for the Rhodesian Railways to transport fresh produce from farms to markets in Salisbury and Bulawayo. The Rhodesian Railways allocated Farmers' Co-ops a rail truck twice a week for transporting vegetables from Mutare, but the farmers were responsible for icing the truck. The Agricultural Marketing Council criticised the Rhodesian Railways transport services for unsuitable timetables, long periods required to deliver produce at stations before the trains depart, slow trains, lack of cold trucks and rail cars, delays at receiving station, high charges and rough handling.<sup>106</sup> Due to these problems, in 1947, 2,200lbs of vegetables transported on rail from Passaford Siding in Mashonaland to the Farmers' Co-op in Salisbury went off and were thrown away on delivery.<sup>107</sup>

The Rhodesian Railways pointed out that its wagons were designed for heavy loads, and it was difficult to transport small quantities of produce delivered by farmers. In 1952 around 3,000lbs of produce was delivered by farmers per week and occupied a small fraction of the 30ton wagon.<sup>108</sup> The produce was divided into 80 to 150 parcels consigned to market masters and many customers away from the rail stations.<sup>109</sup> The Rhodesian Railways refused to offer refrigerated or louvered trucks citing the absence of strong evidence of increasing quantities to fully utilise them.<sup>110</sup>

In 1963, the Manicaland Farmers Co-op contracted Smith and Youngson Transport to transport fruits to Salisbury, but the cost was double normal rail charges.<sup>111</sup> Cold trucks were offered to transport beans and peas from Chimanimani, Chipinge and Nyanyadzi to Mutare Processing Factory. The produce was packed in sacks restricting free cool air circulation and arrived in a poor condition at the factory for dehydration. Fruit farmers thought the cold trucks were ideal for fruits that were packed in crates. This was also unsuccessful because farmers could not guarantee the required 6 tonnes minimum load for transport to Salisbury.<sup>112</sup>

In 1953, the Agricultural Marketing Council claimed that the marketing of produce in municipal markets in Harare and Bulawayo was chaotic and poorly packaged. The Agricultural Marketing

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<sup>106</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.

<sup>107</sup> NAZ, LG191/11/224 Delivery of fresh vegetables to Salisbury. June 1947.

<sup>108</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F1, Fruit and vegetable marketing. memorandum, transport of deciduous fruit: Ref 8.4.16/200.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.



Council pointed out that manufacturers of standard packaging materials were absent in the country therefore boxes were difficult to obtain. Farmers and cooperative distributing agencies complained that standard packages were expensive, and it was not clear whether the containers were returnable or not.<sup>113</sup>

In 1964, the Bulawayo Council raised the same concern about disorderly marketing of produce and the failure to encourage farmers to use standard packages.<sup>114</sup> The challenge was serious among African farmers who delivered produce in poor packages such as sacks, old broken baskets and tins and sold in punnets, pockets, cases, bunches, boxes, baskets, piles, plastic bags or loose columns on a table. Poor packaging increased produce waste since “anything packed in a grain bag from Mutare would never reach Bulawayo fit for consumption.”<sup>115</sup> Merchants also complained about poorly packed and damaged fruits delivered by farmers and underscored the essence of giving feedback to farmers on the state produce arrived in at markets to solve the problem. Improving packaging could increase farmers’ incomes as bruised fruits received low prices.

The Bulawayo Municipality requested the government to pass laws to control packaging and accelerate the adoption of standard packaging. The municipality contracted a local firm to supply standardised cardboard boxes to pack tomatoes, onions and other produce. Farmers who adopted the standard packages obtained better prices and food eaters benefitted from quality produce.<sup>116</sup> The Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Senior Horticulturalist and Salisbury Market Master considered the proposal to legislate standard packaging and unanimously opposed it. The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands was:

aware of the problems that arose when produce arrived on the market in variegated assortments of containers and appreciated that the presentation of produce in standard forms of packing can only be beneficial to all concerned with marketing, it nonetheless felt that the situation does not call for government to legislate at the present time.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.

<sup>114</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and vegetable marketing: municipal markets. vol. I, a letter from the Bulawayo City Council Town Clerk to the Secretary Ministry of Agriculture. 29 April 1964.

<sup>115</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and vegetable marketing: municipal markets. vol. I, letter from M. G. B. Rooney (for Secretary of Agriculture) to the Town Clerk. 30 May 1964.



The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands concluded that the proposal was unnecessary since commercial farmers were gradually adopting more efficient and better presented packaging of produce to receive better prices.<sup>118</sup> Also, similar debates about how to standardise packaging took place in South Africa and the matter was exhaustively investigated and it was opposed.<sup>119</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands acknowledged that standard packaging benefited farmers and promoted it, but maintained that freedom must be allowed for the benefit of small-scale farmers.<sup>120</sup> Legislating standard packaging would prove uneconomical and drive small-scale farmers to evade selling in municipal markets and instead sell produce through other channels.<sup>121</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands emphasised that undercapitalised farmers who could not afford standard packaging were encouraged to present produce in a manner they find most convenient and to their best advantage.<sup>122</sup>

The implementation and supervision of standard packaging would be difficult and expensive especially considering the small volume of horticultural produce marketed by farmers.<sup>123</sup> Also, the existing marketing practices were supported for presenting an:

opportunity for the housewife to purchase fruit and vegetables in lots that are convenient to her requirements. Standard packaging is of greater interest to the wholesaler buying in bulk. Although it can be argued that many housewives buy vegetables and fruit in standard packages such as pockets and share them out amongst themselves, it still does not remove the objection to the fact that standard packaging tends to limit the scope offered to the customer regarding the make-up and size of the lots offered for sale.<sup>124</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands hailed box frames placed on selling tables used in Salisbury as the answer to handling loose produce and recommended the Bulawayo Council to adopt it since it was cost effective.

In 1963, the Health, Housing and African Administration Committee recommended the introduction of market agents in the Salisbury Municipal Market for an initial two years with

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and Vegetable Marketing: Municipal Markets. Vol. I, Letter from M. G. B. Rooney (for Secretary of Agriculture) to the Town Clerk, 30 May 1964.

<sup>124</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and vegetable marketing: municipal markets. vol. I, memorandum-standard packing, Senior Principal (E&M) from Rooney. 12.5.64.



a possible one year extension to increase its business.<sup>125</sup> The 1945 Salisbury Market bylaw was amended in 1965 to allow the adoption and operation of agents in municipal markets. The amendment made provision for the fixing of a commission charged for goods supplied by agents and to prohibit the sale of articles within the market area except in the retail shops or stalls permitted therein.<sup>126</sup> The Chairman of the Market Advisory Sub-committee invited its members to comment on the merits of market agents and observations on their practical operation. The sub-committee believed market agents would even out supplies thereby reducing gluts and shortages cycles that led to produce price fluctuations. This was crucial to farmers who customarily attached reserve prices to their produce. Market agents would gather and circulate invaluable production and market intelligence to promote insurance and continuity of supplies.<sup>127</sup>

The sub-committee, however, concluded that the adoption of market agents in municipal markets was unjustified due to the low market turnover, estimated at £200,000 per annum.<sup>128</sup> Municipal markets were facing competition from private enterprises.<sup>129</sup> The sub-committee doubted that agents would agree to work because they were interested in packaged goods which formed approximately 60% of the total volume of produce handled in the market.<sup>130</sup> The sub-committee feared the introduction of market agents would increase produce prices and the cost of living to food eaters.<sup>131</sup> It was feared few people would respond to the invitation for agents. The combined commission was believed to be unattractive to farmers and the one year trial and error period was too short to justify the injection of substantial amounts of funds.<sup>132</sup> The initial one year period was short, since the market agent's role was to bring new business, they would spent 6-7 months in the background canvassing in the country, building connections and convincing farmers to sell through the municipal market.<sup>133</sup> The initial contract period was increased to two years with a possible extension by one year.

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<sup>125</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and vegetable marketing: municipal markets. vol. I, minutes of meeting of the Market Advisory Sub-committee held in the committee room town house on Monday, 28 January 1963.

<sup>126</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and vegetable marketing: municipal markets. vol. I, minutes of meeting of the above sub-committee held in the council chamber, town house. on Tuesday, 23 March, 1965, at 4 p.m.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and vegetable marketing: municipal markets. vol. I, notes on meeting of Market Advisory Sub-committee on 28 January 1963.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.



It was clearly spelt out that there should be three market agents in the Salisbury market and not less or more than three.

The Salisbury Municipality adopted a Five-Year Capital Development Programme from 1965/66 to 1969/70 to modernise and increase sales in the municipal market. The programme approved £27,500 for extending market buildings, £3,350 for a car park in 1965/66 and £2,000 for market furniture and equipment. An initial £1,000 for the year 1965/66 and thereafter £250 per year was budgeted for maintenance until 1969/70.<sup>134</sup>

In 1964, the city Treasurer investigated the desirability of publicising the activities of the Municipal Produce Market to increase the volume of produce it handled. The city Treasurer proposed a sustained campaign targeting farmers and buyers for between three to six months.<sup>135</sup> The weekly Rhodesian Farmer, a magazine, was used to reach out to farmers since it was the official organ of the Rhodesian National Farmers Union (RNFU) circulating 7, 000 copies.<sup>136</sup> Radio, television and spot advertising were proposed for adverts targeting urban people. The city Treasurer directed the Health, Housing and African Administration Committee to budget funds for 1965/66 for an advertising campaign to promote the Salisbury Municipal Market.

The city Treasurer was optimistic that the business handled by the municipal market would increase in the short run. One of the biggest fruit producers informed the market master that its Board of Directors was not happy with how its fruits were handled and the prices they received in the past, but promised to market all fruits it cannot export in the municipal market only.<sup>137</sup> The RNFU at its annual congress unanimously upheld a recommendation from the Fruit and Vegetable Producers for all produce farmers to sell through municipal markets.<sup>138</sup> The city Treasurer further justified the new budget by stressing that the turnover of the Salisbury Municipal Market increased by approximately £22,000 in the seven months compared to the corresponding period in 1963 and the trend was likely to continue.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and vegetable marketing: municipal markets. vol. I, minutes of meeting of the above Sub-committee held in the council chamber, town house, on Tuesday, 23 March, 1965, at 4 p.m.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



In the early 1960s, the RNFU suggested the reorganisation of the Salisbury Municipal Market to sell packaged wholesale units only. In 1963, Mr Churchill, the Director of Markets in Durban, assessed the feasibility of the proposal. The Director found that the reorganisation could contribute positively to the operation of the produce market. In his view:

The intake, handling, sale and despatch of large consignments would considerably simplify the operation of the market and remove the frustration felt by many large-scale buyers who are forced, ... to spend long hours at the market while the housewife choose retail quantities which she hopes to get at a wholesale price.<sup>140</sup>

Churchill recommended that the Salisbury Municipal Market be reorganised to sell mainly wholesale units, but maintain retail sales despite the difficulties of reconciling retail demand with wholesale sales.<sup>141</sup> He explained that:

As it is inadvisable to divide the buying power, I recommend that those housewives who wish to attend auction sales on the Salisbury Market should continue to do so in competition with other buyers even at the wholesale section when established as recommended hereunder. As produce is in any event auctioned and sold per unit, the only real problem which this creates is the valuable time taken up to serve many small purchases at an auction sale.<sup>142</sup>

Churchill stressed that the dividing line between wholesale and retail sales was relatively indistinct, and it was unnecessary to force an arbitrary distinction between the two.<sup>143</sup> Conducting retail and wholesale sales simultaneously promotes competitive buying essential to stabilise producer and urban food prices.<sup>144</sup>

He pointed out that a Committee of Inquiry in South Africa carefully examined the question of dividing produce markets into wholesale and retail sections, and it found that:

The reorganisation of markets as proposed can work on larger markets and where the system has been implemented or experimented, it was unsuccessful because it was difficult and impractical to divide produce, retail buyers claimed the right to attend the wholesale section no matter how produce was allocated between the wholesale and retail sections and since retail buyers are slow bidders, average prices in the retail and wholesale sections were different.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> NAZ, F226/1237/F2, Fruit and vegetable marketing: municipal markets. vol.I, report by the city treasurer: municipal market: retail and wholesale sale. 4 October 1963.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.



Overall, Churchill concluded that experiences in other countries show that the proposal carries more disadvantages than advantages. The question should be further reviewed in the future when the market size and turnover increase.<sup>146</sup> The Salisbury Municipality agreed that the time was not yet ripe to reorganise the Salisbury Municipal Market.<sup>147</sup>

In 1965, the problems of produce marketing in Southern Rhodesia were debated in the Legislative Assembly. In his contribution to the debate, Newington, MP for Hillcrest, characterised market relations as a two-way responsibility, the responsibility of grower to agent and agent to grower.<sup>148</sup> He dismissed the argument that selling agents were ineffectual, inefficient, and formed buying rings that short-changed farmers. The cooperation between farmers and agents and farmers' understanding of the agents' problems as selling problems could improve the marketing of produce.<sup>149</sup> He further submitted that selling agents were not solely responsible for the chaotic conditions in produce markets, farmers were mainly responsible since they refused to take advice from the agents. In his words:

I do not believe the growers themselves could give the agents correct information and that many of the trials and troubles that the fruit market has had were directly the responsibility of the growers, or if they were not the responsibility of the growers, were due to lack of liaison and understanding of the problem of selling.<sup>150</sup>

In 1953, the Agricultural Marketing Council suggested that a more intimate and personal relationship between the producer and marketing organisations would go far to improve conditions in municipal markets.<sup>151</sup>

#### **4.4. Africans in Horticultural Production and Marketing up to 1979**

African farmers were the earliest to market produce in Salisbury soon after the city's establishment in 1890. The white settlers who were prospecting for gold depended on food from African farmers (Mlambo 2014). Africans produced for the market mainly to meet the colonial tax demands and avoid joining the colonial labour market. Africans, especially the Shona, asserted their independence by resisting joining the colonial labour market and

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Mr J. A. Newington, MP Hillcrest, marketing of agricultural products. Southern Rhodesia, Legislative Assembly Debates, vol. 60, 1965,

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.





considered those who did as having sunk low economically and socially (Palmer 1977). As early as 1898, women and young girls from adjacent areas, such as Seke, Epworth, Goromonzi and Domboshava produced and sold fresh produce in Salisbury (Barnes and Win 1992, Schmidt 1992). Africans adopted new horticultural crops in response to the expanding European market (Ranger 1985). Palmer (1977) describes this as a minor agricultural revolution in response to rising food demand in mines and towns.

In response to the failure to discover the second rand<sup>152</sup> in Zimbabwe, the colonial state adopted the White Agricultural Policy in 1908. The policy promoted settler agriculture and settler farming was quickly transformed from “market gardening for Salisbury” to a serious colonial economic sector (Palmer 1977). As more white settlers undertook farming, they joined hands with miners and pressurised the state to curb African agriculture to reduce competition and increase labour supplies (Madimu 2017). There is consensus that the colonial government’s response was to make sure that African peasant agriculture and produce marketing were short lived (Palmer 1997, Phimister 1988, Chamlee-Wright, Schmidt 1992). The colonial state intensified a separate development policy from the 1930s to promote the interests of white settlers and protect them from African competition. To curtail African farmers’ competition, Africans were dispossessed of their land, and this was sealed by the Land Apportionment Act in 1930. From the 1930s, African farmers were segregated in markets using the Maize Control Act (1934) and the Cattle Levy Act (1934). The dual economy that resulted from these policies favoured white settler agriculture and undermined African agriculture. Consequently, many Africans joined the colonial labour market (Palmer 1977, Shonhe 2017).

A considerable number of Africans continued to find avenues to survive independently despite the repressive laws. Schmidt (1992) acknowledges that Africans were indeed at the end of the rope by the late 1930s, but women in Goromonzi intensified horticultural production for marketing in Harare. The women irrigated crops from streams to increase yields to exploit the profitable Harare market. African farmers continued to participate in the produce industry despite state efforts to destroy African agriculture. In 1950, the Food Production Committee reported that many Africans in Salisbury and nearby farms maintained moderately to

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<sup>152</sup> The Witwatersrand in South Africa was the site of the discovery of extensive gold deposits that reshaped that country’s economy and society.



extremely well-tendered produce for marketing in the city.<sup>153</sup> Ranger (1985) hails this as the “African choice of the peasant solution”.

African farmers and traders were prohibited from selling produce in the ‘European markets’ from the 1930s. In 1936, the colonial state passed the Native Registration Act that was meant to control the movement of Africans in urban areas. In 1941 and 1945, the Land Apportionment Act was amended and divided urban areas along racial lines. Each race was to reside and do business in its own area. All African traders were required to vacate ‘European areas’ to African townships. According to Arrighi (1967), the act prevented interracial competition in food trading through prohibiting African ownership or lease of premises in European areas. Wild (1991) states that African traders were pushed to poor markets following the adoption of systematic segregation and this curtailed their growth. The Native Registration Act, 1936 and the Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act, 1946 also restricted African traders and farmers to sell in African townships only. The pieces of legislation were meant to prevent competition from African farmers so as to protect the interests of white settler farmers (Sylvester 1991).

Colonial officials claimed that African horticultural farmers sold their produce to Europeans in Harare at the expense of their nourishment.<sup>154</sup> As succinctly captured by the Food Production Committee; “...in the reserves and purchase areas Africans should essentially be a peasant farmer and emphasis should be laid on his primary need to produce the varied food requirements of himself and his family.”<sup>155</sup> The committee suggested that propaganda should be used to stop Africans from marketing their produce. Andersson (2002) argues that market segregation was aimed at discouraging African farmers from producing for marketing. The requirement to register all African farmers and for them to submit returns and to place them under same controls as European farmers were designed to eliminate all except a few educated African farmers.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> NAZ, S955/208 Native Production and Trade Commission, written evidence submitted to the Native Production and Trade Commission by the Central Food Production Committee in reply to the former’s questionnaire.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.



Many settlers supported the segregation of African produce farmers. In 1938, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Lands justified excluding African farmers from markets on the basis that:

raising and maintaining the European standard of living requires some effective measure to be adopted to ensure to him a major portion of the local markets in European areas (at prices which can be controlled) and in those overseas export markets for specified products which can be expected to afford him a reasonable return more than the costs of production. Argument is sometimes advanced that it is not in accordance with the British traditions of African administration, and would be unjust, to limit the access of African producers to markets in the European areas of principal consumption. I suggest that this contention is a fallacy. European occupation, enterprise and capital have created these markets, and during their creation and expansion into larger markets overseas and adjoining territories, and indigenous Africans have played only a passive part...<sup>157</sup>

Africans were restricted from making direct producer to eater sales and allowed to sell in African markets only. It was suggested that their produce should receive low prices since they incurred lower production cost and handling small quantities of produce from African farmers was costly.<sup>158</sup> Colonial officials argued that African farmers could sell profitably at prices below economic prices for settler farmers because they acquired land freely (Moyana 1984).

The colonial officials were determined to restrict equal participation by African farmers in the local markets. In 1938, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Lands saw “no good reason why it should be felt that in order to afford the [African] of Southern Rhodesia a fair return for his agricultural products he must be allowed to sell those products in local European areas.”<sup>159</sup> Instead African competition should:

be faced at once, and courageously, otherwise the extinction of the European farmer through African competition must, I believe, be merely a question of time. To remove competition effectively, legislation would require to be enacted, apportioning their respective share in local European markets, to European and native producers.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> NAZ, S1215/1208/1 Marketing of native agricultural products. letter to the Hon. Prime Minister from the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands, 31 May 1938.

<sup>158</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.

<sup>159</sup> NAZ, S1215/1208/1 Marketing of native agricultural products. letter to the Hon. Prime Minister from the Secretary Department of Agriculture and Lands, 31 May 1938.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.



The “European” market for all crops including potatoes, onion, citrus fruit, apples, pears, soft fruits and nuts and green vegetables was reserved for white settler farmers.<sup>161</sup>

From the late 1940s, the new economic and social realities in colonial Zimbabwe pressurised the colonial state to slightly shift its view towards African agriculture (Barnes and Win 1992). The rapid expansion of secondary industries, increased job opportunities, intensified implementation of the Land Apportionment Act all increased African migration to towns resulting in greater urbanisation (Mlambo 2009). In 1949, the Marketing Officer estimated that:

African reserves cover one quarter of the total land in the colony and in the past African producers were discouraged to produce beyond subsistence, but because of the rapidly increasing population in Southern Rhodesia, African farmers should make an increasing contribution to food supplies.<sup>162</sup>

The increased urban population increased the demand for food. Kauma and Swart (2021) note that Africans’ production and consumption of fresh produce like green vegetables and tomatoes increased between 1939 and 1944. Also responding to this new development, in 1938, F. E. Harris, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, suggested that the Native Commissioners should go beyond collecting taxes and controlling the morals of Africans and uplift their standard of living through encouraging African farmers to produce more, improve their agricultural methods and market their crops.<sup>163</sup>

In 1944 the Native Production and Trade Commission was appointed to examine African marketing problems. A mission was sent to study African production and marketing practices and methods in British colonies in West and East Africa and the Belgian Congo. Thereafter the Native Production and Marketing Branch and the Native Production and Marketing Council were set up in January and April 1948 respectively to deal with all problems in African agricultural production and marketing. In 1949 the Marketing Officer argued that:

The collection and marketing of small individual production of some 300,000 to 400,000 [African] families call for special methods and it has gradually become apparent

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> NAZ, S1611, Working Papers used by CNC in compilation of annual reports: 1937-1948. report of the Native Production and Marketing Branch for the year 1948 (Salisbury, April 13th, 1949, Marketing Officer-A. Pendered).

<sup>163</sup> NAZ, S1215/1208/1 Marketing of native agricultural products. letter from the chairman of the Minister of Agriculture and Lands (F. E. Harris) to the Hon. Prime Minister, 7 November 1938.



that if this production is to be used effectively, a suitable marketing organisation must be evolved.<sup>164</sup>

The contribution of African farmers to the country's food supplies was appreciated since the 1940s, as reflected in the colonial thinking, but the colonial state maintained segregation policies.

In 1958, a survey on the marketing facilities available for Africans was conducted in major cities. It found reasonable marketing facilities in Mutare, limited facilities in Harare, and absolutely none in Bulawayo and Gweru. In Salisbury, there was Musika in Harare [Mbare Township] with 250 tables for hire and at the Community Centre 34 stalls that were hired at 6d and 1/- per day respectively.<sup>165</sup> Hawkers were not allowed in Harare, in contrast to Bulawayo where licensed hawkers were permitted except for selling local produce where a licence was not required. Following these findings, the Department of Native Agriculture stressed the urgent need to establish urban marketing facilities for African farmers to diversify their crops and provide the urban African a better balanced and more nutritious diet.<sup>166</sup> To pre-empt the cost excuse, the Department of Native Agriculture stated that establishing markets in African townships involved little, if any, capital expenditure, although overnight accommodation for farmers presented a problem.<sup>167</sup>

In 1958, the Salisbury Municipality denied the responsibility for developing markets. The town clerk argued that the request to build markets by the Department of Native Agriculture was an unreasonable interpretation of section 53 of the Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act, 1951. The act only gave powers and responsibility to the council to control Africans wanting to carry on business, trade or hawk within a proclaimed area.<sup>168</sup> Further, the Health, Housing and Native Administration Committee stated that it lacked funds due to the urgent need to provide housing for Africans in employment and could not build markets for Africans.<sup>169</sup> The council was prepared to assist to build markets in African areas

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> NAZ, LG191/12/7/3/2, Marketing in native residential areas. extracts from memorandum-municipal markets. Ref No.4685/NEM.29/3.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> NAZ, LG191/12/7/3/2, Marketing in native residential areas. letter from the Town Clerk to the Secretary for Native Affairs. 12 December 1958.

<sup>169</sup> NAZ, LG191/12/7/3/2, Marketing in native residential areas. provision of marketing facilities in native residential areas. memorandum from Health, Housing and Native Administration Committee, 17 November 1958.



if funds were provided from another source, for instance the Native Development Fund. The council further stressed that the Salisbury Municipal Market, though it was located outside African Urban Areas, was available to African farmers, with a small number of African farmers already using it.<sup>170</sup>

Between 1953 and 1963 the colonial state became indifferent to improving the marketing of African produce. Agriculture was organised on racial rather than functional basis and the paternalistic controls imposed created problems for African farmers.<sup>171</sup> The marketing system was designed to meet the requirements of the white commercial farmers at the expense of African farmers.<sup>172</sup> According to Burrows,

many of the problems of [African] marketing (and some charges of paternalism) have arisen because we have tried to impose a sophisticated complex system of grades, prices and marketing facilities on a dual economy, where the bulk of the cultivators are not able to conform. The inability of peasant farmers to fit into the national marketing system compelled the old Native Department to provide special marketing services, and an ancillary marketing organisation was built up on racial lines.<sup>173</sup>

In 1955, the Federal Government justified marketing segregation of African farmers arguing that “marketing schemes covering large areas, with such very small individual production, have of necessity been relatively expensive per unit of produce. This was inevitable in a backward society, so unskilled in agriculture and so unorganised for economic purposes.”<sup>174</sup>

The collapse of the federation in 1963 presented an opportunity to re-organise the marketing structure and move away race-based marketing systems. Burrow pointed out that there were important political and sound economic reasons to discard the federal paternalistic controls and racial discrimination in marketing.<sup>175</sup> African agriculture’s contribution to economic growth was viewed as vital. Burrow argued that the future development of Southern Rhodesia’s economy depended on African agriculture and anything that impeded increased African farmers’ productivity was retarding the development of the whole economy.<sup>176</sup> Soper

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Report by John R. Burrows (Economist), agricultural marketing and the peasant farmer: a review of the problems of marketing in the subsistence sector-Ministry of Internal Affairs. Salisbury, January 1964.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Government of Southern Rhodesia, what the Native Land Husbandry Act means to the rural African and to Southern Rhodesia: a five-year plan that would revolutionise African agriculture. 1955.

<sup>175</sup> Report by John R. Burrows (Economist), Agricultural marketing and the peasant farmer: a review of the problems of marketing in the subsistence sector-Ministry of Internal Affairs. Salisbury, January 1964.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.



(1956) emphasised that “...every industrial revolution has its agrarian counterpart.” The state proposed to improve African agriculture through measures such as guaranteeing markets, promoting aggregation, establishing cooperatives and accurate pricing of produce.

The colonial state sought to develop an inclusive horticultural sector in the 1970s through improving African farmers’ and urban people’s incomes to centralising food marketing to achieve economic wellbeing and growth (Drakakis-Smith and Kivell 1990). The state investigated the market requirements for the African population, improved their purchasing power and encouraged African farmers to engage in horticultural production (Robinson 1978). Mackenzie (1978) found that the sales of fruit and vegetables by Africans increased due to increased consumption by the urban African population that depended on purchased food and improved availability in rural areas. African businessmen contributed immensely to the distribution of produce in urban and rural areas.<sup>177</sup>

African traders and farmers hawked produce door to door directly to urban food eaters. Some African traders stocked produce from municipal markets to resell in open markets in townships.<sup>178</sup> The colonial laws did not allow Africans to sell at stationary positions, therefore some Africans walked around or used bicycles to sell their produce to Indians.<sup>179</sup> In 1953, the Agricultural Marketing Council commented that:

In view of the widely scattered suburbs of the larger towns, the difficulties of transport for housewives, the fact that many hawkers are also producers, and the difficulty of administering prohibition or greater control than is at present exercised by local authorities, we do not consider that hawking activities should be prohibited, but we recommend that more control in regard to licencing, on the health side and the areas they cover should be introduced as circumstances permit.<sup>180</sup>

It further argued that the replacement of the door-to-door marketing method, which most European farmers find uneconomical, by registration of African farmers or forcing their

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<sup>177</sup> During the 1990s, produce hawkers were still moving door to door in rural areas. Muputwa was one of the produce traders who moved around selling oranges and other fruits in Mwenezi District in Masvingo. Farmers also delivered produce such as potatoes to sell in rural areas.

<sup>178</sup> Interview, Ngwenya, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>179</sup> Several groups of people arrived and settled in Zimbabwe at different intervals after 1890. These groups included the white settlers, the Jews, Indians, Greeks, and other African groups such as the Sotho who came from South Africa.

<sup>180</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.



production through compulsory channels was unwise, unnecessary, and extremely expensive.<sup>181</sup>

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that the production and marketing of horticultural produce in colonial Zimbabwe was difficult and contested. The domestic market was small and the export market too competitive. State officials, municipal authorities, farmers, and food eaters could not agree on how to develop the horticultural industry. The colonial state and settler farmers agreed to segregate African farmers to eliminate them from urban markets to promote their own interests. Municipal markets in Harare and Bulawayo were key urban markets for fresh produce marketing and settlers regarded them as European markets, where African farmers should not sell. It was towards the end of the colonial period that lukewarm efforts were made to integrate Africans into the produce industry. African farmers intensified horticultural production in response to the growth of cities and continued to market their produce in urban markets despite the intensification of segregation since the 1930s. These efforts were instrumental in the horticultural industry and laid the roots for the rise of Mbare Musika. African farmers and traders retreated to African townships where they established produce markets. The failure to find an agreeable marketing system in colonial Zimbabwe made it possible for produce markets such as Mbare Musika to emerge and grow. Having discussed developments in the horticultural sector that formed the background to the rise and development of Mbare Musika, the next chapter focuses on the emergence and development of Mbare Musika in Harare.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.





## 5. Chapter Five: A History of Mbare Musika: Colonial and Postcolonial Developments

*Markets are wild beasts. They are valuable, but often uncontrolled and fail to discern the quality of a transaction. They have values and strengths, which should be recognized. But they also need to be tamed and coordinated, rather than demonized (Pierluigi Milone and Flamina Ventura 2015: 44)*

### 5.1. Introduction

Mbare Musika emerged during the colonial period and has been operational for close to a century in 2023 as I complete this thesis in 2023. The market emerged in response to the rising food demand following the establishment of Harare. The colonial policies shaped African produce marketing and the birth and early development of Mbare Musika. This chapter traces the history of Mbare Musika from its inception to 2019. The chapter investigates the activities in the market during its embryonic stages and how they led to the further growth of Mbare Musika. It seeks to explain the transformation of the market to a legitimate market in the eyes' of the authorities and the development of its infrastructure and governance during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The chapter also explores the responses of actors in Mbare Musika to the socioeconomic and political changes that took place in Zimbabwe. It explores the actors' actions, strategies, and perceptions and how they shaped Mbare Musika. The chapter relies mainly on archival material and oral history to recover the colonial and post-colonial developments in Mbare Musika.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section explores the responses of the Salisbury Municipality to Africans marketing produce in Harare. The second section investigates how Africans' trading activities led to the emergence of Mbare Musika. Section three traces the developments in Mbare Musika from 1980 to 1999. Section four traces developments in Mbare Musika between 2000 and 2019 in the face of the economic crisis. The last section is an examination of the impact of Cholera and Covid-19 on produce marketing in Mbare Musika.

### 5.2. Produce Marketing in Salisbury

The idea of marketing produce through municipal markets in Harare was adopted during the colonial period. South Africa always influenced developments in Southern Rhodesia (Moyana 1984) and the municipal market model was developed with assistance from South Africa. In 1951, the Salisbury Council sent councillor A. W. Sturges to a Market Masters Conference in



Muizenberg in South Africa. Sturges came back convinced that municipal marketing was a service to both the producers and urban food eaters and should claim more attention from the Salisbury Council than it was receiving then.<sup>182</sup> Sturges stressed that it was the responsibility of the council to invest in markets to ensure adequate food supplies to the growing urban populations away from shops. In his report:

The available sources of supply were inadequate since shops in Salisbury were centralised and people walked long distances to get produce. Private enterprises also failed to cater for the needed supplies at reasonable cost and convenience making it the council's responsibility to invest in markets. Hawkers were partly filling the gap between shops and homes, but their services were not satisfactory because they were unreliable in their visits, some places were not served and their prices too high and extortionate.<sup>183</sup>

Sturges reported visiting the Municipal Retail Market Square at Salt River in Cape Town that had permanent stalls leased to traders. He reported that produce was displayed attractively, and prices were strictly controlled. The market square allowed cars and it was evidently popular for fresh produce buying. Sturges concluded municipal marketing was “the best way to bring the market close to people and control prices to avoid extortionate retail prices charged by traders.”<sup>184</sup> Municipal markets supplied adequate produce close to homes and were essential for the wellbeing of urban people therefore the council should prioritise their development.<sup>185</sup>

The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 empowered the council to set aside African Urban Areas and disallowed Africans to own properties in the city (Wild 1991). The act also gave the Salisbury Council powers and mandate to provide houses, shops, firewood huts, trading tables, water, electricity lights and sanitary services in African areas.<sup>186</sup> With the approval of the Governor, the Salisbury Council appointed a superintendent, deputy superintendent and assistant superintendents to manage African areas. The superintendent labelled and affixed a number on every house, shop, and trading table that was built in African townships. Space for accommodation or trading was rented from the council through applying to the superintendent. In 1940, the Salisbury Municipality rented trading stalls in African markets at

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<sup>182</sup> NAZ, LG191/12/33/4, Operation of mobile markets or suburban markets. report by Councillor A. W. Sturgess, Market Masters Conference: Muinenberg, 1951. 25th April 1951.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid

<sup>186</sup> NAZ, S1542/L5A 1933-1940, Land Apportionment Act, memorandum. regulations for the Salisbury native area: Land Apportionment Act, section 32. 24<sup>th</sup> June 1940.



£0.0s. 6d./day.<sup>187</sup> The marketing regulations stipulated that “no person shall trade at any place in the area except in, at or from a shop, firewood hut or trading table.”<sup>188</sup> The idea of approved and unapproved markets operations in Harare today can be traced to this period.

Though the officials were convinced that municipal markets served the interests of both farmers and food eaters, many farmers were dissatisfied with how produce was marketed in the Salisbury Municipal Market. Municipal markets were unpopular with farmers, including settler farmers, for maintaining strict standards, delaying payments for weeks or months and refusing to pay for produce that rotted in the market before it was sold.<sup>189</sup> *Makoronyera* (farmers’ agents) became popular with farmers since they bought all grades, paid cash on the spot and were linked to the growing African produce marketing.<sup>190</sup> African traders established “parallel markets” mostly in Fourth and Rezende Street in the city centre that were later condemned and prohibited by the Salisbury Municipality.

The Salisbury Municipality condemned African produce marketing in the city centre citing several reasons. In 1951, the Salisbury Municipality justified interventions to:

put an end to the growing practice of vegetable hawkers carrying on their trade from stationary positions in certain [parts] of the major city thoroughfares as the congregation of customers and their motorcars not only turn the streets into open-air fruit and vegetable markets but increase the traffic congestion.<sup>191</sup>

The growing population and demand for food in Harare explained the emergence of open air markets, it became possible to trade at fixed positions thereby abandoning the mobility previously practiced.<sup>192</sup> The Salisbury Council argued that it was not much concerned with the space occupied by barrows as causing congestion, the major issue was the large numbers of Africans who gathered around barrows and moved back and forth across the road.<sup>193</sup> There were complaints that emergent markets generated large amounts of dirt and litter scattered in the surrounding streets and there was an absence of toilets for traders and their customers

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Interviews, Ishewedu and Ngwena, agents. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> NAZ, S3609/10, Salisbury Street Vendors Bylaws from 29 October 1941 to 31.12.55. letter from the Town Clerk Department to the Local Government Officer. 23 July 1953.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> NAZ, S3603/11, Salisbury Food Stalls Bylaws, from 20th August 1937 to 23 August 1956. letter from the Prime Minister’s Office to Messrs Gaukroger and Padgett. 25th November 1954.



who extensively foul the whole place.<sup>194</sup> The Salisbury Council wanted to maintain a good image of the city and proposed that further measures should be implemented to prohibit African street traders. This was because the 1950 bylaws that aimed to prohibit African produce traders from certain streets failed to serve their purpose, traders merely moved to other streets and created similar problems.<sup>195</sup> In the council's view, African street traders were unnecessary since Salisbury had eleven shops and the Salisbury Municipal Market that sold fresh produce at convenient times each day.<sup>196</sup>

In 1951, the Agricultural Marketing Council recorded the following views against African produce traders:

hawkers, particularly native hawkers, are a public nuisance; that their storage conditions are in many instances insanitary; with inadequate supervision and control by the local authority, they buy poor produce and sell it at exorbitant prices; that they are merely a convenience to the lazy housewife; that their activities result in unfairness to both the consumer [eater] and producer; that they should be prohibited in town and suburban areas and that this was achieved in one large town in the colony by inducing producers to supply only to the local co-op., so that the co-op. was able to run a house-to-house delivery twice a week...<sup>197</sup>

The Assistant Native Commissioner of Nkai claimed that Africans were poor businessmen who enjoyed high profits by selling at high prices therefore suffered low turnover and increased the cost of living.<sup>198</sup> Ngwena, a retired *koronyera*, confirmed that the colonial state did not want African traders to sell fresh produce in Harare on the basis that they were unhygienic.<sup>199</sup>

The Salisbury Municipality's desire to eliminate African food traders was endorsed by many in the white settler community. The Chief Education Officer complained about the growing number of African hawkers of ice cream and ice pops near schools and contended that they constituted a nuisance and possible danger.<sup>200</sup> The South African Timber Co. (Pvt) Ltd. and

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> NAZ, S3609/10, Salisbury Street Vendors Bylaws from 29 October 1941 to 31.12.55. Memorandum, City of Salisbury: hawkers and street vendors.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Report by the Agricultural Marketing Council on fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, March-April 1953.

<sup>198</sup> NAZ, S2961, Chief Native Commissioner annual report. report of the Assistant Native Commissioner, Nkai, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1953.

<sup>199</sup> Interview, Ngwena, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>200</sup> NAZ, S3609/10, Salisbury Street Vendors Bylaws from 29 October 1941 to 31.12.55. The Bulawayo Chronicle, 27 January 1955.



the Salisbury Chamber of Commerce agreed that African traders were a nuisance and caused unhygienic conditions around Fourth Street where they mainly operated.<sup>201</sup> The Railways supported the proposal to move food stalls away from Kingsway Street, close to its station, and pledged to offer adequate food catering services to its passengers.<sup>202</sup>

Wild (1991) is not convincing in his assertion that white shop owners supported restricting African traders not because they were competitors, but due to their concern about litter in front of their shops and fingerprints on their windowpanes. The aesthetic reasons trivialised the economic reasons, especially the issue of competition stressed by colonial officials and white business owners in their submissions against African traders. In a council meeting, Mr Jackson, a representative from the Salisbury Chamber of Commerce, submitted that African food traders operated close to shops selling similar goods thereby competing for African buyers and worse still, Africans employed in the vicinity gathered at the stalls making considerable noise and neglecting their work.<sup>203</sup> The Town Clerk further stressed that the great increase in the number of street food vendors had almost driven the white owned African eating houses out of business.<sup>204</sup> The colonial state intervened mainly to protect the interests of settler business owners more than for aesthetic reasons.

Though the call to prohibit African traders gained much support from white settlers, their importance in Harare's food market was acknowledged by some in their defence. The Prime Minister, Godfrey Huggins, disapproved further restrictions in 1951 due to two factors that needed careful examination. Firstly, Huggins was not happy with the general statement that vendors caused traffic congestion and called the Commissioner of Police to investigate the matter and report his findings. The police investigation in Fourth Street could not link traffic congestion and vending. Secondly, it was acknowledged that vendors served a section of the public and banning them would increase the cost of living.<sup>205</sup> Huggins asserted that vendors served a demand from the public and recommended that measures should be put in place to

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<sup>201</sup> NAZ, S3603/11, Salisbury Food Stalls Bylaws, from 20th August 1937 to 23 August 1956. letter from the Town Clerk (Salisbury) to the Secretary for Justice, Internal Affairs and Housing. 5th December 1955.

<sup>202</sup> NAZ, S3603/11, Salisbury Food Stalls Bylaws, from 20th August 1937 to 23 August 1956. letter from the Prime Minister's Office to Messrs Gaukroger and Padgett. 25th November 1954.

<sup>203</sup> NAZ, S3603/11, Salisbury Food Stalls Bylaws, from 20th August 1937 to 23 August 1956, minutes of a meeting held in the committee room, town house, on Thursday 13th January 1955, at 10am in connection with street food vendors and native mineral water carts.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> NAZ, S3609/10, Salisbury Street Vendors Bylaws from 29 October 1941 to 31.12.55. the respond sent to Mr Marshall (The Local Gvt Officer) from the Acting Secretary on 22 June 1953.



ensure that they operate 500 yards away from shops selling similar goods instead of banning them.<sup>206</sup>

Following the firm position taken by Huggins, the Minister of Health and the Chamber of Commerce shifted slightly and acknowledged that African traders were useful, but maintained that they should be eliminated. The Minister of Health contended that African traders served a useful purpose, however their general progress should be watched, and Africans should be educated to buy food from eating houses.<sup>207</sup> The Chamber of Commerce shared similar views and wanted the activities of African traders to be restricted until they gradually disappear altogether.<sup>208</sup> The Local Government Officer, E. W. Marshall, opposed this view, arguing that:

The government policy had not changed, it was satisfied that the vendors served a useful purpose, especially when it was considered that the number of native eating houses in operation were comparatively few and were in the main centralised in a particular part of town.<sup>209</sup>

Instead, he recommended the council to distinguish between mobile and stationary traders and prohibit street vending in the city centre. The recognition of the useful role played by African produce traders to some people was part of the fissures that allowed them to continue operating.

White stall owners who were consulted supported street food vending in general, but also favoured the elimination of African street traders. Mears, a food stall owner, agreed that street food stalls were a nuisance if compared to those in London, but argued that the Salisbury Municipality should not ban them because they constitute a vital aspect of the daily lives of a large section of Harare's population.<sup>210</sup> The shops in Harare were centralised making it difficult for low-income earners to access low priced produce. Produce vendors provided an important market for farmers. Mears further stated that banning produce stalls would increase the cost of living to many voters and prove to be politically costly. He submitted that street food was reasonably priced for low-income earners to afford and improve their diets.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> NAZ, S3609/10, Salisbury Street Vendors Bylaws from 29 October 1941 to 31.12.55. report from the Local Government Officer to the Under Secretary, 1955.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> NAZ, S3603/11, Salisbury Food Stalls Bylaws, from 20th August 1937 to 23 August 1956. letter from W. T. S. Mears to Alderman A. C. Olley, 09 October 1951.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.



The 1951 amendment of Government Notice 558 that sought to ban food stalls in Salisbury's city centre was heavily criticised by Councillor Chas. His main argument was that:

The council showed lack of continuity of thought and policy and that constitute bad governing. It is plausible that traders should be given freedom to do their business where they know there is trade. The food stalls came into existence because of the need by people and their survival demonstrated that they are serving the purpose and doing fair business. Interfering with this freedom was tantamount to dictating whether people should do business or not, where to trade within an area, which in most cases does not work.<sup>212</sup>

The council was criticised for the manner in which it adopted its policies. African produce traders were not consulted before their eviction. Chas argued that "the council's proposals were in bad faith, in so far that members made up their minds on a whim and persisted in haste without properly applying their minds to the possible effects upon citizens who established their businesses in good faith."<sup>213</sup> Chas further condemned prohibiting street traders because it destroyed businesses established over time and as an unwarranted interference with the rights of citizens. The council allowed the produce traders to build substantial businesses and destroying them would mean capital and income loss.<sup>214</sup>

Further, Chas pointed out that banning street traders was unlawful. He argued that the 1930 Municipal Act gave the council the right to regulate and control and not to totally prohibit it, or to eliminate trade.<sup>215</sup> Chas stressed that "such a policy if permitted would be void, contrary to good public policy and a negation of good governing. Bylaws made by the Salisbury Council under the Municipal Act, 1930 were ultra vires and unbinding."<sup>216</sup> In response to this criticism, the Salisbury Council applied for the amendment of the Municipal Act. The following words were added:

...and for prohibiting any person from carrying on the business of selling or exposing for sell from any vehicle, stall, receptacle, or other movable structure in such areas and at such times as may be prescribed by the council by regulation, any animal product, fish, fruit, vegetables, condiments, or beverages which are intended or ordinarily used for human consumption save ice-cream.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> NAZ, S3603/11, Salisbury Food Stalls Bylaws, from 20th August 1937 to 23 August 1956. letter from Olleys Chas (councillor) to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 8 October 1951.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> NAZ, S3603/11, Salisbury Food Stalls Bylaws, from 20th August 1937 to 23 August 1956. letter from Salisbury Town Clerk to the Town Clerk(s) Bulawayo, Gwelo, Gatooma, Que Que, Umtali, 20th August 1937.



The amendment of the 1930 Municipal Act enabled local authorities to make bylaws to control and prohibit produce trading in Harare. It further distinguished between approved and unapproved produce markets and criminalised street trading.

The measures to eliminate African produce traders in Salisbury were unsuccessful. The Local Government Officer opposed the closing of Fourth Street to African traders in 1951 because the impact of the Licence Control Act, 1950 was not yet felt. He believed that the requirement for operating licences would naturally reduce the number of African traders.<sup>218</sup> Wild (1991) notes that with persistence and endurance the council was able to push African traders from the city centre. This view ignored the inability of the municipal police to enforce the said measures. African traders continued to trade in Harare without licences. African traders and farmers retreated to streets and African townships that the municipal police could not effectively monitor. Their activities formed the foundation of Mbare Musika and other markets in Harare.

### **5.3. The Emergence and Growth of Mbare Musika to 1979**

The emergence and growth of Mbare Musika shows the resilience of African produce traders against colonial segregation and their ability to grab business opportunities. African traders and farmers responded to their prohibition from the so-called European markets by establishing markets in African townships and streets where the Salisbury Municipality had no firm control. As African townships expanded, produce trade also grew and markets were built (Horn 1995). The involvement of African traders and farmers in produce marketing in Harare laid the roots of Mbare Musika. Mbare Musika began as an illegitimate market until the colonial state recognised it. The Salisbury Municipality responded to its failure to eliminate African produce traders by permitting controlled marketing in African townships. Colonial segregation pushed African produce traders to African townships where they continued to trade.

There is consensus that Mbare Musika was built from the activities of African farmers and traders who marketed produce in Harare since the early colonial period.<sup>219</sup> In a manner reflecting quiet encroachment (Bayat 2000), farmers mainly from Seke, Domboshava, Murehwa, Mutoko, Goromonzi, Wedza and Beatrice gathered in Mbare Township under a

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<sup>218</sup> NAZ, S3609/10, Salisbury Street Vendors Bylaws from 29 October 1941 to 31.12.55. report from the Local Government Officer to the Under Secretary, 1955.

<sup>219</sup> Interviews, Ngwena, Mai Mufaro, Mbuya, Makey, Mbare Musika, 2020.





*Muhacha* tree<sup>220</sup>, close to the Bata Store to sell their produce. Quiet encroachment is “the silent, protracted, but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive and improve their lives” (Bayat 2000: 545). According to Ngwena, many Africans avoided the wrath of the white police by selling produce in Mbare Musika and Matoko in Mabvuku.<sup>221</sup> The crowd selling under the tree grew and the marketplace was extended to the bottle store area, a few metres from *Muhacha*, to accommodate more people. These unsanctioned gatherings marked the early stages in the development of Mbare Musika. It is not clear when the market was established, but oral evidence points to growing produce trading in Mbare Musika in the 1930s and 1940s. Oral informants remembered a period when colonial police used land rovers and motorbikes to crush produce and chased traders from Mbare Musika.<sup>222</sup> The eradication strategies, that involve low level harassment of traders by the police, confiscation of produce, arrests, fines and destruction of property (Kamete 2017), failed and the Salisbury Municipality acknowledged Mbare Musika.

The date Mbare Musika was recognised by the Salisbury Municipality is not clear, what is clear is that by the early 1950s Mbare Musika was a legitimate market. Wild (1991) points out that the segregation did not stop Africans from selling produce illegally and in the 1930s the Salisbury Municipality changed its policy towards African traders. In 1935 the superintendent proposed the building of markets in African townships to improve food supplies, reduce traffic from townships to town and to clear African trade in town. Wild (1991) asserts that this became a central part of the council policy that scrapped African trade restrictions and in 1936 the council-built stores and markets in townships. Makombe (2013) notes that in the 1940s the Salisbury Municipality was not organising and building produce market in African areas. He suggests that Mbare Musika was built in the 1950s.

One informant claimed that in the 1960s, the Salisbury Municipality built the first covered market close to the bus terminus.<sup>223</sup> Muzvinabhizimusi, a *koronyera*, viewed the birth of Mbare Musika as victory for Africans against colonial segregation. He claimed that:

The market was born out of a bitter struggle, whereby some traders lost lives. The colonial system restricted Africans in urban areas by giving them a small corner that

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<sup>220</sup> Muhacha is a zezuru name for an indigenous fruit bearing tree. The *Muhacha* tree where African gathered was close to the current colcom shop. This is some few metres from the present day Mbare Musika.

<sup>221</sup> Interview, Ngwena, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>222</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, agent and former chairman. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>223</sup> Interview, Mbuya, trader. Mbare Musika, 2022.

was not enough. It was illegal to trade and police frequently chased and confiscated produce from African farmers and traders. We struggled and broke the limits placed on us by Smith.<sup>224</sup>

Initially, the place was fenced and divided into the wholesale that accommodated farmers, and retail markets, where women sold. Later, separate covered market structures were built for wholesaling and retailing (Figure 4). The market structures were well built, with water, lockers, built-in counters, and electricity.<sup>225</sup>



Figure 4: First covered market structures built at Mbare Musika: Retail Market (left) and Wholesale (right).

The shift in policy was part of a containment or enclosure strategy (Kamete 2017) to regulate and control Africa traders. Makombe (2013) and Wild (1991) agree that the Salisbury Municipality built Mbare Musika to control the influx of Africans into produce marketing.<sup>226</sup> Wild (1991) states that the council hand picked African traders and moulded African markets to its will and liking. Kamete (2017) calls this strategy pernicious assimilation or selective incorporation since it accommodated a limited number of traders and justified the elimination

<sup>224</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>225</sup> Interview, Mbuya Shingai, trader. Mbare Musika, 2022.

<sup>226</sup> This market was built adjacent to Mbare Bus Terminus. It is still operating but was turned to a curio market after the construction of the current Mbare Musika facility across the road to its north.



of those without stalls. This policy failed as in the 1970s the demand for stalls outstripped the available stalls (Makombe 2013).

Street trading grew and police harassment was intensified to eliminate traders from streets. In 1979, Mrs Shava, a MP, questioned the harassment and violence meted out on street traders. She submitted that:

I just want to make a point here, perhaps the minister and the police force can help... There are people who sell vegetables and fruit in the street of Salisbury and at times these people buy these things with the little money they have... and I know they are doing it illegally, but with the present situation they must fend for their families. You find that sometimes the police pounce on these people, collect their fruits or vegetables... and then share them among themselves.<sup>227</sup>

The number of people entering the produce market increased due to the influx of people fleeing the escalating war in the rural areas.<sup>228</sup> African traders requested the Salisbury Municipality to allocate more trading space at Mbare Musika.<sup>229</sup> Due to intensified pressure from the traders and the war, the Salisbury Municipality allocated a bigger space where Mbare Musika is currently located. The new market was built adjacent to the old market (now a curio market) after the demolition of the Old Bricks, Two Rooms, and Muzorewa houses. Makey remembered that when he was a boy in the 1950s, the place where Mbare Musika is built today was a housing area though fruit and vegetables were brought to Mbare from close areas.<sup>230</sup> Houses that remain between the market buildings are evidence that the space was at some point a residential area.

The Salisbury Municipality refused to fund the construction of market structures at the new site. Traders and prospective stall owners contributed the money to demolish the houses and construct a tarmac market surface at the new site. According to Muzvinabhizimusi, the traders and municipal officials agreed that ownership of the market would be transferred to the traders after a period of twenty years.<sup>231</sup> The stalls were allocated to people who contributed money that was used to hire a construction company to clear houses and lay tarmac at the new site.

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<sup>227</sup> Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debate, 1979, vol. 100, p.1203.

<sup>228</sup> Interview, Mbuya Shingai, Mbare Musika, 2022.

<sup>229</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>230</sup> Interview, Makey, Mbare resident. Mbare Musika, 2020

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.



The beneficiaries built makeshift structures of timber, zinc, cardboard boxes, and polythene sheets that formed trading stalls.

Mbare Musika grew from the activities of individual farmers and traders to become the commercial hub and nerve centre of Zimbabwe's food economy (Chokera et.al 2014). It is a central node in the country's food economy handling agricultural and manufactured food products from as far as neighbouring countries. A large population and being the centre of communication sustains markets (Hodder 1965). Mbare Musika possesses a huge bus terminus and attracts many people from different areas daily. A 1965 shopping survey revealed that:

Mbare Township has an estimated 7,000 households, one major commercial and shopping centre, [Mbare] Musika and seven minor clusters of shops located in or near residential neighbourhoods. Replies to the question on purchases of vegetables show that 79.9% choose [Mbare] Musika and a further 15.4% choose the neighbourhood shops, giving a total of 95.3 percent for Harari (Mbare Township).<sup>232</sup>

The survey further found that many Africans depended on Mbare Musika for vegetables because:

firstly, African culture and tradition includes the consumption of several vegetables not normally available in the city centre, so that many purchases can only be made in the township. Secondly, a significant proportion of the vegetables on sale in Harari [Mbare Township] are grown by the residents either on their own plots in the township or nearby rural areas. Either the supply is in the town or focused on it. Thirdly, as most vegetables are home grown near the market, the quality is high, and prices are considerably lower than in the city centre.<sup>233</sup>

These factors partly explain the resilience and growth of Mbare Musika over time. Mbare Musika handles some quality produce, and this challenges the notion that it emerged to sell unexportable poor quality produce common in literature.

Allegations that Mbare Musika emerged to sell poor quality produce trivialises African farmers' agency and ability to practice farming as a business. Traders at Mbare Musika have also shown their capacity as entrepreneurs who see and make use of opportunities. This makes Muzvinabhizimusi's description of *makoronyera* as businesspeople to some extent true.<sup>234</sup> Mbare Musika emerged from the activities of African farmers and traders in response to

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<sup>232</sup> A Report on Harari shopping survey by M. A. H. Smout to the Director of African Administration, Municipality of Salisbury, September 1965.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



opportunities and challenges that resulted from the rapid growth of Harare. Some took positions as middlemen to generate incomes outside the colonial labour systems. Their innovativeness, creativity and resilience in the harsh colonial environment demonstrated their reliability and vital role in urban food supplies and food security.

#### **5.4. Developments in Mbare Musika, 1980-1999**

At independence in 1980, Mbare Musika was firmly established and a key player in food supplies and produce marketing in Harare. An increasing number of people, especially women joined Mbare Musika during this period. Fresh produce marketing provided many migrants to Harare with income generating opportunities (Chadya 2007). Mbare Musika replaced the Salisbury Municipal Market as the main council produce market in Harare. This was in the first few years of independence when the new government was seeking to address colonial injustices. There was also an influx of people into Harare after the relaxation of colonial movement restrictions. The demand for stalls rose sharply and the Harare Council could not build consistently markets to match the rising demand. The Harare Council invested considerable amounts of money to develop *musika* but maintained the colonial approach to governing produce markets. The new council had at its disposal the existing colonial laws and systems to administer the city and regulate produce marketing in the city.

In the early 1980s, the council requested the Minister of Home Affairs to stop prosecuting street traders who sold handicrafts, raw fruit and vegetables, and flowers until adequate marketing facilities were made available. Market stall holders complained that “illegal vendors” were operating without paying fees and nothing was done to control them. The Hawkers and Vendors Cooperative Society requested permission from the city council to assist the police to correctly monitor and screen vendors and hawkers in Harare. The council resolved that:

The society had no powers to perform those duties and they were not the only organisation representing the interests of traders and the society be treated as other groups or members of the public and consultations to be made with other groups.<sup>235</sup>

The Director of Community Services upheld the decision to take no action against illegal traders since there was a shortage of trading spaces.

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<sup>235</sup> Harare Council meetings minutes, Health, Housing and Community Services minutes: 28<sup>th</sup> September 1982.



The City of Harare spent considerable amounts of money to build people's markets in Harare in the 1980s. In the 1982/83 financial year \$162,000<sup>236</sup> of the reserved sum of \$399,164 was allocated for the construction of people's markets. A total of 27 people's markets were targeted for completion in the 1982-83 year and two of these were in Mbare. A total of \$12,000 was allocated for the two markets in Mbare.<sup>237</sup> In Mbare Musika the council built the OFM to accommodate the increasing number of farmers. Mbare Musika benefited indirectly from the expansion of people's markets (satellite markets) that relied on its produce. People's markets extended Mbare Musika's produce distribution network to almost every part of Harare.

The wholesale and retail sections of Mbare Musika were upgraded by building covered market structures in the early 1990s. According to Muzvinabhizimusi, the covered market structures' design was borrowed from Belgium.<sup>238</sup> External funding was important in the expansion of infrastructure at Mbare Musika.<sup>239</sup> Muzvinabhizimusi narrated that the Queen of England toured Mbare Musika in 1991 and acknowledged its great role in people's lives and food supplies. The European Union (EU) funded the construction of the covered market structures in the wholesale and retail sections.<sup>240</sup> The involvement of donors was disputed by Manyama who argued that the construction of Mbare Musika was funded by the Harare City Council.<sup>241</sup>

In 1981, the Finance and Development Committee and the Health, Housing and Community Services Committee proposed to a review of market fees to eliminate the deficit attributable to markets. Following this proposal, in May 1982, the Director of Community Services recommended a review of market fees to increase revenue by \$72,405 against a deficit of \$137,390. People's markets were classified as follows; Market type A was covered with table, locker, fence or wall, B covered with table and locker, C covered with table, D covered

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<sup>236</sup> The US\$ was equivalent to Zimbabwean dollars in 1982. \$ refers to the Zimbabwean dollar that was the currency to around 2009 before the adoption of the multicurrency regime that was dominated by American dollars. Between 2009 and 2019 the \$ refers to the American dollar that remained dominant in the Zimbabwean economy and Mbare Musika. During this period bond notes/coins were used in the market and exchanged to the USD\$ at changing rates. From 2004 to 2009 Bearer's Cheques were also used in the economy and the market.

<sup>237</sup> NAZ, Harare Council Meetings Minutes, Health, Housing and Community Services Minutes: 28th September 1982.

<sup>238</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>239</sup> Interviews, Muzvinabhizimusi, Godzira and Ishewedu, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>240</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>241</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Council Offices, 2020.



market, E open air market and F wholesale market. The market fees were reviewed as shown in Table I below.

Market Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee	Economic Fee
A	15c	35c	45c
B	15c	35c	40c
C	5c	25c	35c
D	15c	20c	30c
E	10c	15c	25c
F	\$1.00	\$1.50	\$2.50

Table 1: The proposed and economic fees/per day (Source Harare City Council Minutes 1982).

The market fee was calculated based on the cost of operating markets. In 1982, the annual cost of running a ten-trade module market was \$1,800 and was calculated as shown in Table 2 below:

Item Cost	Sub-amount (\$)	Amount (\$)
Capital charges –interest (at 9.25%)	555	
Repayment	200 +555	755
Repairs and Maintenance		60
Supplementary Charges		160
Waste Management		65
General expenses		95
Salaries and Wages (Apportionment)		500
Sub-total		1635
Add Administration Charges (10%)		165
<b>Total</b>		<b>1800</b>

Table 2: Cost of running a market (Source Harare City Council Minutes 1982).

For this cost, an economic fee (to ensure economic viability) of 50c per day was ideal compared to the 35c that was charged. To avoid anomalies a uniform initial fee for all people's markets was pegged at 35c per day.<sup>242</sup> The proposal to increase market fees, however, was deferred for three months pending the completion of people's markets to stop traders from vacating markets to selling in streets. In January 1983, the people's markets were completed and allocated and the council introduced the new market fees. The council campaigned against street traders soon after bringing the new markets into operation.

A sub-committee consisting of Councillors Zhakata J., Chaya N. T., Maturure E. G., Mataruse M. and Nehumba B. was appointed to allocate stalls and deal with other issues in the

<sup>242</sup> NAZ, Harare Council meetings minutes, Health, Housing and Community Services minutes: 28th September 1982.



establishment people's markets. The sub-committee faced challenges in allocating stalls in people's markets, for instance, the Harare Council minutes reflect:

133 vendors were identified in the vicinity of the first three people's markets which had a total of 50 stalls. Of the applicants, 45 were not residents of the city and certain others were unable or unwilling to pay the market stall hire fee. However, having eliminated these from the list of applicants, one site was still overcrowded and for another site there was only one remaining applicant. It was also pointed out that at many sites one side of the market structure was considered better to trade than the other.<sup>243</sup>

Mai Mufaro, an old retail trader, admitted that many traders were unable and some unwilling to pay the *korona* (\$0.25) monthly market fee levied in the 1980s. This resulted in an escalation of street trading.<sup>244</sup> The problems they encountered showed the complexity in dealing with street trading that continued to rise since 1980. People's markets were not an effective solution to deal with street trading.

Preference in the allocation of stalls was given to old and single women who were already selling produce illegally close to newly built people's markets and had limited sources of income. In urban areas, Smith et.al (1995) note that not all people find work, incomes are small, erratic, and unreliable for many poor families. Manyama underlined that:

Mbare Musika is a quasi-public institution that is mainly interested in the welfare of the disadvantaged people. The City of Harare is not a profit-making organisation, it aims to break even. The major idea of the market is to protect the poor. Many people are suffering and have low incomes because of the economic challenges that the country is facing since the 1990s. These low-income families get cheap food from Mbare Musika. It also gives opportunities to many people to earn an income.<sup>245</sup>

Produce retailing in Mbare Musika is dominated by women from poverty stricken, marginalised and vulnerable low-income families in Harare. Most of them come from the high-density suburbs and informal settlements like Epworth, Mabvuku, Highfield and Chitungwiza.

The period after independence witnessed the expansion of Mbare Musika in terms of infrastructure. Notable was the building of the farmers' market and covered wholesale and retail market structures. Also, the council built many satellite markets to address the problem of street vending that started since the colonial period. The Harare (people's markets) bylaw

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Interview, Mai Mufaro, Mbare Musika, 2020.





of 1982 defined the produce sold in Mbare Musika. Mbare Musika handled a wide variety of produce like potatoes, onions, tomatoes, cabbages, bananas, carrots, peas, squashes, baby marrows, chillies, etc. The wide range of produce sold at Mbare Musika reflects that city markets have become a big business (Binns and Fereday 1996).

### **5.5. Mbare Musika during the Zimbabwean Crisis 2000-2019**

Starting from 2000, Zimbabwe experienced an unprecedented crisis, with its economy falling rapidly to break world records (Raftopoulos 2009). The country experienced serious poverty and unemployment. Mbare Musika increasingly became a sanctuary offering people affordable food and income generating opportunities as the crisis deepened. Activities at Mbare Musika bolster Perence Shiri, the late Minister of Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement's claim that the horticultural industry is "... a direct attack on poverty, hunger and malnutrition in addition to generating foreign currency and creating high employment opportunities down the value chain."<sup>246</sup> A lot of money circulates in produce trading at Mbare Musika. Scoones (2010) describes the US\$30 million cash revenue that flows through Mbare Musika annually as impressive and a bright spot in a depressed economy. Consequently, Mbare Musika attracted many people including powerful politicians who contested to control the market and its revenue. The amount of money and produce that circulate in Mbare Musika during a serious economic crisis points to its uniqueness, resilience and invaluable role in food supplies and urban food security.

The success of Mbare Musika during the Zimbabwean crisis changed how it operated and the goods it handled. Mbare Musika no longer deals with a limited range of traditional vegetables and fruits (Smith 1989). To reduce competition and promote complementarity, traders introduced non-food items in Mbare Musika. Mai Mufaro stated that they were no longer making money from selling produce compared to what they earned when people were few.<sup>247</sup> They appealed to the council for permission to sell non-food items that were prohibited in the market by the city laws. They were granted permission to sell electrical appliances, clothing bales, sacks, and hardware in *musika*. The marketing of dry food produce such as madora, *kapenta*, grain, cooked foods, manufactured foods, and traditional medicines also became popular options. The process began in the 1990s and became entrenched after 2000.

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<sup>246</sup> Silobi, (2018), Horticulture sector a sleeping giant in Zimbabwe, [online], [accessed 16 September 2020], available from: <https://farmersreviewafrica.com/horticulture-sector-sleeping-giant-zimbabwe>

<sup>247</sup> Interview, Mai Mufaro, Mbare Musika, 2020.



The introduction of these goods diversified Mbare Musika, turning it into a big shop selling a variety of goods and this promoted its vibrancy and complementarity.

At the end of the 1990s, OFM was no longer accommodating the large number of farmers and volume of produce delivered at Mbare Musika daily. In the early 2000s, the Harare City Council built the NFM, replacing the chicken market (*kuhuku*) and some houses to accommodate more farmers. This shows the commitment of the city council to improve produce marketing in Mbare Musika. It also shows the rising importance of food issues in city planning as houses paved the way for markets. This development also illustrates the growing popularity of horticultural farming and the resultant rise in produce supplies to Harare. Mbare Musika became more central in the marketing of produce for the many farmers, especially small-scale farmers, who cannot dispose of their produce in formal and exports markets.

The expansion of market infrastructure at Mbare Musika could not meet the high demand for trading space. Many *makoronyera* sold potatoes in trucks at Rufaro Stadium and in the streets and open spaces around Mbare Musika.<sup>248</sup> The council complained that trucks destroyed infrastructure such as sewerage systems.<sup>249</sup> Traders also sell in streets (*paspeed*) outside Mbare Musika, bus terminus, Magaba and Mupedzanhamo in Mbare Suburb where many people gather. Bananas and other fruits are sold in privately run markets at *paKajune* and *kwaMujiji*. All these are essential components of Mbare Musika. The prevalence of these markets points to the creativity and innovation of actors to access trading spaces and earn a living from produce marketing.

Traders in Mbare Musika pointed out the presence of competition between street traders and licenced traders. Though the increase in street vendors is affecting licenced traders, Mai Mufaro revealed that “we do not have problems with them because they are our children who are unemployed who also want to make a living.”<sup>250</sup> Many street traders stock produce from Mbare Musika, therefore they benefit farmers and *makoronyera* who sell large units.

Street trading is illegal, and police campaigns to clear the streets are common experiences. Commenting on a victim of police raid, Chin’ono argued that “she has not lost onions, she

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<sup>248</sup> In 2023 potato farmers and traders were moved to Coca-cola where the council opened a new market to decongest Mbare Musika.

<sup>249</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Council Offices, 2020.

<sup>250</sup> Interview, Mai Mufaro, Mbare Musika, 2020.



has lost her children's meal, and money for their school! [Harare Council] is cruel. It enforces bylaws which were put in place by previous governments that provided jobs..."<sup>251</sup> In 2020, there was outrage and bitterness among Harare residents after the City of Harare posted a video of its workers loading potatoes seized from street traders in a garbage truck for dumping.<sup>252</sup> Many people see nothing wrong with street vending, considering the stubborn economic crisis and massive poverty in Zimbabwe. They condemn the council for being insensitive, contributing to food waste and the loss of livelihoods, and dehumanising people who are attempting to earn a legitimate living.

Many stalls in Mbare Musika were subdivided and sub-let to accommodate more people. A single stall in the wholesale market now houses at least two traders renting from its owner. Stall owners who are no longer active sub-let their stalls to active traders. Stall owners appealed to the council again to allow sub-division of stalls to give trading space to young people who are unemployed.<sup>253</sup> Unapproved market extensions were made in the retail section, and it is alleged land barons collect revenue from these stalls for self-enrichment at the expense of the council.<sup>254</sup> Renting out stalls is a business; stallholders pay a small amount to the council and receive higher amounts for rentals from their tenants.

Despite the impressive annual turnover, Mbare Musika has been riddled with many challenges during this period. Waste management is a main problem experienced as the council struggles with service delivery in Harare (Figure 5). Unlike in the 1980s and 1990s, where the marketplace was cleaned daily with running water and garbage was collected regularly, from around 2000 heaps of garbage spend weeks in the marketplace.<sup>255</sup> Waste accumulated much in the OFM, the car park and outside security walls. The wholesale and retail sections are comparatively clean because market committees supervise cleaning. Traders who sell packages and plastics clean the market in return for selling in those sections. Also privately owned markets employed caretakers who assist in waste management.

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<sup>251</sup> H., Chin'ono, (2021), She has not lost onions, she lost her children's meal...@daddyhope, [Twitter], 01 June [accessed 01 June 2021], available from:

<https://twitter.com/daddyhope/status/1399778426119241733?t=YEIAIxdu3z4EGWcFKUuR2w&s=19>

<sup>252</sup> General Chiwenga Wisdom, (2020), City of Harare destroys confiscated wares. [Facebook], 8 January, [accessed 21 May 2021], available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/thetabloidzimbabwe/videos/566892160708910/?mibextid=TfNwVoErvbAdloke>

<sup>253</sup> Interview, Mai Mufaro, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>254</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>255</sup> Interview, Mukono, agent. Mbare Musika, 16 November, 2020.



Figure 5: Produce waste in the Farmers Market.

Mbare Musika experiences high produce waste mainly due to poor storage facilities. Produce in the farmers markets was exposed to adverse weather conditions because the market was not completely roofed. Produce was stacked on the dirt market floor and sometimes on

top of garbage. When the farmers' markets close in the afternoon, some produce is covered in black polythene papers and is left in the open. Hamusimbi stresses that post-harvest losses, sometimes going up to 30%, is a major problem that hampers the potential of markets to feed more people and stabilise price.<sup>256</sup> Changamire, a satellite trader, believed that market structures in Mbare Musika were decades behind their time and many wondered why they have remained so.<sup>257</sup> The high produce waste resulted from poor post-harvest handling of produce and it reduced farmers' incomes and compromised food safety and quality of produce from Mbare Musika eaten by urban people.

<sup>256</sup> AGTAG Agricultural Magazine, (2018), Zambia: a new gateway for fresh produce trade in Africa. [online], September, [accessed 22 June 2022] available from: <https://www.agtag.co.za/category/2/post/20759>

<sup>257</sup> Interview, Changamire, trader. Damofalls, 2020.



Banana farmers and traders complained about the failure of the council to build them proper marketing facilities thereby exposing them to private players. These are the sentiments shared by Murara, a farmer from Honde Valley:

We do not have standard facilities for banana ripening, storage, and marketing. We produce large quantities of bananas in Honde Valley, and large percentages deteriorate fast due to poor storage, and we are unable to export them. Banana farmers are ill-treated. The council has done nothing to build good markets for us like the one above. If you compare our situation with those selling other produce, even in Mutare, where I started selling, we are treated badly, some farmers have good markets. If the council had built good markets for us, banana losses would be low. We are treated like this because we have no representation to take our problems to the minister.<sup>258</sup>

The privately owned banana markets at Mbare Musika are equipped with cardboard boxes for storage, ripening and selling bananas. In contrast banana marketing firms such as Matanuska Fruits Zimbabwe in Harare have well equipped warehouses, covered, and spacious. The situation becomes pitiful during the rainy season, the cardboard boxes are soaked in water (Figure 6). Murara commented that the only reason for the absence of maggots in the market was the chemicals they used to ripen bananas.<sup>259</sup> They lost a lot of bananas and income due to high produce waste.

The way produce was transported to the market is a serious problem that requires improvement. Produce was transported mostly in open trucks, many times with people sitting on top. The produce was not properly packaged exposing it to damage on the journey. Different types of produce are loaded in a single truck. For instance, a truck I travelled in from Mutoko was loaded with bundled carrots, cucumbers in sacks, sweet potatoes, maize and lemons and we sat on top of the produce. Some produce fell on the gravel roads and was reloaded. In contrast, some large-scale farmers packaged produce in crates and load a single type of produce on a truck. Poor transport systems and packaging contributed to high produce waste in Mbare Musika.

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<sup>258</sup> Interview, Murara, farmer. Mbare Musika, 2020. He made this comment while he said this pointing to the Mbare Musika Chicken Cooperative Market structure adjacent to the banana market.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.



Figure 6: A Banana Market in Mbare Musika after rains.

Accounting for poor waste management and service delivery is a controversial topic in the market. According to the Manyama, the problem cannot be attributed to the failure of the council alone, “we are all to blame.”<sup>260</sup> On the other hand, traders and farmers blamed the council and questioned the use of market fees they paid to the council. In December 2020, sellers in the NFM refused to pay the daily market fee until garbage was cleared in the car park, temporarily used for selling while the NFM was being renovated. The council engaged the police to deal with the traders, but they remained adamant forcing the council to bring a front loader and truck to clear the garbage. Though the protest seemed to be spontaneous, it was organised by some few *makoronyera*.

These *makoronyera* justified their protest citing the negative impact of accumulating waste on produce marketing.<sup>261</sup> Accumulating garbage consumed the market space, and some ended up trading on top of waste. The rotting produce, coated with flies and producing a stench was an eyesore. Tete Murovi, who frequently buys at Mbare Musika, claimed that she does not

<sup>260</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>261</sup> Interview, Protest leader, Mbare Musika, 2020.



buy leafy vegetables and thoroughly washed produce like tomatoes, cucumbers, butternuts and potatoes she bought because Mbare Musika is dirty.<sup>262</sup> Poor waste management reinforces the negative image of a dirty and unhygienic market widely held thereby reducing its potential to supply food to many people in Harare. One middleman exclaimed “*mari dziri kufa*” (money is dying)<sup>263</sup> while pointing to the rotting produce. Produce waste translated to huge financial losses to farmers and middlemen and undermined reinvestment in agriculture.

The council explained its inability to manage waste with low revenue collection and budget allocation challenges. In 2017 it collected ZW\$2,000,476 from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) against a projected revenue income of ZW\$5,394,653. Efficient and effective revenue collection is undermined mainly by lack of enforcement and political interference.<sup>264</sup> In 2015 the council agreed to retain 20% of revenue collected annually for infrastructural development and other services needed in markets.<sup>265</sup> The 20% was not remitted since 2015 and this explained the lack of market infrastructure.<sup>266</sup> The Director further revealed that vendors resisted paying market fees to council citing lack of vending stalls and ablution facilities.<sup>267</sup> Some traders acknowledged that revenue meant for market development is embezzled by “tax collectors” through connivance with middlemen or paid to powerful and connected land barons.<sup>268</sup> In 2019, the Informal Sector Committee reported that revenue collected declined by 23.39% from the 2018 value.

Vandalised market structures at Mbare Musika remained unrepaired because the council repairs markets structures destroyed by calamities only and does not intervene where deliberate negligence is the cause.<sup>269</sup> The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) blamed poor service delivery on the inefficiency and corruption of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) controlled councils as their strategy to regain the political control of Harare, while the council fervently claimed that ZANU-PF’s interference in markets

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<sup>262</sup> Interview, Tete Murovi, food eater. Harare, 2020.

<sup>263</sup> Interview, Majoni, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>264</sup> City of Harare, Informal Sector Committee minutes, 12 February 2018.

<sup>265</sup> City of Harare, Informal Sector Committee minutes, 27 October 2015.

<sup>266</sup> City of Harare, Report from the Director of Housing and Community Services to Town Clerk, 28 March 2019.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>269</sup> City of Harare, Informal Sector Development Policy.



undermines its work.<sup>270</sup> In 2020 the Auditor-General reported massive corruption and bad corporate governance in the City of Harare. The city council's accounting system was shambolic, facilitating opaque transactions leading to failure to account for over US\$1 million.<sup>271</sup> A large amount of revenue was lost to land barons who allocated trading spaces to traders and charged fees as high as \$10-\$15 per day.<sup>272</sup> In the Banana Market for instance, farmers are charged US\$2 to use a box. In Mbare Musika, the manipulation of revenue collection systems by corrupt officials and traders was a common occurrence. The council proposed periodic shifts of market officers to prevent the development of acquaintance with traders to curb corruption.

Market officials are poorly equipped to effectively perform their duties. The Marketing Officer was overloaded with duties and had no council vehicle and inadequate fuel for his personal car.<sup>273</sup> Cleaning workers lacked cleaning materials, protective clothing, and earned poor wages and were also overloaded with work. One of them reported the "suppression of their demands by senior officers who think they should clean the market with bare hands."<sup>274</sup> Mbare Musika had no single functional truck for garbage collection.<sup>275</sup> Consequently, city council workers were incapacitated and demoralised leading to poor performance. It was said they worked *pachikanzuru* (the council way).

Politics and power relations within which markets operate, and act are important in shaping them (Schutter 2019, Scoones 2015, Scoones 2014). Mbare Musika was involved in the fight for the independence of Zimbabwe from colonial rule. Later the loss of municipal control in Harare by ZANU-PF to opposition MDC inflamed the political situation in Zimbabwe and led to politics of disorder that exacerbated the council's problems (Sachikonye 2011). The protracted political contest involved accusations, violence, harassment, crime, and victimisation of alleged opposition members. A report by the secretary and nationalist reflect the thinking of ZANU-PF aligned committees how the council run Mbare Musika. He wrote:

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<sup>270</sup> City of Harare, Report on failure to allocate vendors at Machipisa Area: namely Jabavhu Market and Luna Park Flea Market in Highfield. 13 March 2019.

<sup>271</sup> R., Muchenje, (2022), Audit unmasks rot in local authorities. [online], [accessed 13 May 2022], available from: <https://thenewshawks.com/audit-unmasks-rot-in-local-authorities/>

<sup>272</sup> City of Harare, (2021), Interactive workshop meeting.

<sup>273</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>274</sup> Interview, council worker, 2020.

<sup>275</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Musika, 2020.





I as a nationalist seem not to understand about those councillors opposition through out the whole country about their isolation of ZANU PF carders who are members of the home industries and markets. Now we face mala administration mala systems. Government policies frustrations of ZANU PF members. Victimization and harassment of ZANU PF members. Intimidations dominance and dictatorships to ZANU PF members no freedom of expressions on home industries and our markets. Comrade sir so are we building the country or destroying it as it is agricultural and natural resourced based...Comrade sir for your own information about our home industries and our markets there is your no service roles and contributions from council maintainance of durawall our own security guards of which we pay their salaries from our institutions. Rates in affordable very high in excess of our profits of which we are now living under poverty datain line because of those imperialist dominated council's through out the whole country in urban areas (sic).<sup>276</sup>

Manyama remarked that since 2000, after MDC won Harare urban council seats, some people are fighting to take over control of Mbare Musika for their personal benefit. Manyama argued that the council has been trying to defend Mbare Musika against political interference so it can continue catering for public needs.<sup>277</sup>

Mbare Musika is viewed as strategic in ZANU-PF's attempt to regain the control of Harare council from the MDC. Political tensions in Mbare Musika escalated in the late 1990s when Mugabe's hold over power was challenged and ZANU-PF lost the urban constituencies. For the larger part, the market operated undisturbed until after President Mugabe lost his grip on power which culminated in traders being forced to show allegiance to ZANU-PF by attending its political gatherings.<sup>278</sup> ZANU-PF aligned youth closed Mbare Musika and instructed all traders to attend political rallies, burials at the National Heroes Acre and to go to the Harare International Airport to bid farewell to or welcome the President when he travelled outside the country. Mbare Musika was viewed as a nationalist and revolutionary institution and a ZANU-PF constituent.<sup>279</sup> The market resources were also allocated on a patronage basis to loyal ZANU-PF supporters.

Mbare Musika is divided into units named after national heroes Josiah Magama Tongogara, Cain Nkala and Border Gezi, with each unit each led by a committee. The committees were

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<sup>276</sup> Home industries and markets, inserted by nationalist Matthew Kabanda Hove (on another page it is written by a pen: compiled by J. M. T. K. Hove, Secretary, as an addition. There is no date when the paper was inserted or compiled. I copied the quotation as it is and to the best of what I could see. The paper is somehow torn showing signs it is a reference material that is always shown to people. He keeps the document at his market stall.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Interviews, Ishewedu, Manyama, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>279</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



powerful and enforced the ruling party's wish for everyone in Mbare Musika to toe the party line. The stationing of a ZANU-PF district office adjacent to Mbare Musika symbolised the ruling party's presence and power in the market. The committees became parallel administrative structures that interfered with the council's activities. The committees and administrative staff appointed by the government to the council competed with the Harare Council and undermined its capacity to run the market.<sup>280</sup> Chikulo et.al (2020) correctly note that Mbare Musika is managed by the council in principle, but practically powerful actors' control and negotiate its interactions. According to Munyaradzi, son of a committee member, the council cannot do anything in Mbare Musika without the approval of the market committees.<sup>281</sup>

Mbare Musika became inaccessible to purported MDC affiliated traders and marketing officials. Ngwarayi, a retail trader at Mbare Musika, claimed that:

The market was too political, ZANU-PF supporters were powerful over traders. They have privileged access to stalls and other resources such as money contributed by traders for different purposes. There is no accountability, the money ends up in private pockets and we do nothing about it. These were the benefits of being a committee member and they can be absent without problems.<sup>282</sup>

Those who were alleged to support MDC were referred to as "sell-outs" and were summoned to leave the market.<sup>283</sup> Barnes and Win (1992) note a trader who supported Muzorewa and lost her trading stall. Muzvinabhizimusi described Mbare Musika as a ZANU-PF market and MDC supporters as "*mapere haashaike*" (hyenas are found), but they are mad people.<sup>284</sup> Traders in Mbare Musika rallied behind ZANU-PF to protect their access to market facilities and resources. It was an offence to read newspapers that criticised ZANU-PF and its leaders and alleged sell outs were expelled from the market.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>281</sup> Interview, Munyaradzi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>282</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>285</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



ZANU-PF interfered with the council officials carrying out their duties. In 2019, a District Officer from Mbare failed to allocate stalls due to violence by members of ZANU-PF.<sup>286</sup>

Another case occurred in Highfield where:

The ZANU-PF youths wanted approximately 300 stands to allocate their members which was heavily refuted by the District Officer. After the refusal to offer the 300 stands to the youths, the ZANU-PF youths declared that there would be war if we proceed to allocate. Actually, near the site there were youths who were “bused” [brought by buses for political meetings] from Epworth, Budiriro and other suburbs to get ready for war. The officer in charge Machipisa had encouraged us, City of Harare staff to compromise on the request of the ZANU-PF youth and we reached an impasse (sic). Finally, we both agreed to seek audience with higher offices.<sup>287</sup>

A young man stated that he managed to get a table (stall) in the retail section because he supported ZANU-PF during the “tsunami”.<sup>288</sup> The stall was taken from a woman who was no longer paying market fees.

ZANU-PF interference in Mbare Musika escalated towards elections in 2000, 2002, 2008 and 2013. The marketplace became a no-go area for market officials and opportunists, who are politically connected, pushed their political and personal agendas.<sup>289</sup> During election times, Manyama reported:

gross inefficiencies in revenue collection and allocation. Residents who are beneficiaries of good service delivery are told by political parties vying for votes to stop paying their rates making the city council incapacitated and under resourced. There are competing forces striving to fulfil personal gains at the expense of service delivery such as pressure groups (Residents Associations) that are tirelessly encouraging residents not to pay rates. Council workers are not paid, have salary balances that stretch for months, and this affect their delivery capacity and morale.<sup>290</sup>

In the past political leaders nullified arrears owed to the council for political mileage.<sup>291</sup> A council official pointed out that consultations were less charged when political temperatures were low during the post-election period, but towards elections the temperature increased

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<sup>286</sup> City of Harare, Report from District Officer Mbare to Districts Administration Manager, challenges faced in the allocation of Tsigas Market stalls and Ok Flea Markets. 13 March 2019.

<sup>287</sup> City of Harare, Report from Highfield District Officer to Head Districts Administration Manager, Report on the failure to allocate vendors at Machipisa Area: namely Jabavhu and Luna Park Flea Market in Highfield, 13 March 2019.

<sup>288</sup> Interview, King, farmer (former trader in Mbare Musika). Murehwa, 2020. He used the term tsunami to refer to the 2008 presidential election rerun between MDC and ZANU (PF) that was violent.

<sup>289</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> City of Harare, Report on revenue collection from the informal sector and challenges being encountered, from the Director of Housing and Community Services to the Town Clerk, 28 March 2019.



and engagement became impossible.<sup>292</sup> Towards elections, council officials were assaulted as they performed their duties in markets. Mutongwizo (2014) asserts that Mbare Musika's development suffered from the impediments created by ZANU-PF aligned groups such as Chipangano. Chipangano was a ZANU-PF aligned vigilante group that used violence to benefit a few at the expense of the whole community. Political opportunists exploited members of the community who paid more to access resources and they diverted resources to powerful individuals. Ngwena claimed that:

ZANU-PF members and council officials connive to allocate stalls to traders outside the council systems. The market was well built with water, electricity but all these did not work because the money was pocketed by connected individuals. Some traders were allowed to operate at the water sinks in the process damaging the water infrastructure. As a result of many corrupt practices, the market is running without water and electricity.<sup>293</sup>

Some traders' associations collected inflated market fees from traders on the pretext that they were remitting to the council. The council put in place measures to encourage traders to pay market fees directly to council to curb such revenue leakages.<sup>294</sup>

Clean-up blitzes that peaked with Operation Murambatsvina (clear out the filth) in 2005 are another manifestation of political struggles to control Harare. Operation Murambatsvina was caused by the desire to punish MDC supporters, adherence to technocratic and modernist urban planning, and to reduce the number of poor people in cities (Raftopoulos 2009). Unapproved market structures in the retail section and around Mbare Musika were cleared during the clean-ups. Between 2020 and 2022 several clean-ups were carried out while I was doing my fieldwork. Over the years politicians have been allocating market spaces and then demolish them in a manner reflecting political fights. Produce traders lost business and income after these clean-ups. In 2021, women who sell cucumbers were concerned that business was low because their largest buyers were cleared in a blitz.<sup>295</sup> Some traders were unable to recover from the loss and completely left Mbare Musika.<sup>296</sup> The demolitions generated disappointment and bitterness among the poor who rely on Mbare Musika for food and

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<sup>292</sup> Interview, Manyama, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>293</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>294</sup> City of Harare, Minutes of the Informal Sector Committee. 12 February 2018.

<sup>295</sup> These comments were made by women traders who were negotiating cucumbers from Sachigaro in the NFM in June 2021 soon after a clean-up blitz.

<sup>296</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



incomes. Traders affected believe the government does not care about their welfare given the high unemployment rates.

Hyperinflation reached a nadir in 2008, officially measured at 230 million per cent (Chigudu 2020, Gono 2008). Inflation devoured people's savings and earnings reducing many to poverty. Mbare Musika was not spared by inflation, how the market was affected, and the responses of the actors reflect its resilience. Hyperinflation was a serious challenge that Mbare Musika encountered and survived. The hyperinflation period left strong memories and greatly shaped the operation of Mbare Musika. Murara described the hyperinflation period:

The time was painful, it was painful. I have a satchel of bearer's cheque at home, but this did not deter us from continuing with farming. The situation has advantages and disadvantages depending on what you faced at the market. There were times when things changed before selling our produce and we benefited and times when money lost value just after finishing selling and we lost everything. People became miserable or made fortunes instantly depending on the situation they encountered at the market. There was nothing much we could do after losing, you would come back and start a new project.<sup>297</sup>

Speculation was rife and the state's response to it exposed many farmers and traders at Mbare Musika. For instance, in 2006 the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) introduced banking measures against people who hoarded cash that affected many ordinary people without bank accounts. Actors with cash in hand suffered much while those with produce benefited when prices changed in Mbare Musika.

Many banks were liquidated during the crisis and many account holders lost their savings. Matapi, a *koronyera*, was visibly pained as he narrated how he lost all his savings after the liquidation of CFX Bank and the closure of his branch at OK Mbare.<sup>298</sup> Many people expressed unwillingness to hold bank accounts due to memories of the cash crisis and the losses they suffered as a result. Mbare Musika became sensitive to the currency crisis, and it quickly responded to prevent losses since then.

Mbare Musika showed great resilience and reliability as a source of food and income for farmers and traders who continued with their activities despite the economic turmoil in the country. Sellers kept a watchful eye on the inflation trends and adjusted prices several times

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<sup>297</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>298</sup> Interview, Matapi, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.



a day to match inflation to minimise losses.<sup>299</sup> Farmers bought inputs and other goods immediately after receiving their cash payments. Some bartered produce with supermarkets for groceries like cooking oil and sugar which they used to pay workers.<sup>300</sup> These measures were used to store value and continue farming. The black market flourished and none wanted to hold onto cash in this highly speculative environment. Farmers were driven by the need to survive more than to make profit to continue farming for the market. The main aim was to maintain their projects at a time many profit-oriented businesses like supermarkets were closing due to unprofitability.

Mbare Musika was among the first to adopt foreign currency in response to hyperinflation. Foreign currencies, mainly US\$, South Africa Rand and Botswana Pula, were used for transactions or were bought to store value. This became an ongoing and important saving and survival strategy in Mbare Musika. The multicurrency era from 2009 to 2016 was a “sweet period” for people in Mbare Musika.<sup>301</sup> Prices stabilised and farmers received better incomes. They saved and invested money to build homes and expand their farming projects. Traders no longer carried loads of bank notes as they did during the hyperinflation era.<sup>302</sup> After 2016, the multicurrency system was scrapped, and bond notes were introduced. Interestingly, in arguing for the adoption of the bond notes, the then Minister of Finance, Patrick Chinamasa questioned the logic of using a reserve currency (US\$) to buy *matohwe* (snot apples) in Mbare Musika. The bond notes were followed with other financial reforms, but Mbare Musika used its experience during the hyperinflation to protect its people from losses induced by exogenous forces. The actors at Mbare Musika stayed away from mobile money and banks to settle payments and instead used cash, especially US\$.

### **5.6. Managing Pandemics in Mbare Musika: Cholera and Covid-19**

Food health and safety is a key theme in urban food studies. The rapid growth in food vending in Harare subsequently increased concern over food safety (Kwiri et.al 2014). Officials and the media view Mbare Musika as a ‘ticking health time bomb’ that may explode into a health crisis at anytime. The overflowing garbage bins and poor sanitary facilities (Kwiri et.al 2014) support this alarm. The World Health Organisation (WHO) cites daily visitors to Mbare Musika from different areas as a risk factor in the spread of epidemics. Hamusimbi argues that

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<sup>299</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Chizhanje, 2020.

<sup>300</sup> Interview, Mucheri, Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>301</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>302</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



the unhygienic trading practices sometimes found in fresh produce markets turn markets into potential “disease hubs” and raise food safety concerns.<sup>303</sup> The level of hygiene in Mbare Musika is a great concern that needs urgent attention, but there are no clear links between the outbreak of pandemics and practices in *misika* in Harare.

Zimbabwe suffered recurring cholera pandemic outbreaks after 2000. In 2008 and 2018, there were serious cholera outbreaks that infected and killed many people.<sup>304</sup> The 2008 cholera epidemic was unprecedented and the deadliest in the history of Zimbabwe, and it killed more than 4,000 people (WHO 2013, Chigudu 2019, Cuneo et.al 2017, Youde 2010). During the 2018 Cholera outbreak, Jessica Pwiti, the Executive Director of Amnesty International commented that:

The current cholera epidemic is a terrible consequence of Zimbabwe’s failures to invest in and manage both its basic water and sanitation infrastructure and its health care system. It is appalling that in 2018, people are still dying of such a preventable disease.

Officials and the media accused traders of being unhygienic in times of cholera. Chigudu (2020) emphasised the neglect of townships as the main cause of cholera outbreaks. Uncollected rotting waste, human waste outside the market and the absence of running water point more to poor service delivery by the council than inherent unhygienic practices in Mbare Musika.

In 2008 the state responded to the cholera pandemic by closing Mbare Musika, though it was not the epicentre. The cholera outbreak started in Glen View and Budiriro where it was alleged water was contaminated with human waste. Mbare Musika was temporarily shifted to the City Sports Centre in Belvedere, to the west of Harare. Belvedere residents vehemently opposed the relocation arguing that it was not an effective solution, but a transfer of the problem by creating an equally filthy vegetable market in their area. They also feared crime would increase in their leafy suburb and their properties would lose value. In 2018, the Joint Operation Command (JOC) was formed from all security forces. JOC responded to the cholera outbreak by removing vendors from the streets. Produce traders resisted the eviction

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<sup>303</sup> AGTAG Agricultural Magazine, (2018), Zambia: a new gateway for fresh produce trade in Africa, [online], September. [accessed 22 June 2022] available from: <https://www.agtag.co.za/category/2/post/20759>

<sup>304</sup> There was another cholera outbreak in Harare that started in Buhera at the end of 2023 while I was finalising my thesis.



because they saw no link between their activities and cholera. The intervention meant an assault on their livelihoods resulting in running battles with the security forces.

The situation at Mbare Musika was pathetic during the Covid-19 outbreak more than was the case during cholera outbreaks. The novel coronavirus (Covid-19) was first detected in China in 2019 and it spread quickly across the globe and in 2020 cases were first detected in Zimbabwe. In March 2020, the fast-spreading pandemic caused alarm prompting the Zimbabwean government to adopt a total nationwide lockdown for three weeks. The lockdown banned gatherings and movement of people unless they were essential workers or going to purchase food within a 5km radius. The lockdown was extended with varying intensity until 2022.

During the early days of the pandemic many sectors of the economy and society were shut down. As in cholera outbreaks, Mbare Musika was in the spotlight as a high-risk factor that could cause doom in the country. All *misika* were classified as non-essential and closed despite being part of the agricultural sector and food market. *Misika* remained closed until after a police raid at Sakubva Market in Mutare led to the questioning of the government stance. The police raided a night market at Sakubva Market and burnt produce people were selling. The story and pictures became viral on social media causing an outcry. Some days later the state re-opened legal produce markets with strict enforcement of lockdown measures. Farmers and traders secured exemption letters from the Agricultural Research and Extension (AREX) officers to travel to Mbare Musika.

The impact of Covid-19 on Mbare Musika slightly differed with the stages in the unfolding pandemic. In the build up to the much anticipated lockdown Mbare Musika experienced brisk business as people stocked produce to sustain them in the first three weeks of the lockdown that was announced. Farmers whose produce was ready for the market and traders benefited, but this was short-lived. Conspiracy theories that produce such as onions, lemons, garlic, and ginger assist in “healing” the virus increased and kept the demand and prices for these products high. Mula estimated that he took home above US\$100 daily from onion sales towards the lockdown, an amount he had never taken home in a single day before.<sup>305</sup> Zvikomborero who sold lemons reported high sales due to Covid-19.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Interview, Mula, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>306</sup> Interview, Zvikomborero, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.





In Harare *misika* were closed for two weeks and all illegal markets were cleared. I witnessed traders at Pakamunhu, Gazerbo, *kwaGeorge* destroying their market stalls. Produce traders were ordered and complied to self-demolish unapproved markets out of fear of the coronavirus and the heavily present security forces enforcing lockdown rules. Many produce traders believed that the state was being opportunistic at the expense of their livelihoods. They argued that there was no Covid-19 in Zimbabwe and the state claimed its presence to get donor funds and achieve its long-term aim of banning vendors and *makombi* (omnibuses).<sup>307</sup> They pointed to the absence of a single Covid-19 case in Mbare Musika that was congested making it and impossible to practice social distancing to further buttress their conspiracy theories.<sup>308</sup>

Ngwarayi pointed out that he used up his capital and savings just a few days after Mbare Musika was closed.<sup>309</sup> Some farmers and traders defied the lockdown measures and engaged in night trading out of economic necessity (Makombe 2021). In the words of Changamire, “it is hard for me to sit and look at a hungry family yelling for food to eat. I was forced by the situation to go back to Mbare.”<sup>310</sup> From the onset traders asserted that *kusi kufa ndekupi?* (either way we are dying), it was better, they argued, to die of the virus fending for our families than die of hunger indoors.<sup>311</sup> There were no comprehensive social support schemes to cushion them from the loss of incomes. Hunger and poverty are the main reason many traders and farmers braved the night to sell produce in *misika* across the country.

Security forces unleashed violence and harassment against those who attended night markets. Toriro and Chirisa (2021) correctly note that Covid-19 exposed many traders mainly in unregistered markets to state sponsored violence. Mirirai, a satellite trader, narrated how one night Mbare Musika was raided by soldiers and all who were attending the night market were forced to roll on the ground.<sup>312</sup> Violence by the riot police who released tear gas canisters in streets around Mbare Musika was code named “*chele yakanda*” (Chelsea has scored)<sup>313</sup> by traders to warn each other so they could run away. There were also traders who resisted more directly, for example, I witnessed vendors who sell along Chaminuka Road

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<sup>307</sup> Interview, Tapfumaneyi, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>310</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Interview, Mirirai, satellite trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>313</sup> The riot police were referred to as Chelsea Football Club because they wear blue uniforms.



throwing stones to resist eviction by council police. The main argument was that the situation was hard, and they cannot watch while being pushed out of their hustles. Unlike what Chirisa and Toriro (2021) who find that a new type of vendor who used cars emerged, actors without cars who were in the market before Covid-19 continued trading in Harare.

Farmers suffered heavy losses due to the closure of Mbare Musika. According to Scoones (2020), “the rural people are on their own. There is a big chain of reaction-without markets, producers, transporters, and all others suffer.” Murara revealed that large quantities of bananas ready for the market were lost following the closure of Mbare Musika and transport challenges.<sup>314</sup> Small-scale farmers suffered most since they had no alternative markets to dispose their produce. Nyagomo stated that farmers sold produce to *makoronyera* from Mbare Musika who visited farms and took advantage of the situation and cited travelling challenges to justify paying ridiculously low prices to farmers.<sup>315</sup>

Accessing Mbare Musika after its reopening remained a serious challenge that reduced the demand for produce. I travelled in a truck with farmers from Honde Valley and the driver “sanitised” (bribed) police for us to pass roadblocks and took long routes to avoid some checkpoints. Roadblocks caused delays and curfews made it challenging to transport produce during the night as had been done before. Satellite traders were not approved to go to Mbare Musika and faced serious transport challenges. The Zimbabwe United Passengers Company (ZUPCO) buses that replaced omnibuses in Harare were inadequate and inefficient. Intercity buses were prohibited, and farmers travelled long distance in open trucks exposing themselves to dangers and cold.<sup>316</sup> Travelling to Mbare Musika became a nightmare, though *makoronyera* and farmers reported being safe upon entering the market.<sup>317</sup> Many *makoronyera* are convinced Mbare Musika was reopened and became untouchable to allow powerful politicians who are also farmers sell their produce in the market.<sup>318</sup>

I observed heaps of produce, especially cabbages, indicating historically low demand for produce. Prices in Mbare Musika were forced down by the low demand. For instance, cabbages were selling for around Z\$20 (less than US\$0.10) in Mbare Musika at the height of

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<sup>314</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>315</sup> Interview, Nyagomo, farmer. Mutoko, 2021.

<sup>316</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>317</sup> Interview, Mandebvu, agent. Mbare Musika, 2021.

<sup>318</sup> Interview, Tete, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.



the lockdown. Under normal circumstances a cabbage sells for at least US\$1. This was a sad story for farmers who were losing their incomes. Business at Mbare Musika reached an all-time low owing to the closure of satellite markets, public institutions, restaurants and bars and events that buy considerable amounts of produce. The comment “*zvakhakwa*” (things are drunk) was a common reply to questions on the state of business in Mbare Musika.<sup>319</sup> Sellers at Mbare Musika complained that though the market was reopened people were still locked in their homes and were not coming to buy.<sup>320</sup> Covid-19 disturbed many businesses and activities and many people lost incomes to spend on food.<sup>321</sup> Some *makoronyera* from Mbare Musika organised mobile marketing to reach out buyers in suburbs. I saw many *makoronyera* I met in Mbare Musika before the lockdown selling at *kwaGeorge* market where many traders were now stocking produce.

The controversies in donor funded projects became evident in a debate on who was responsible for maintaining the water infrastructure installed by the international NGO Oxfam. A monthly fee of US\$3 and US\$1 was paid per stall for water in the retail and wholesale sections respectively. Committee members from the wholesale and retail markets invited those from the farmers markets to make similar contributions which they refused to do. In a stern voice the chairman of the OFM claimed that “when you call for these contributions people are frightened knowing they are now being milked. We are not going to be eaten with our eyes wide open like *kapenta* [a small, dried fish with big eyes].”<sup>322</sup> The chairman reiterated that:

Farmers and middlemen in the farmers markets pay daily market fees that should be used for water provisioning. Money was contributed in the past, but there was no system to account for how the money was used. Where are the buckets that were placed at the market gates for washing hands during the lockdown?<sup>323</sup>

In some sense, Covid-19 was an opportunity for many to exploit traders for their own benefit. It also raised questions over corruption and the lack of accountability in Mbare Musika.

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<sup>319</sup> Interview, Majoni, Chief, Cheneso, 2020.

<sup>320</sup> Interview, Tapfumaneyi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>321</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>322</sup> Submissions made by the chairman of the Old Farmers’Market in a meeting in the Old Farmers’Market at Mbare Musika.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.



The impact of pandemics was felt in every aspect of social life of people (Chigudu 2019). Thompson put it bluntly saying, "...the biggest losers in the outbreak are informal traders, mostly vendors selling fruit and vegetables."<sup>324</sup> Changamire stated that:

Some people are afraid to buy from *musika* especially if there is rumour of a Covid-19 positive case in a street like what happened in my street. This reduced our sales. People are afraid of contracting the virus; they are not coming to buy.<sup>325</sup>

Owing to cholera and Covid-19 pandemics people were afraid to buy produce from Mbare Musika lowering business and incomes. During pandemics traders and farmers suffered state sponsored violence despite the absence of clear links between pandemics and *musika*. Small-scale farmers, who produce perishable fruits and vegetables and have no alternative markets to sell their produce are the ultimate losers.

## 5.7. Conclusion

The chapter has shown the journey that Mbare Musika travelled from its embryonic stages to the present. Mbare Musika originated from the activities of the African farmers and traders in Harare during the colonial period. Initially, farmers from areas around Harare responded to the rise in food demand by growing and hawking fresh produce. The Salisbury Municipality attempted in vain to eliminate African farmers and traders based on the allegation that they were unhygienic, a nuisance, and competed with white settler owned businesses. The survival of African produce trading partly shows their resilience and adoption of effective strategies. The "illegitimate" gathering to market produce in Mbare Township formed the foundation of Mbare Musika. The colonial regime later recognised Mbare Musika in a bid to control the number of Africans involved in produce marketing. Both the Salisbury and post-independence Harare councils were involved in cat and mouse relationship with street traders and failed to stop the traders operating. Developing produce markets and integrating *musika* to the urban landscape is overdue as many people rely on *musika* in response to shrinking opportunities in the main sectors of the economy. Actors in Mbare Musika were able to build and sustain a resilient market without state support. The following chapters explore how Mbare Musika is organised, sustained and works.

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<sup>324</sup> J.,Thompson, (2018), "Hugs, fresh fruit no more as cholera kills in Harare. [online], [accessed 12 June 2020], available from: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-09-18-hugs-fresh-fruit-no-more-as-cholera-kills-in-harare/>

<sup>325</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.



## 6. Chapter Six: The Organisation and Relations in Mbare Musika

*The weaker partner in a symbiosis may be partially handcuffed, but the handcuffs are golden*  
(Erich Schanze 1991)

### 6.1. Introduction

The organisation of markets and actors' relationships in the market influence how markets work and their degree of resilience. This chapter explores the ordering of Mbare Musika against the backdrop of the common view of it as a chaotic and disorganised market where confusion reigns (Jaricha 1979, Mudeka 1997, Mborera 2019). Jaricha (1979) also asserts that *musika* is dominated by conflict and a general atmosphere of uncontrollability where buyers and sellers are suspicious and taking advantage of each other. I find these arguments pointing to what must be a weak market structure full of conflict that cannot adequately account for Mbare Musika's resilience and continued functioning. Dhewa (2020) points out that "for a very long time, farmers and traders have been finding their own way around post-harvest challenges, developing their own economy with no policy guidance".<sup>326</sup> There is little state involvement in the actual marketing of produce in Mbare Musika. This chapter explores how the actors were able to build the market and how they organise themselves for production and marketing of produce in Mbare Musika. Organic solidarity (Durkheim 1972) that consists of ties of cooperation and interdependence among individuals and groups contributes to the resilience and working of markets in the absence of the state. This chapter brings evidence of an invisible, deep seated order and networks based on *ukama* and trust in Mbare Musika.

This chapter relies on ethnographic observations and oral histories. The chapter has five sections. The first section explores the various organisational systems in Mbare Musika. It captures the sectional division and the identities that structure the market. Section two investigates how farmers organise and position themselves into networks to bring produce to Mbare Musika. The next section unpacks the organisation and relationship of actors based at Mbare Musika. The fourth section investigates how traders move produce from Mbare Musika through satellite markets to homes. Section five examines the role of *makoronyera* in the marketing of fresh produce at Mbare Musika.

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<sup>326</sup> C., Dhewa, (2020), Covid-19 shows symbiotic relationships between formal and informal economies. @eMkambo, [twitter], 12 May 2020, [accessed 11 May 2020], post deleted but initially posted at: [https://twitter.com/eMkambo/status/1259773989544656898?t=5MTUgl\\_u4RgRkgJ6fk8ERg&s=19](https://twitter.com/eMkambo/status/1259773989544656898?t=5MTUgl_u4RgRkgJ6fk8ERg&s=19)

## 6.2. 'Order in Chaos': The Structure and Identities of Mbare Musika

The commonly observable aspect of Mbare Musika is the huge crowd, moving randomly especially during peak trading times. This has been interpreted as evidence of a chaotic, confused and disorganised marketplace. Yet, on close observation, one finds that the people



Figure 7: Retail traders selling tomatoes in the Old Farmers Market.

who make up the crowd in the marketplace know what they are doing and have rules that guide them. Market buildings mark different sections of Mbare Musika. A number of issues such as buildings, roles and dominant produce are important structures and market identifiers. These structures and identities are overlooked by many writers despite their essential role to actors in Mbare Musika.

Mbare Musika has three main sections which are:

*kuvarimi* (farmers'

market), wholesale and retail markets. *Kuvarimi* accommodates farmers who deliver produce each day and sell in that section. They pay a market access fee and a daily market fee until they finish selling their produce. The farmers are allocated a vacant space on arrival. *Kuvarimi* has two sections; the OFM and the NFM. *Kuvarimi* is a covered market. It has sheds built around the security walls, high flat roofs, open sides and an open centre. *Kuvarimi* opens daily and selling starts early in the morning (around 3am) continuing to midday (around 1130am-12pm). Thereafter the market is cleaned and receives produce from around 2pm until the next marketing day. Farmers sell produce in large units (*kuhodhesa*), for instance, they sell a whole



truck of produce to a middleman. Wholesalers and retailers stock produce at low prices (*kuhodha*) from farmers early in the morning for resale in smaller units later during the day. In principle, *kuvarimi* accommodates farmers, but *makoronyera* (defined in section 6.6) and traders occupy large spaces in this section. These traders stock produce from farmers or *makoronyera* and sell a few metres away in the section.

Secondly, the wholesale market has several rows of similar medium-height gable roofed buildings, divided by narrow pedestrian walkways and two wide tracks used by trucks offloading produce. Each block in this section is divided into small sections that are numbered sequentially. The stalls are allocated to licensed traders by the city council and the traders hold the stalls permanently and can pass ownership to their children or sublet to other traders. They pay a monthly fee to the council for using the stalls. Traders sell produce in large units e.g., a pocket of potatoes. It is common nowadays to find traders selling small quantities in the wholesale market eg a pile of tomatoes. Though many are still specialising in a single produce like potatoes, an equally high number sell a variety of produce.

The retail market operates in a similar way to the wholesale market. The retail section has several low, flat roofed buildings separated by very narrow walkways. Each block is divided into several stalls that are allocated to traders permanently by the city council. They pay a monthly market fee to the city council. The stalls are inherited by children when the parent dies or retires and many are subdivided and sublet to other traders. Women are the majority stallholders in the retail section, though women are generally dominant in Mbare Musika. The retail section has toilet buildings at selected points, water taps and sinks in a shed located at the centre. Around the retail market are makeshift market sheds built to accommodate more traders. Retail traders sell a variety of produce in small quantities usually to food eaters. In the 1990s, many traders in the retail section shifted from selling mainly horticultural produce to sell other products such as sacks, tobacco, dry produce, uniforms and electrical goods. There is also a section that sells traditional medicine. Both the wholesale and retail sections are surrounded by a security wall and are open from 6am to 6pm. They are strictly controlled by the committees discussed in Chapter Five.

Sections of Mbare Musika are also structured and defined by the dominant produce sold in each section. Farmers or traders selling the same product gather close to each other forming a section identified by their produce (Figure 8). There are roughly defined boundaries for all

the main produce sold in Mbare Musika providing meaningful identities and order.



Figure 8: A section where butternuts are sold in the New Farmers Market.

For instance, potatoes have a distinct market outside known as *kumalorry* and in the wholesale market called *kumapotatoes*. This form of organisation and identity is essential for the functioning of Mbare Musika. Regular buyers go directly to a section that sells the produce they intend to buy thereby saving time. The ordering is useful for buyers to easily compare the quality of produce and trading conditions. This way of structuring enables traders to cooperate more than they compete. They share information, advice, and stock together, sell on behalf of each other and tend to charge the same prices.

Both human and non-human actors possess labels for identification giving Mbare Musika order and meaning. A striking example is that of porters who are identified by the colour and numbers on their overcoats. Porters with grey overalls offload trucks, those wearing green operate push carts and those wearing blue carry produce on their heads. The overalls are labelled on the back with letters and numbers e.g., OFM 07 indicating where they work and their porter's number. Crates and other packages are also labelled, for instance PK, mainly with paint to distinguish crates belonging to different owners. This is useful for easy identification when collecting crates in the market. The process is far from being chaotic, farmers and porters do not randomly claim ownership of the packages. The labels protect property from theft, reducing loss and govern the behaviour of actors to avoid conflicts over crates.





These forms of structure and identities are invaluable to regular actors in the market. They give Mbare Musika order in the seemingly chaotic and crowded market, an order that is invisible to casual observers. People in Mbare Musika do not behave randomly, they know how the market is structured and functions. Stalls are clearly numbered, and the rules are known, actors know their role, where they operate and how. They know what is expected from them. The structure and identities form a deep-seated order that governs and controls the functioning of the market thus contributes to the resilience of Mbare Musika.

### **6.3. Food Streams: From Farms to Mbare Musika**

The movement of produce from farms to Mbare Musika through different channels and networks sheds light on the organisation and functioning of Mbare Musika. How produce is moved to the market contributes to the nature, freshness and price of produce delivered at Mbare Musika. The movement of produce involves many actors who are organised into networks of solidarity. Food streams (supply channels) consist of farmers, transporters, *makoronyera* and other actors who are not directly involved like the police. These actors self-organise into networks to overcome challenges and exploit market opportunities. These self-organised networks are efficient and supply resources and information that facilitate the movement of produce from farms to Mbare Musika. The strength in these networks partly accounts for the resilience and efficient functioning of Mbare Musika.

Produce is moved from farms to Mbare Musika collectively without central coordinating instruments like statutory marketing boards. The actors involved utilise their networks and self-organising abilities to access information, assemble produce and organise transport to the market. Large-scale farmers, who are usually well resourced and connected and produce large quantities can supply produce to Mbare Musika individually. However, they rely on established relations with agents who collect produce from their farms and sell on their behalf. In contrast, small-scale farmers who are undercapitalised and produce small volumes are largely dependent on their relationship and connections with fellow farmers, transporters and *makoronyera* to move and market produce at Mbare Musika. They organise themselves and aggregate small produce volumes from different farmers to make up a transportable load.



Figure 9: Jiggers loading a banana sack in Honde Valley.

They collectively hire a truck and share the cost to transport them and their produce to Mbare Musika. *Makoronyera*, transporters and transport agents are vital in the whole process.

In Honde Valley, for example, there are local cells whose leaders coordinate with local farmers and transporters. The local farmers' cells are connected to local transport agents. Local transport agents build and maintain good relations with "their farmers" building a strong network. These are farmers the agents work with repeatedly; they know each other. Dhewa describes transporters as unsung heroes in African agriculture and food systems.<sup>327</sup> They organise farmers whose produce is ready for the market and provide trucks to move farmers and produce to Mbare Musika.

In my ride-along in Honde Valley, I observed Mupositori organising farmers to secure a load for his transporter. The next day, Mupositori and his transporter moved around collecting produce from "his farmers" before departing to Mbare Musika in the evening. Mupositori's team of jiggers loaded the big banana sacks and bundled sugar cane into the truck (Figure 9). They form an intelligence network that gathers information on farmers ready to travel to Mbare Musika. They inform transporters after securing adequate loads. Transporters do not randomly visit farms, they are well informed about the availability of adequate loads before they travel to an area.<sup>328</sup> In turn transporters share price information and the demand situation

<sup>327</sup> C., Dhewa, (2021), How does food move from production zones to markets and consumers? @eMKambo, [Twitter], 23 August, [accessed on 25 August 2021]. available from: <https://twitter.com/eMKambo/status/1429719090667560961?t=q3arDcavVVwUOUILkZ5KBw&s=19>

<sup>328</sup> Interview, Tamuka, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

at Mbare Musika with farmers, who travel fully aware of the situation. Farmers transport their produce and pay after selling the produce relying on mutual trust.



Figure 10: Sugar cane and bananas in sacks placed on the roadside for transport to Mbare Musika.

Trucks on their way from or to Mbare Musika shed light on the involvement of many farmers in delivering produce. The trucks are loaded with small parcels belonging to many farmers sitting on top of the produce. This is testimony of farmers' collective efforts that make the journey to Mbare Musika possible. As shown in Honde Valley, the collective efforts start from farmers assisting each other

to move produce from valleys to roads where it is graded, packaged, and stored before loading (Figure 10). In some instances, farmers source produce from fellow farmers to make economically viable units to transport to Mbare Musika.

Transporters and farmers have established long term relationships that they are all keen to uphold. In most cases, truck drivers come from the same areas as farmers, and they are related based on *ukama*. Agents are also from farming areas and know the farmers they deal with. They know the quantity of produce available and the farmers travelling to Mbare Musika each day. Farmers do not load in any truck; they wait for their specific transporter to build and maintain good relations. Some even postpone their journeys if their trucks get full before picking them. Loading produce booked for another transporter causes disputes among



Figure 11: Farmers on their way from Mbare Musika to farms.

transporters. Transporters in the same route work together and share information on roadblocks, share loads, and deliver parcels like money.

Several trucks deliver produce at Mbare Musika daily. Recently, there was an increase in trucks available for transporting produce to Mbare Musika following a surge in the importation of used cars from the United Kingdom and Japan. The trucks have flexible routes and penetrate almost all the farming zones. A police officer estimated that more than twenty 10 tonne trucks with fresh produce pass Hauna police road block daily on their way to Harare.<sup>329</sup> This has improved market access for farmers even in remote areas and reduced the burden of taking produce to main roads for buses or hitching rides with trucks. Buses and trucks demanded immediate payment making it hard for farmers without money to deliver produce at Mbare Musika. Transporters have timetables that suit the farmers who travel during the night and take them back, something that buses could not do before.

Transporters are sent many times by farmers or *makoronyera* to deliver produce at Mbare Musika. Mashoko a transporter who owns a small truck records addresses and cell numbers of all farmers he deals with in a notebook. He hires out wooden tomatoes crates to farmers.

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<sup>329</sup> An estimate by a police officer from Hauna, Honde Valley. The truck driver and his assistant agreed with this estimate.



He is sent by farmers and *makoronyera* to farms to transport produce to Mbare Musika. This saves time for farmers and *makoronyera* who concentrate on other duties. Mashoko emphasised the importance of reliability and good relationships with farmers and *makoronyera* to succeed as a transporter. He delivers produce to the market on time to avoid inconveniencing his clients. He works mainly with farmers from his home village in Murehwa, though he has developed connections with farmers from other areas.<sup>330</sup>

Produce importation to Mbare Musika has continued since the colonial period. Produce such as apples, grapes, onions and sometimes tomatoes are imported from South Africa. A licence is required to import produce into Zimbabwe and it is mainly corporations that can meet the requirements for such licences. In times of shortages, traders at Mbare Musika visit neighbouring countries such as Zambia, South Africa and Mozambique and “smuggle” produce into Zimbabwe. Some farmers in Honde Valley have farms in Mozambique and transport bananas, sometimes by donkeys across the border before proceeding to Mbare Musika.<sup>331</sup> Imports such as these are not recorded in official records, but they play an invaluable role in alleviating shortages in Zimbabwe.

Farmers through their networks supply huge volumes of produce to Mbare Musika. Poulton (2000) and Chokera et.al (2014) argue that large-scale farmers supply high quality produce and elbow small-scale farmers out of markets. In contrast, small-scale farmers’ coordination is intriguing and buttresses the findings by the CSM (2016) and Wegerif (2017) that small-scale farmers supply the largest percentage of food to cities. Small-scale farmers self-organise to assemble produce and resources and are immersed in solidarity networks that move produce to Mbare Musika. There are still isolated cases of new farmers as the one from Macheke, who lost two hectares of tomatoes due to the failure to access markets.<sup>332</sup> Mbare Musika accepts produce indiscriminately and farmers who are connected to *makoronyera* and transporters through *ukama* and trust-based relations have been able to sell their produce.

#### **6.4. “Ndedzemudanga”: Relations among Actors at Mbare Musika**

The organisation of actors such as *makoronyera*, traders and porters based at Mbare Musika demonstrates the existence of order and collaboration. The order and collaboration

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<sup>330</sup> Interview, Mashoko, transporter. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>331</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>332</sup> S., Mupangi, (2013), Bring Mbare Musika to farmers. [online], 21 November, [accessed 04 March 2019], available from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/bring-mbare-musika-to-farmers/amp/>



contribute to the resilience and functioning of Mbare Musika. They are organised on the basis of “*ndedzemudanga*” (belonging to the same kraal). The concept is used in the marketplace and marks the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and where resources can or cannot flow to. Actors are particular that one belongs to or does not belong to Mbare Musika. Market resources are moved to those who belong to the market. *Ndedzemudanga* is based on common membership in the whole market, ethnicity, kinship, and familiarity. Groups and associations have been formed around these forms of common belonging.

There are several distinct groups at Mbare Musika. Some of them are *makoronyera*, *machanga* (buying agents) *masorotsa* (solicitors), *mafireman* (selling agents), jagers, *vemasaga* (packaging traders), traders and money changers. There are also market officials who are based at Mbare Musika. Majoni, a *koronyera* summed their relationship with other actors in Mbare Musika as, “we live together, we work together”<sup>333</sup> to signal the importance of cooperation and mutual dependency in the market. Lorenz (1988) argues that the absence of cooperation and the individual maximising goals leads to an impasse as each side blocks trade causing mutual losses. Actors at Mbare Musika avoid a situation such as this from occurring by forming the “partnerships” where they work together and share the benefits collectively.

Actors in the marketplace occupy different positions. *Makoronyera* are the most important and controversial group in Mbare Musika. *Makoronyera* are farmers’ agents (contrary to its literal meaning of con artist) who sell produce on behalf of farmers. They receive produce directly from farmers. *Makoronyera* sell the produce mainly to wholesale and retail traders based at Mbare Musika or from other markets. *Makoronyera* are central in the organisation of farmers and traders and are at the centre of produce trading networks. They enjoy immense power especially during times of produce shortages. For example, Cheziya exercised his power and authority over traders after a delivery of tomatoes during a shortage in September 2020 (figure 12). He prioritised traders who belong to his circle, whom he offered “work” though he promised everyone to get a share. Cheziya pointed out traders and remarked “that one is our customer give him/her tomatoes.”<sup>334</sup> He used this as an opportunity to sanction traders who were disloyal in the past such as Simbai. He authoritatively said to him:

Simbai you have my money, give me my money first. The pain that you are going to feel after failing to get tomatoes is the pain I felt when you defected paying my money.

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<sup>333</sup> Interview, Majoni, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>334</sup> Comments from Cheziya during a selling transaction in the New Farmers Market. Mbare Musika, 2020.

Simbai and Dumisani refused to pay my money. I won't give them tomatoes because *vakandinyudza mari yangu* (they did not pay my money).<sup>335</sup>



Figure 12: Traders waiting to buy tomatoes during a shortage spell.

Produce (work) is offered first to traders who are loyal in times of shortages because they supported *makoronyera* during produce gluts. In this case, Cheziya sold a *sandak* of tomatoes for US\$18-US\$22 on credit. The next day traders sold it for an average of US\$30. This was a big opportunity for loyal traders to make money since tomatoes were in high demand.

*Makoronyera* are tough to the traders, like bulls in a cattle kraal, to control them and to make sure they pay money for produce they are offered on credit. Cheziya intimidated two young men who were also buying tomatoes saying:

Young men do not learn to stock tomatoes from me [he was shivering]. I did not come to Harare to kiss people; I came to make money. I do not like what you were saying yesterday, look now you have come. Did I call you to come? Is it not that you came alone?<sup>336</sup>

Farmers seek these characteristics when choosing agents to sell their produce. It is essential for agents to be tough to traders to ensure payment. *Makoronyera*, however, appreciate the role that traders play to push huge volumes of produce and they maintain a huge network of traders.

Ethnicity and kinship (*ukama*) based relationships are key forces in group organisation in Mbare Musika. Related people dominate the marketing of certain produce in the market. For instance, the marketing of potatoes is dominated by *maBuhera*<sup>337</sup>. The marketing of onions is

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> This term is used in the market to refer to middlemen from Buhera district in Manicaland.



dominated by *makoronyera* from Murehwa who have links with farmers who supply onions from their home area. Manyika speaking farmers occupy *paKajune* Banana Market while Ndauspeaking farmers from Chipinge and Chimanmani dominate the *kwaMujiji* Banana Market. Early *makoronyera* relied on their relations with farmers from their homes to get produce on credit and some started out as farmers before they became *makoronyera*. This defined the produce line they mainly sell in the market. Those who came later, who are mainly relatives, joined the same produce line that earlier *makoronyera* dealt with. They joined as apprentices of earlier *makoronyera* from which they gained skills and capital before becoming independent.

Some groups are made up of relatives reflecting the essence of social ties in the organisation of actors for economic outcomes. Family enterprises, headed by the father or mother and in some cases the brother or sister are common in the marketplace. In most cases, the family head makes important decisions in family enterprises. Group and family enterprises promote flexibility as members attend *musika* on rotation or share responsibilities. There is always a member at Mbare Musika while some members are away doing other things. Enterprises organised along family lines contribute to their continuity and reduce labour costs. Children sell at their parents' stalls while the parents are doing other tasks such as domestic duties. For instance, Msasa, a trader, stated that her son attends the stall in the morning when she is stocking produce in Mbare Musika or doing other domestic chores.<sup>338</sup> Participating in produce marketing is a form of apprenticeship for young people. Mirirai asserted that "a fish is born in water and knows the works in the water."<sup>339</sup> Trading information and skills are naturally passed to young people born in families of traders. Many traders believe that they are teaching their children work to earn an independent income in the future.<sup>340</sup>

The socioeconomic ties are a defensive mechanism against other interest groups. Wiriranai, a potato trader, said that groups are vital for *chirwirangwe* (relatives assisting each other in fights) or to mediate when one of their members is attacked or involved in a conflict with outsiders.<sup>341</sup> Over time actors forged new ties that stretch beyond ethnicity, home area, and

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<sup>338</sup> Interview, Msasa, satellite trader. Msasa, 2020.

<sup>339</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>340</sup> Interview, Shingayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>341</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.





kinship. New ties emerged as actors became familiar and developed new interests and shared common circumstances and experiences.<sup>342</sup> Wiriranai further stated that:

The ethnic and place of origin ties that worked in the market are weakening because the wild characters that were in Mbare Musika are disappearing. Now people know and are getting acquainted to each other as they continuously work together.<sup>343</sup>

Many groups are made up of friends. The newly forged ties are useful for actors to speak with one voice and push for their interests. The new ties range from few individuals to the whole market. The groups are invaluable for *kuchetsirana basa* (giving those in your circle work). Also working as a group reduces the marketing cost since members share the market fee instead of paying individually. In some groups they share the money equally after selling. In some cases proceeds are shared unequally based on the power and connections a member commands.

Jaggers and porters form a group on their own governed by defined rules and codes of conduct. They are further divided into sub-groups and have specific places they work from. The sub-groups are governed by a committee. Each member of a sub-group enforces the trust and monitors the behaviour of fellow porters to ensure a good reputation to get more clients and work. Membership in the sub-groups is controlled by the committees to ensure the entry of known and honest members. Maintaining trust based socioeconomic ties with their clients is essential for their operation and success. A porter revealed that they gained the trust of their clients who send them with valuables, including money, to many places, and they always deliver to build trust and their client base.<sup>344</sup> Many of them are not enticed with the short-term benefits of swindling a client as they can be traced and expelled from Mbare Musika. Jaggers also share information on clients, for instance, I heard a group of jaggers talking about Chingoro, whom they said is difficult to work with and he does not pay for services offered.<sup>345</sup>

In the same vein, *vemasaga* are organised as a group and sub-groups. They are organised in a manner that illustrates the essence of cooperation and mutual benefit over self-interest. They collectively contribute money to import their stock of sacks from neighbouring countries.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> C. Dhewa, (2021), Investment should start with the owners of the resources and not outsiders. @eMkambo [Twitter], 30 August [accessed 30 August 2021], available from: <https://twitter.com/eMKambo/status/1432268047813787651?t=MLGno9wtVWVIEAf-SxcuVlw&s=19>

<sup>343</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>344</sup> Interview, Porter, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>345</sup> Comments from a discussion among porters in the wholesale market in 2020.

<sup>346</sup> Interview, Justin, porter. Mbare Musika, 2020.



I observed three women *vemasaga* who occupy a single stall, they share stock and buyers. One of them narrated that they are not jealous, but supportive of each other, even against abuse.<sup>347</sup> An intriguing form of organisation, cooperation and mutuality was demonstrated by *vemasaga* who sell at market gates. They are divided into two sub-groups and rotate between the NFM and OFM gates. Members of a sub-group shift positions after each sale to give each an equal chance to sell. The point close to the gate is strategically located and is a selling hotspot and every seller is given a chance to sit at that spot. *Mai Runyararo*, a *vemasaga*, revealed that they know each other and believe in giving each other an equal chance to sell and earn money.<sup>348</sup> This organisation has promoted cohesion, oneness, and a sense of belonging to the group.

Council officials are a central constituent of Mbare Musika. They provide security, collect revenue, and clean the marketplace. Council officials have established relations with traders who work at the market every day. They know and respect each other and this influences their conduct in the marketplace. The council officials relate with actors at Mbare Musika on the basis of *ndedzemudanga*. Council officials treat and interact with actors they know and do not know differently. For instance, a trader based at Mbare Musika is allowed in the farmers' markets after they close while outsiders are barred from entering. Council officials receive gifts in form of produce from *makoronyera* to cement these relations. The City of Harare is concerned about its workers developing acquaintances and conniving with traders to engage in corruption. The council attempts to undermine these relations to stop revenue leakages.

The use of totems and clan names is commonplace at Mbare Musika to show belonging, familiarity, and mutual respect. Totems and clan names are an important form of identity, and they influence the behaviour of actors. The use of totems and clan names shows that actors have been working together for a long time. Men identify with totems such as Gudo, Jena, Mhofu, Soko, Matemai, Gushungo, Tembo, Chirandu, and Shumba. Women are called with their totems e.g., Chihera, Masibanda and Manyoni. The emphasis on totems and clan names also points to the essence of *ukama*, relatedness and belonging in the organisation of the market.

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<sup>347</sup> Interview, Mai Edzai, *vemasaga*. Mbare Musika, 2021.

<sup>348</sup> Interview, Mai Runyararo, *vemasaga*. Mbare Musika, 2021.



Overall, *ndedzemudanga* captures a sense of belonging and oneness of actors at Mbare Musika. Actors maintain social and economic ties that form the structure and influence the working of the market. I borrowed the concept from actors in Mbare Musika who used it oftenly to indicate that the person in question is part of the market. This influences the inclusion of insiders and exclusion of outsiders in closely knit networks. Whether one belongs or not is based on family ties, friendship, ethnicity and sharing the same role. This form of market ordering shows the interaction and interconnection of economic and social forces in market functioning. These forms of ordering should not be taken for granted because they are key in the working and resilience of markets. Ordering of this nature is cemented by *ukama* and trust. It helps actors deal with the cost of uncertainty and promotes cooperation and coordination for all to benefit.

### **6.5. Distribution of Produce from Mbare Musika**

Produce delivered to Mbare Musika is distributed in Harare, other towns, and sometimes neighbouring countries. Mbare Musika acts as a collection point where produce is drawn from many farms and then distributed to different areas where it is sold and eaten.<sup>349</sup> Produce is distributed to these places mainly by satellite traders. Many satellite traders come from low income suburbs in Harare. This section is an account of the organisation of networks that distribute produce from Mbare Musika. The networks are made up of satellite traders, *kombi* crews, jagers and caretakers who collaborate in distributing produce from Mbare Musika to different destinations.

Women satellite traders are the major participants in the distribution of produce from Mbare Musika to suburbs in Harare and other towns. The retail traders stock produce mainly from farmers and *makoronyera*. They sell the produce in *misika* built in Harare in the 1980s or in the streets, hawking door to door and in other public places. Retail traders are vital in moving produce from Mbare Musika to other different markets and eventually houses where it is eaten. The activities of retail traders and those that support them are essential in the organisation, function, and resilience of Mbare Musika.

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<sup>349</sup> I was walking in the city centre on 27 March 2023 and a young man and young woman were walking ahead of me towards Mbare Musika. The young man asked why the woman was going to Mbare Musika and she replied that she wanted to buy produce to send to her aunt who was in the United Kingdom. Among other things she indicated watermelon as the other produce the aunt in the United Kingdom wanted. Even though the amount of produce sent to these far away markets is small, some produce from Mbare Musika is destined for eating in Europe.



From around 3am in almost all high-density suburbs, *mahwindi* (touts) loudly shout and whistle, “Mbare Mbare-e-e-e...” alerting traders that their *kombi* is on its way to Mbare Musika. Many retail traders visit Mbare Musika early in the morning to stock produce. The *kombi* crews have tailored their timetables and way of doing things to suit the needs of these traders. For instance, they accept heavy baskets often despised in *kombis* plying other routes. Hazvinei, a trader from Mabvuku stated that they are often ridiculed when they mix with passengers going to work and they commute early in the morning as a group in their own transport to avoid this.<sup>350</sup> Some retail traders have arrangements with truck owners to take them to and from Mbare Musika. During the lockdown, traders from Ruwa used *Sekuru’s* truck to commute to Mbare Musika. Long ago, traders used taxis and buses to travel to Mbare Musika. Traders and transporters forged networks that are vital for the movement of produce from Mbare Musika.

Retail traders usually stock their produce from the farmers markets, and they prefer to buy from farmers. They prefer buying from farmers because their prices are relatively low, and packages are large compared to those used by some farmers’ agents and traders. Retail traders prefer to arrive in the market early in the morning to buy the best quality produce before it is selected by many buyers. Retail traders want to buy produce directly from farmers before *makoronyera* who increase prices take over.<sup>351</sup> Sometimes the traders travel in groups or pairs based on their friendship. Traders from the same suburb know each other, sell at same marketplaces, and share transport. Traders assist each other to stock and sell produce. They also discuss the market conditions and produce trading and other social issues affecting them during their journey.

Retail traders from other towns such as Chinhoyi, Kariba, Beitbridge, Mutare and Masvingo stock produce at Mbare Musika. For example, I frequently met two traders from Chinhoyi at Mbare Musika on Fridays. They hired *Jabu’s* truck to travel to Mbare Musika. They travelled to Mbare Musika since it offers them a variety of produce at affordable prices. During the planting season they visited at least twice per week to stock seeds that would be in high demand by farmers.<sup>352</sup> The two traders have connections with sellers based at Mbare Musika and booked produce early in the morning while still in Chinhoyi. They arrived in the afternoon and sent their porter to pay and collect the produce. Their porter claimed that *zvimbuya*

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<sup>350</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Interview, Traders from Chinhoyi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

*zvangu izvi* (these are my grandmothers), and they have been working together for a long time.<sup>353</sup> Traders from other towns sometimes request price updates and employ porters to buy produce who send it with buses to the traders. Tonnes of produce are loaded at the Mbare Bus Terminus daily to be transported to other towns.

Produce from Mbare Musika is also distributed to other cities by *makoronyera* on selling trips around the country. Some potato traders undertake selling trips to Chivhu, Mvuma, Gutu, Zaka, Chiredzi and Zvishavane when Mbare Musika is flooded with produce, and they sell at relatively high prices in those towns where potatoes are scarce.<sup>354</sup> Ishewedu stated that he has been to many places buying and selling produce simultaneously.<sup>355</sup> Farmers who come to sell produce at Mbare Musika also buy produce they do not produce themselves to take on their trips back home. For instance, some farmers and *makoronyera* from Murehwa sell onions at Mbare Musika and also buy potatoes that are not produced in Murehwa from Mbare Musika for their own families and even for selling back home.

Public institutions and corporations provide a considerable market for produce from Mbare Musika. Corporation and public institutions source produce directly or through buying agents



whom they contract. Buying agents are contracted to supply produce to hospitals, the army, universities, schools, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants,

Figure 13: Trader paying for produce storage at a cloakplace.

and bars.<sup>356</sup> Some companies that specialise in fresh produce marketing source it directly from Mbare Musika. I met buyers from several supermarkets procuring produce at Mbare Musika.

<sup>353</sup> Interview, Porter, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>354</sup> Interview, Tamuka, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>355</sup> Interview, Ishewedu, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>356</sup> Interview, Ngoni, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.



The reality of the complementarity of Mbare Musika and supermarkets is bolstered in this connection. Mbare Musika is central in fresh produce supplies even to formal enterprises.

Caretakers operate “cloakplaces” at most pick-up points that provide storage services to retail traders (Figure 13). Caretakers know the traders that they work with. They have worked together for a long time and maintained good relations. According to Hazvinei, traders trust caretakers, they do not steal or mix up their produce and they send forgotten produce to its owners with *kombis*.<sup>357</sup> In 2020, caretakers were paid ZW\$5 for their service, but the high number of traders they serve makes it a significant source of income. Caretakers contribute immensely to secure produce and minimise losses from theft, inconveniences, and the burden of carrying produce around the market while buying stock.

Networks of satellite traders, *kombi* crews, porters, caretakers among others facilitates collaboration to quickly distribute produce from Mbare Musika. Produce is perishable and marketing infrastructure is unsophisticated requiring its quick movement. Each individual produce retailer absorbs only a small amount, but due to their large number, cumulatively they distribute the biggest volume of produce from Mbare Musika. They do not use cold storage, but hold small amounts enabling them to supply a small niche of food eaters and reduce produce wastage. They indirectly connect many families and institutions in Harare and other towns where produce from Mbare Musika is finally eaten to Mbare Musika.

#### **6.6. The Relationship Between *Makoronyera*, Farmers and Traders**

The role of *makoronyera* and their relationship with farmers and satellite traders who visit Mbare Musika is controversial and contested. Many commentators, especially from the media, view *makoronyera* as exploitative and benefitting from the marketing of produce at the expense of farmers and urban buyers. They argue for the elimination of *makoronyera* in Mbare Musika to improve produce marketing, increase farmers’ incomes and lower food prices. Middlemen, however, can be viewed as a necessary evil that fill the void left by the absence of the state in produce marketing. Some farmers and traders acknowledged the role that *makoronyera* play in the marketing of produce. The practice of *chikoronyera* and the relationship of *makoronyera* and other actors changed overtime to make their view of them as con artists inapplicable.

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<sup>357</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.



The term *makoronyera* is used loosely to refer to all middlemen in Mbare Musika. *Makoronyera* literally means con artist (reflecting the negative attitude towards these market agents), but in the context of produce marketing in Mbare Musika refers to farmers' agents. *Makoronyera* are directly linked to farmers and sell produce on their behalf for a commission.<sup>358</sup> They are involved in *chikoronyera*, which is negotiating with farmers and selling produce on their behalf at an agreed price for a commission or a mark-up. *Makoronyera* are distinct from traders who buy produce for resale in small quantities. Actors such as *masorotsa*, *mafireman* and *machanga* are not *makoronyera*. Commentaries especially from the media, compound *makoronyera* with everyone at Mbare Musika.

It is believed that *makoronyera* emerged in Harare at Manganjera between 1965 and the early 1970s where African farmers marketed produce. They emerged in response to the banning of African produce marketing by the Salisbury Council. According to Ngwena, courageous young men engaged farmers to sell on their behalf in the prohibited city centre for a commission.<sup>359</sup> Ngwena asserted *makoronyera* were brave, ruthless and feared. They would place a bottle or jacket on produce to indicate ownership and no one would dare take the produce.<sup>360</sup> Horn (1995) argues that commercial farmers found selling small quantities of produce to women traders cumbersome and men popularly known as *makoronyera* established wholesale enterprises to bridge the gap between retailers and farmers.

The criminal roots of *makoronyera* are clear from the violence and fights that were rife. Violence and fights were tools to assert power, authority, and to be acknowledged by fellow *makoronyera*. In their formative years, *makoronyera* used weapons such as guns, knives, and axes to intimidate farmers and defend themselves. Ngwena singled out Dhubha who moved around with a huge knife as one of the earliest and notorious *makoronyera* in Harare.<sup>361</sup> *Makoronyera*, many who were mere thugs, were exploitative during this period. They intimidated farmers and forcefully took produce and paid amounts that were far below the market price. According to Ngwena, in response farmers engaged *makoronyera* they were

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<sup>358</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>359</sup> A group interview with Ngwena, one of the old *makoronyera*, Matapi and Ishewedu, who sell tomatoes in the Old Farmers Market. Ngwena joined the market in the 1970s and is now retired from the market and working as a mechanic at Croco Motors. He passed through the market from the court where he was attending a case of his son who works in Mbare Musika to see his friends Ishewedu and Matapi. I found them seating and sharing snuff at Ishewedu's place, and we ended up having a group interview after Ishewedu introduced him as one of the oldest members of the market. This was on Wednesday 28 October 2020.

<sup>360</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.



related to in order to protect themselves from exploitation by those who were strangers to them.<sup>362</sup> Farmers contacted the *makoronyera* they were related to in advance each time they delivered produce to Harare. *Chikoronyera* assumed a protective role to farmers. Today, many farmers rely on their relationships with *makoronyera*, usually relatives, to sell produce and for protection against exploitation.

Council police, especially Razorman, were strict in acting against *makoronyera* to stop them from entering the farmers market in the 1980s. Razorman, a former council policeman, who was an ex-combatant and Tongogara's guard, is applauded by farmers and traders for his role against *chikoronyera* up to the 1990s. Razorman strictly enforced rules and firmly controlled Mbare Musika unlike the present market police who are accused of conniving with *makoronyera* to exploit others.<sup>363</sup> Razorman made people queue at the market gate and to prove with *tswana* and money that they were buyers before entering the farmers' market. In the 1990s, *makoronyera* requested permission from the council and were issued agent letters to allow them to sell in the farmers' market.<sup>364</sup> The council was, however, unable to control the influx of *makoronyera* and other middlemen in the farmers' market. The farmers' market is now dominated by traders, who do not fit the term *makoronyera*, selling retail units, a few metres from where they stock produce.

Except for a few, many farmers sell produce through *makoronyera*. Farmers who have been in Mbare Musika for long periods sell their produce independently. Also, farmers selling small quantities of produce can sell on their own. Pedzisai stressed that he sells independently to avoid exploitation, but he must be vigilante to resist pressure from *makoronyera*.<sup>365</sup> Some farmers sell independently since they were once *makoronyera* and are known in Mbare Musika. Also, banana farmers market independently because it takes time to ripen bananas and ethnically related farmers occupy the same market.

Sarawoga, a farmer from Macheke, described Mbare Musika as dangerous for farmers.<sup>366</sup> *Makoronyera* do not allow farmers to independently sell their own produce. A potato agent shared the same sentiment, he said:

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Interviews, Hazvinei, Changamire & Ngwena, 2020.

<sup>364</sup> Interview, Kumbirai, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>365</sup> Interview, Pedzisai, farmer. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>366</sup> Interview, Sarawoga, farmer. Mbare Musika, 2020.





Potatoes are marketed by *makoronyera*; farmers do not sell directly because they would lose their produce to thieves. You must be known or use someone known in the market to avoid such losses. Farmers arrive in the market without knowing anyone and they face difficulties to sell their produce on their own forcing them to look for *makoronyera*.<sup>367</sup>

According to Justin, it is impossible for a farmer to sell produce independently in Mbare Musika, the farmer would lose much of the produce to thieves.<sup>368</sup> To remain relevant, *Makoronyera* harass farmers they do not know who attempt to sell independently.

One morning I observed a farmer who was selling watermelons independently. She was assisted by three men she came with from her farm. Some people came pretending to buy to cause chaos and steal her watermelons. Even some buyers manipulated her by negotiating harshly and disagreed with the prices she asked. She shouted hard to control people selecting watermelons in vain and she lost a lot to thieves. In a different case, a group of farmers were pressured by potential buyers to sell their butternuts at a lower price than they wanted. They were told it was getting dark and they would lose their produce to thieves. Many unknown farmers who attempted to sell independently experienced torrid times from buyers and thieves in Mbare Musika.

Farmers experienced this menace before establishing relations with “their” *makoronyera*. Sachigaro served several farmers everyday who bring produce from Mutoko and Uzumba where he also comes from. *Makoronyera* from Murehwa assisted many farmers who are their relatives to sell onions. Cosmas and Saimon stated that they maintained connections with farmers from their home towns in Mutoko and Chihota respectively who sought their assistance because they trust them.<sup>369</sup> Farmers called *makoronyera* to arrange for the delivery of produce to Mbare Musika. When the *makoronyera* are fully booked, they scheduled the visit to a later date.<sup>370</sup>

The importance of *makoronyera* to farmers was further asserted in Cheneso’s following remark:

We help farmers to sell their produce to prevent their produce from being stolen. There are many thieves in Mbare Musika. Farmers who sell alone can lose a lot of their

<sup>367</sup> Interview, Tafara, potato trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>368</sup> Interview, Justin, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>369</sup> Interviews, Cosmas and Saimon, traders. Mbare Musika, 2020

<sup>370</sup> I listened a phone conversation between Sachigaro and a farmer who wanted to deliver her produce at Mbare Musika while doing fieldwork in 2020.



produce to thieves who come and carry even a sack in broad daylight. We know the thieves in the market, and if you lose a certain produce, we know the culprit.<sup>371</sup>

Farmers' agents respect each other and do not cause chaos on their fellows' stalls. *Makoronyera* protect farmers they are related to from thieves and other manipulative forces in the market. The physical and mental demand of selling produce in Mbare Musika also explains the choice farmers make to engage *makoronyera*.

Farmers offer produce to *makoronyera* that they know and trust. In cases where they do not have trusted *makoronyera*, they would rather sell independently. The relationships are forged and maintained after repeated transactions over time. They take time to assess the behaviour of *makoronyera* and to build trust. Gudeman (2009) notes that trust-based personal relationships develop over time, and they frame and stabilise market exchanges and create a zone of peace. Farmers share information about "their" *makoronyera* and would move away from those that cheat them. A farmer stated that he was referred to Sachigaro by a fellow farmer after being short-changed by his agent.<sup>372</sup> *Makoronyera* build networks of farmers through maintaining a good reputation, trustability, and a good performance in the market. Those *makoronyera* who possess a good name build a huge network of farmers through new farmers who are referred to them by farmers they already serve.<sup>373</sup>

Farmers agree that *makoronyera* are exploitative, but they also appreciate the positive role they play, especially considering the highly perishable nature of their crops. Mucheri, a farm manager, pointed out that:

We deal mainly with Mukono at Mbare Musika. Sometimes we deliver 10 tonnes of produce, but he would say he sold only 9 tonnes, the other tonne went to waste, and we replace it. We do this to maintain a good working relationship with him for future marketing. *Makoronyera* are very rough in handling produce that is why produce waste is high. However, we treat *makoronyera* well that is why they continue to come to buy from us.<sup>374</sup>

Mucheri complained that Mukono made a lot more than the farmer and in the 2019/2020 season they disagreed and stopped dealing with him. Farmers exert power like agents, but they are more constrained than agents (Lyon 2000). Farmers who produce in large quantities

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<sup>371</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020. Cheneso is sometimes involved in *chikoronyera* as actors' roles in Mbare Musika are not rigid.

<sup>372</sup> Interview, Takaedza, farmer. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>373</sup> Interview, Majoni, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>374</sup> Interview, Mucheri, Ruwa, 2020.



rely on agents in Mbare Musika to push large volumes of the perishable produce. Farmers weigh the benefits they get from selling through agents and ignore the manipulation they sometimes experience.

Marketing relations are useful for the farmer involved in times of gluts and *makoronyera* in shortages. For instance, a farm in Ruwa sells its onions and tomatoes through their agent in Mbare Musika only, they do not receive payments on the farm. For instance, potato farmers have their buyers to whom they sell all their produce, and do not side sell to other buyers no matter how lucrative the price they offer, instead they report the buyer to their agent at Mbare Musika.<sup>375</sup> Sometimes conflicts happen but are quickly resolved and they continue to work together.

Contrary to the parasitic notions about *makoronyera*, they play an invaluable role in the marketing of produce. Indeed, some *makoronyera* exploit farmers, but emphasis on that mega narrative misses the complexity and plurality of the relationship between *makoronyera* and farmers. *Makoronyera* accept bulk supplies from farmers compared to corporations that order small quantities and this is important for farmers who produce large volumes. *Makoronyera* provide the most reliable link to the market for farmers who often struggle to sell their produce. The farmers concentrate on production while *makoronyera* undertake the marketing of produce.

*Chikoronyera* involves travelling to different parts of the country, some that are inaccessible like Bende in Nyanga District where they collect potatoes to bring to Harare. They are largely responsible for organising transport and cover the transport cost. This is invaluable in stimulating production even in remote areas and it supports farmers' livelihoods. *Makoronyera* are also important in the circulation of market intelligence in some cases regulating the flow of produce into the market to avoid gluts. By taking possession of perishable goods especially in times of gluts, considering the poor market infrastructure at Mbare Musika, they carry a huge risk that sometimes leads to serious losses. *Makoronyera* are sometimes involved in the harvesting and grading of produce on farms. In some instances, they invest in farming projects through making advance payments to farmers to meet different costs.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Interviews, Justin and Tafara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>376</sup> Interview, Shingayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



*Makoronyera* receive a commission from the farmers they assist to sell produce for. In one instance, Sachigaro and his colleagues sold thirty bags of cucumbers for Chitsa, a farmer from Mutoko. The commission was not stated from the start of the transaction because they are related, but the farmer gave a reasonable amount as appreciation and to maintain his relationship with the agent. They get a commission of between US\$1 to US\$2 per bag depending on the market price. When prices are high, they get a higher commission and a low commission when the price is low. They sold cucumbers for prices ranging from US\$10 to US\$15 and received US\$30 as their commission. In a different occasion, I observed a farmer pull out a US\$20 note and hand it to Sachigaro, a *koronyera*. Sachigaro had arrived when the farmer was about to sell his produce at a lower price and took over and got a better deal for the farmer. Sachigaro emphasised that the farmer should inform him whenever he is coming to Mbare Musika.

Sachigaro claimed that farmers are happy to work with him. He assists farmers with planning, choosing crops to grow, and marketing. Chitsa said:

I sell through Sachigaro because I trust him. He is from my home area. I started to deal with him some few years ago and we lost contact when he shifted from the OFM to the NFM. They reunited this year. He is honest and friendly.<sup>377</sup>

According to Lorenz (1988), threats to terminate transactions and loss of business deter cheating and opportunism and ensures that obligations are met. Cheating and dishonesty result in the termination of marketing relations in Mbare Musika. Chitsa revealed that he cut ties with a *koronyera* who intimidated him through *kusunga kumeso* (frowning), paid money far below the value of his produce and tried all tricks not to pay his money. Chitsa values his ties with Sachigaro because he is trustworthy and friendly. He pays all money due to me according to prevailing market prices. Chitsa said he had made a lot of improvements since reconnecting with Sachigaro and refers other farmers to him for assistance. He sometimes sends produce to Sachigaro with drivers and receives his money in the same way.<sup>378</sup> The relationship between *makoronyera* and farmers in Mbare Musika yields complex and plural stories.

Farmers are not always ignorant players in the market, they receive market intelligence. Farmers call *makoronyera* inquiring about prices and market conditions before delivering produce. An agent claimed that they tell farmers accurate information, but there are instances

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<sup>377</sup> Interview, Chitsa, farmer. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.



when they falsify information when prices are too low to avoid discouraging and demoralising the farmer, who would cancel produce delivery.<sup>379</sup> Farmers also believe they are given accurate information and have several strategies, including their own agents, to verify information.<sup>380</sup>

For *makoronyera* who travel to farms to buy produce, good relations with farmers are key. A potato trader stressed the importance of communication with farmers in procurement of produce. They maintain contact with farmers and managers who inform them when potatoes are ready for the market. They have been receiving supplies from these farms for a long time.<sup>381</sup> *Makoronyera* use strategies such as paying cash or offering high prices to build relations and to guarantee supplies from farmers. Some farmers can contact several *makoronyera* and sell to those who offer better prices and terms.

Farmers break relationships with *makoronyera* who cheat them. Some *makoronyera* state low prices for produce, but farmers would discover the actual price of produce from discussing with fellow farmers. Upon making this discovery, farmers engage a new agent to sell their produce. Tafara asserted that:

The secret to success in *chikoronyera* is to be trustworthy and tell the farmer true prices. Farmers have many ways to discover the true market price of produce. Farmers share information on potatoes quality and prices on whatsapp groups. Upon discovering that a *koronyera* is dishonest they dump them, and the fortunes would fall like a deck of cards.<sup>382</sup>

Many *makoronyera* lost their fortunes partly because of cheating farmers. Clark (1994) emphasises that traders placed a high priority on personalised relationships with farmers for their success. This is the same in Mbare Musika; *makoronyera* understand the essence of *kuvimbika* (being trustworthy) to their success. *Makoronyera* who build and maintain a huge network of farmers are the most powerful and have accumulated a lot of wealth.

Some agents left Mbare Musika for farming and many still aspire to take the same route. *Makoronyera* are sometimes part time farmers who produce vegetables for sell in Mbare

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<sup>379</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>380</sup> Interview, Mucheri, Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>381</sup> Interview, Taurai, agent, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.



Musika. They believe that farming is more rewarding than *chikoronyera*. Kumbirai, a *makoronyera*-trader believed that:

The farmer gets a lot from the transaction. I have many marketing costs that reduce my income compared to farmers. I spend days selling 200 bundles of onions a farmer sold in few minutes if the quality is good. I get a margin of US\$0.5 less cost. I aspire to get a farm to start farming.<sup>383</sup>

In some instances, *makoronyera* spend several days to clear produce and they pay market fee each day. In addition, *makoronyera* lose lots of money when demand suddenly drops even after paying the farmer.

The relationship between *makoronyera* and buyers from outside Mbare Musika has also been in the spotlight. The media and some literature have popularised a narrative that Mbare Musika abuses buyers using manipulated measures, abusive language, physical abuse and theft. There are several cases of such negative experience at Mbare Musika justifying the fear held by many visitors. The stories and experiences of buyers from outside Mbare Musika are multiple and complex. *Makoronyera* stressed the importance of buyers, and how they strive to develop a network of buyers. Frequent buyers who are familiar and have relationships with *makoronyera* are likely to receive better treatment.

For instance, Msasa, a satellite trader, realised she forgot her money while stocking tomatoes in Mbare Musika and an agent offered her credit she paid on her next visit.<sup>384</sup> In a different case, one morning a satellite trader who was buying from Cheneso said, “I left all other people selling cucumbers coming here because this ‘child’ is kind hearted.”<sup>385</sup> A second woman came and left her basket in Cheneso’s care. She added that Cheneso is kind to her buyers. Cheneso replaced cucumbers her buyers were not pleased with. A disabled woman passed through her stall while being pushed in a wheelchair by a young boy and Cheneso shouted, “hey bring our mother here; she does not know where we are.”<sup>386</sup> The woman came back, and she was given a pile of cucumbers for free with the instruction to go and sell. The woman thanked her and continued with her journey.

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<sup>383</sup> Interview, Kumbirai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>384</sup> Interview, Msasa, Msasa, 2019.

<sup>385</sup> Comments from an anonymous Satellite trader, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>386</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 17 October 2020.

*Makoronyera* and satellite traders know each other and maintain socioeconomic relations that influence how they transact. They know each other from outside the market. Neighbours and



Figure 14: A transaction between a satellite trader and woman trader in Mbare Musika

relatives discuss many social issues that affect them when they meet in the marketplace. While I was at Cheneso's stall, a woman asked the price of cucumbers. Cheneso replied, "it is you my sister, I recognised your voice; you last came here a long time ago."<sup>387</sup> They sat and discussed one of their relatives who reunited with her husband and many more stories for a long time.

Middlemen employ several strategies to cultivate their customers (Horn 1994). They strongly believe that *ropa/maoko* (blood, hands) of the person they stock from influences the rate of turnover.<sup>388</sup> Produce stocked from a *koronyera* with *ropa/maoko [r]akanaka* (good luck) sell quickly while that from someone with *ropa/maoko [r]akaiṓa* (bad luck) is hard to sell. Satellite traders prefer to stock from *makoronyera* who are patient and kind-hearted to sell quickly. They find all possible ways to avoid *makoronyera* who are rude and rough to them. As a result,

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> These are Shona idioms, loosely translated *ropa rakanaka* is good blood and *maoko akanaka* is good hands. People who possess these have good luck and their work folds well as opposed with those with bad blood or bad hands whose works does not go well.



some *makoronyera* are conscious of how they treat buyers in transactions. Ngwarayi commented that:

I treat my customers well to influence them to come back again. I use correct and standard measures for the traders to also make profits after resale. Many come back stating that my produce (*inofamba*) sell fast and thank me for the higher returns.<sup>389</sup>

Mula stated that the safety of their customers is very important, they make sure that there are no thieves at their stall.<sup>390</sup> This is contrary to the practice by other *makoronyera* who connive with *machanga* to overcharge buyers.

Some satellite traders, however, have shown their dislike of *makoronyera*. They deal with different *makoronyera* each time they buy, they have no links in Mbare Musika. Changamire pointed out that, “I only have links with Maita who sells packages, I have been buying from her for many years. Personally, I do not like *makoronyera*, they exploit us and are rough and lack customer care.”<sup>391</sup> Though this is his position, while moving around Mbare Musika, he greeted and discussed with some *makoronyera* and other traders. He maintained a relationship with Maita who stores his produce while stocking and assists him to buy packages ideal for packing the produce he stocked. On one occasion he lost money and a woman who sells in the OFM assisted him with vegetables to get something to sell and bus fare.<sup>392</sup>

Some traders and buyers openly stated their links with certain *makoronyera* in Mbare Musika. Melody, a regular buyer in Mbare Musika gets produce from specific sellers because their produce is good and clean. She is not sure whether her regular contacts influenced how she is treated or not. It is convenient for her to go straight to a specific table rather than moving around looking for the produce. In most cases, she finds her regular suppliers with satisfactory produce and does not have to look elsewhere.<sup>393</sup> In the same vein, Mirirai stated that:

I maintain good relations with *makoronyera* because of repeated transactions. I always buy from *makoronyera* who treat me well to maintain the relationship. I only buy from others when they do not have the produce. I get produce on credit, some extras and market information from my regular contacts.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>390</sup> Interview, Mula, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>391</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> Interview, Melody, food eater. Whatsapp, 2020.

<sup>394</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Zimre Park shops, 2020.





Occasional visitors have no relationship with *makoronyera* and are most likely to be manipulated especially by *machanga*. In contrast, regular buyers are familiar with the marketplace and have established relationships with *makoronyera* that they sometimes benefit from.

*Makoronyera* understand the essence of maintaining a good relationship with farmers and traders for their success. Many successful *makoronyera* have established and maintained long standing relationships with farmers and traders. *Makoronyera* strive to build a huge network of farmers and buyers to succeed. They refer to them as “my farmers” or “my customers” to maintain links with them. The relationship between *makoronyera* and farmers and sellers cannot be generalised, exploitative and beneficial relations exist in Mbare Musika. *Makoronyera* value a good reputation to continue receiving goods from farmers to make money. Farmers dump agents who are exploitative and cheat on them and find other agents who treat them well. Mucheri indicated that in 2019, they did not sell through their agent because:

He was not paying us satisfactorily compared to his earnings from our onions. He came here walking on foot, but now he owns a fleet of trucks and cars. In our negotiations no one could compromise, and we stopped supplying him.<sup>395</sup>

In the following seasons they mended their relationship and resumed working together. Conflict exists in the relationships, but for mutual benefit all parties seek to maintain good working relations.

## 6.7. Conclusion

This chapter explores the organisation and functioning of Mbare Musika. It argued that contrary to the general view of a ‘disorganised and chaotic’ market, Mbare Musika has a deep-seated order that is invisible to casual observers, but visible on careful examination. The market buildings, and the arrangement of different produce sold in specific areas, structure the market in a way that is understood by and guides people who are familiar with the market. Mbare Musika is also structured around identities and labels that give it order and meaning. Buyers and sellers self-organise into solidarity networks based on ethnicity, kinship, and friendship. Group ‘partnerships’ and family enterprises are common in Mbare Musika, where cooperation for mutual benefit prevails over narrow selfish interests. The cooperation is essential to overcome challenges and to move produce along the distribution network. Actors

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<sup>395</sup> Interview, Mucheri, Ruwa, 2020.



are aware of their interdependence, and they therefore strive to maintain harmonious relationships with fellow actors. Conflicts and exploitation for short-term gain exist in Mbare Musika, but most actors consider their long term interests over short term benefits.

*Makoronyera* play a controversial and invaluable role to the survival and function of Mbare Musika. Since their formative years, they exploited farmers who sought to sell independently and protected those they were related with. But *makoronyera* continue to be used today for the positive roles they play, such as linking farmers to the market, carrying risks of holding and transporting produce, gathering and sharing information, and maintaining relations with sellers and buyers. Through all this they play a crucial role in the resilience and functioning of Mbare Musika.



## 7. Chapter Seven: Socioeconomic Practices in Mbare Musika

*Putting all one's eggs in a single basket is not a favoured mode of procedure, though pasar traders have a basically speculative orientation they strongly prefer a complicated process of hedging to playing long shots (Clifford Geertz 1963: 40).*

### 7.1. Introduction

Few studies focus on the everyday life and reveal the multiple strategies developed by small-scale actors in marketplaces (Viteri 2010). Little research has been done on everyday practices, activities, and marketing strategies in Mbare Musika, yet this is crucial to understand its past, present and likely future functioning and role in urban food supplies. Fresh produce trading is the core activity, however, many sociocultural practices and activities are undertaken in Mbare Musika. The situation at Mbare Musika demonstrates that marketplaces are not purely economic institutions; historical, cultural and social forces shape how they are organised and function (Zelizer 2011). Lyon (2000) notes that many business relations involve sociocultural factors to illustrate the intertwining of economic and non-economic practices in markets. This chapter investigate the economic and sociocultural practices in Mbare Musika. The practices illustrate that actors cooperate, collaborate, and reciprocate more than they compete. They also reflect the centrality of trust and *ukama* in the marketing of produce in Mbare Musika. I argue that these practices are essential elements that shape the organisation, functioning and contribute to the resilience of Mbare Musika.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the nature of produce trading transactions in Mbare Musika. The section explores the forces that determine produce prices in the market. The second section is an account of the financial practices in Mbare Musika and their contribution to the functioning and resilience of the market. Section three discusses the sociocultural practices in the marketplace. Mbare Musika is social, and the sociocultural practices are a crucial part of its resilience and functioning. The chapter relies largely on the interviews, oral histories, and my observations in Mbare Musika.

### 7.2. Produce Trading in Mbare Musika

Produce trading is the main activity in Mbare Musika. Farmers, *makoronyera*, traders, transporters, porters, council officials etc. participate in produce trading in different ways. Farmers supply produce directly or through *makoronyera* and are the main sellers. Traders buy produce from farmers or their agents for resale in the wholesale or retail sections. Retailers and wholesalers inturn sell to households, restaurant operators and public



institutions. Some supermarkets also source produce from Mbare Musika. The cooked food vendors in Mbare Musika buy considerable amounts of produce from the market and in turn sell cooked food to farmers and middlemen in the market. The prices and nature of transactions reflect the influence of both economic and non-economic forces.

Demand and supply are important determinants of price of produce in Mbare Musika. Shifts in demand or supply change the price of produce, even in the short run. For instance, in April 2021, carrot supply increased and pushed down prices from US\$65-75 to US\$50 for the best quality and high grade per 60kg bag.<sup>396</sup> Also potatoes prices swing with changes in demand and supply. On one occasion the price of potatoes increased from US\$8-10 to US\$14 per 15kg pocket because farmers did not deliver on the day.<sup>397</sup> The supply of produce is high or low on some days of the week and this determines prices. The supply of produce also increases during the rainy season causing gluts and falls during the dry season causing shortages. Correspondingly, prices for most produce falls in the rainy season and increases in the dry season.

In Mbare Musika, produce is displayed for the buyers to see, and the response of the buyers set the price. One afternoon in 2020, trucks arrived in the market with green mealies<sup>398</sup> after shortages in the morning. On sight of the first truck, traders jumped onto the moving truck and selected mealies before it even stopped to offload. This reflected a high demand and the price for a dozen was pegged at ZW\$25. As more traders scrambled for a share, the price was increased on the spot to ZW\$30. The second truck arrived and sold at ZW\$30 per dozen and more buyers came and sustained the demand to maintain the price for close to two hours. After around two hours, a third truck arrived, and buyers shifted attention towards it. The price was then reduced to ZW\$25 and sellers were willing to negotiate. Towards sunset, the number of buyers gradually fell, and the price was reduced to ZW\$20 and then ZW\$15. As more trucks came supply increased and the price was reduced further. Demand was high initially but fell later as few buyers remained pushing prices down. The

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<sup>396</sup> C., Dhewa, (2021), Mbare market 23/04/21. @eMkambo, [Twitter], 23 April, [accessed 23 April 2021], available from:

<https://twitter.com/eMKambo/status/1385535490330218501?t=qD0hjz3IG3yXJkXSv5k7w&s=19>

<sup>397</sup> C., Dhewa, (2021), Mbare Musika update. @eMkambo, [Twitter], 12 April [accessed 12 April 2021], available from: <https://twitter.com/eMKambo/status/1381519851227783170?t=dy44V6tCQTomZgA6jj498w&s=19>

<sup>398</sup> Green mealies refer to fresh maize cobs sold in the market before they become hard and dry. Green mealies are roasted (*kugocha*) or boiled before they are eaten.



farmers reduced prices to attract the few buyers who remained after most buyers had already bought their stock from the first trucks.

Disruption of supply and demand patterns greatly impacts price and incomes earned by farmers and traders. For instance, during the period of Covid-19, the demand for produce was disrupted pushing prices and farmers' incomes down. Demand for produce was generally low because people could not visit the market, and public events such as weddings were prohibited. Income changes were cited to explain variations in demand. Traders in Mbare Musika cited the opening of schools as a factor that lowers demand. After paying school fees, many parents remain with less disposable income to spend on produce. Increased spending during weekends and the festive season increases demand for produce in Mbare Musika.

Farmers use the previous day's price to benchmark prices. They state the price to buyers who inquire. If the turnover is high, they increase the price and lower it if the response is low. They continuously do this throughout the marketing day hence similar units are sold at different prices. Usually in the morning, demand is high because the farmers' market is crowded by retail traders stocking produce for resale. As the day progresses, demand falls as the crowd gradually thins. Farmers and agents reduce produce prices to clear the remaining produce before leaving for farms. In the afternoon, the focus shifts to the wholesale and retail markets where people buy small units for home use.

The source of produce influences demand and prices for produce. Small, medium and chart (potatoes used for seeds) grades of potatoes from Nyanga have high demand because they are relatively cheap. Wiriranai said that "potatoes from Nyanga have a better quality, taste, durability, and more valuable than local ones. Our customers state that chips cooked from Nyanga potatoes taste good."<sup>399</sup> High grade and large potatoes from local farms sell for higher prices and have low demand. Wiriranai further stated that small, medium and chart potato grades sell quickly and clear first. They are cheap and affordable to low-income earners. Many people in Harare earn low incomes and cannot afford large and high grade potatoes that are expensive.<sup>400</sup> Many retail traders who stock produce at Mbare Musika are from the high-density suburbs and have low capital and they sell to low income earners. Partly for these reasons they stock relatively cheap produce.

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<sup>399</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.



Organisations such as Knowledge Transfer Africa (eMkambo) and Musika Analytics are assisting farmers with broadcasting produce prices in Mbare Musika on radio and social media. They inform farmers on the price ranges to expect in farmers' market and the public on wholesale and retail prices. On one occasion tomatoes were sold for US\$10 per *sandak*<sup>401</sup> in the OFM and US\$13 in the NFM. Price fluctuations within a day are likely to render the price updates less effective. Prices also differ on the quality of produce, and they change quickly demanding constant updates. Also few farmers have access to these platform partly because of poor network connections in remote areas. Farmers rely on their *makoronyera*, whom they trust, for accurate price updates.

Payments in Mbare Musika are carried out using cash only. Farmers and traders accept payments in Zimbabwean dollars (ZW\$) and American dollars (US\$). Between January and March 2020, for instance, a bundle of onions was sold for US\$1 or ZW\$45 and in September it was US\$1 or ZW\$90 in line with the black-market exchange rate. Mobile payments and card payments are not accepted, and many actors do not have bank accounts. The hyperinflation era and the perpetual currency crisis entrenched this cash only practice. Ishewedu accounted for the practice as follows:

Long back we accepted payments in cheques and now we do not accept payments through banks because it is difficult to access cash from banks. This method of payment disadvantaged farmers because of many days taken to process it. The time taken before payment also affects the trader's capital. It is difficult to adjust prices and other terms after signing a contract.<sup>402</sup>

Currently cash payments are useful in avoiding high transaction costs charged by banks and mobile money.

It must be noted that some traders who supply corporates accept bank or mobile money payments even though it took time to process. These traders supply produce to supermarkets, the army, hospitals, universities, and schools. The traders pay cash for the produce in the market and because they have relatively high working capital and bank accounts, they afford to receive payments later. They are also well connected to secure contracts to supply these institutions.

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<sup>401</sup> *Sandak* is a term used in Mbare Musika to describe a 30kg plastic crate. It is used mainly to pack and refer to tomatoes in the crate.

<sup>402</sup> Interview, Ishewedu, Mbare Musika, 2020.



Transactions in Mbare Musika are negotiated. Produce prices are not fixed, they are subject to negotiation and bargaining. In September 2020, for instance, banana prices were negotiated and ranged from ZW\$4-5 high quality, ZW\$2.5-3 medium quality and ZW\$1-2 low quality. Buyers who bought large quantities successfully negotiated price reductions. Also, sellers used price reductions as a strategy to encourage large quantity purchases. When buying produce, Cheneso stated that:

We inquire prices from farmers, and they state their prices, for instance US\$20. We negotiate the price stating that we do not afford the price and make our offer of say US\$15. The farmer would reject our offer and we agree to meet halfway at US\$17.<sup>403</sup>

Changamire pointed out that the ability to negotiate is an important skill for both sellers and buyers.<sup>404</sup> Walking away to the next seller is a strategy used by buyers to bargain in negotiations. Sellers also quickly offer produce and invoke *ukama* (eg my sister buy for me so I can take care of your young sisters) as a bargaining strategies.

In negotiating and bargaining, participants raise interesting reasons. In most cases the process is carried out calmly to build relations for future transactions. I observed a woman wrapping a ZANU-PF *zambia*<sup>405</sup> negotiating calmly with Ishewedu for a price reduction. The woman stated that she cannot afford the price charged for a *sandak* of tomatoes and wanted to urgently raise money for her savings club contributions. Farmers counter these arguments by explaining the process involved to deliver produce. Murara, for example, explained that he bought 80 bananas for US\$1, paid US\$5 per sack and US\$5 for his transport to Mbare Musika to counter the price reduction request by a buyer.<sup>406</sup> In cases where produce sellers compromised, the transaction was settled in low voices to stop other buyers from seeking the same reduction.

The timing, actors' skills and relationship between the buyer and seller involved are some of the factors that influence negotiations. Actors who know each other and have established relations successfully negotiate terms of a transaction. I observed Melody getting price reductions and add-ons from Wezhira, a trader who she called brother because they are all from Gutu. She buys regularly from him and other traders in the market. She emphasised that

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<sup>403</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>404</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>405</sup> A term used in Zimbabwe to refer to a piece of cloth wrapped around women's waist and covers the lower body.

<sup>406</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.



“*ukama* influences my negotiations all the time. *Ukama* or totems always work. They help to establish rapport and it is easier to negotiate from such a position.”<sup>407</sup> Though a useful tool in negotiation, *ukama* does not always guarantee offers being made. For instance, Majoni asked Giant for a price reduction for a bundle of onion from US\$1 to US\$0.8 for the fifty bundles he bought arguing that “we also want to make money, do you want us to go back to the rural areas.”<sup>408</sup> The two are brothers from Murehwa, but Giant countered the request saying he was in a difficult situation.

Mbare Musika contributes immensely to urban food supplies. Produce is sold in flexible quantities to suit the money and needs of buyers. Produce is packed in standard units like crates or heaped for marked prices, but sellers can divide upon request from buyers for lesser amounts. Mirirai responded to a buyer who requested the price of tomatoes saying, “all money can buy.”<sup>409</sup> For her, during that period, money started from ZW\$5 and she offered produce equivalent to any amount. In this way retail traders cater for the needs of poor families. She reiterated that people without a dollar for a packed unit cannot go home and eat vegetables without tomatoes.<sup>410</sup> This is a selling strategy to make money, the small amounts add up to the whole unit, if not more and win traders the buyers’ loyalty. Selling small emergency quantities of produce known as *tsaona*<sup>411</sup> places *musika* at the heart of the urban food provisioning for the poor as a relief to their precarious food situation (Dande 2023).

Traders in Mbare Musika earn a mark-up through a practice called *kukenduza* (repackaging produce). The practice involves breaking bulk, where farmers’ packages are repackaged into smaller units. Traders repack produce unconsciously since they have been doing it repeatedly for many years. Cheneso described how they repackaged as:

We are experienced, we know it. I can buy as sack of cucumbers for US\$10 and make money from it. I can buy it for US\$15 and make the same amount of money or even more. I cannot get less than US\$5 from it. I can order it for US\$20, next day US\$25 and then US\$30 and still get the same profit. We sell cucumbers for the same price (US\$1) despite the increase or decrease in the stocking price.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Interview, Melody, food eater. Whatsapp, September 2020.

<sup>408</sup> Remarks by Giant, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>409</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> *Tsaona* is a shona word for accident or crisis. It is used in high density suburbs in Harare to refer to emergency food parcels bought when people struggle to earn enough incomes.

<sup>412</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.





Throughout my fieldwork, the retail price of cucumbers, tomatoes, and onions in Mbare Musika was US\$1 per heap or bundle and uniform for all traders, despite changes in wholesale prices. Hazvinei said they packed their produce as follows:

We reduce the number of items on the heap or pack when the stocking price increases and maintain the selling price. When stocking price falls, we increase the quantity on each pack. When it is no longer possible to adjust units, we discuss as a group at the market and agree to raise the price.<sup>413</sup>

This practice is an invaluable tool to absorb price fluctuations common in produce marketing. This was particularly instrumental for traders to survive in the inflationary economic environment that climaxed in 2008.

*Kukenduza* partly determines the potential 'profit' margin traders earn. In the case of onions, both farmers and traders sold a bundle for US\$1. The farmer's bundle has between fifteen to twenty-five bulbs depending on grade. Traders in Mbare Musika buy the onions and repackage them, with a bundle having seven to fifteen bulbs. Kumbirai pointed out that "I get a margin of around US\$0.5 per every bundle that I stock. I break two bundles of onions into three bundles and sell them for US\$1 each."<sup>414</sup> One day he stocked 200 bundles of onions from Giant for US\$200. Assuming he used the above criteria to re-bundle them, he got 300 bundles and sold them for US\$300. His mark-up was US\$100. He subtracts the market fee, food and transport costs and his net income depends on the days he spent selling the onions.

Some farmers and traders dry and store onions during harvesting time to sell later when prices increase. In Nyanga, farmers dry and store their onions in kitchens and large-scale commercial farmers in drying sheds. Many traders stock onions when they are plentiful to package and store them for sale when prices peak between December and March. The onions are packed in 10kg pockets, consisting of twenty-eight onions that are not weighed. The pocket is sold for between US\$5-10 during this period compared to US\$2 when sold soon after harvesting.<sup>415</sup> Farmers begin to supply green onions in March and the price begins to drop. The importation of onions from South Africa ceases when local supplies resume and prices drop making it unprofitable to import onions.<sup>416</sup>

<sup>413</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Chizhanje, 2020.

<sup>414</sup> Interview, Kumbirai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>415</sup> Interview, Majoni, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>416</sup> C., Dhewa, (2021), Mbare Musika update. [Twitter], 15 April [accessed 15 April 2021], available from: <https://twitter.com/eMkambo/status/1382653840130928644?t=OeOoRhsAaheDolI96PI5tA&s=19>



Produce packaging is a thorny issue in the marketplace. Retail traders complain that *makoronyera* use small packages to short-change them. *Kukenduza* sometimes involve manipulated packages such as cut or folded tins or leaving gaps below produce heaps. For example, I observed a trader arranging tomatoes in dishes leaving some gaps below to limit the number of tomatoes in each unit.<sup>417</sup> Sometimes farmers also pack produce in a manner that raise questions. A farmer from Macheke, placed grass beneath tomatoes in crates to reduce breakages during transportation in bad roads.<sup>418</sup> The tomatoes were sold for a low price since buyers bargained successfully arguing that the boxes were not full.

All actors in Mbare Musika seek to make money or profit produce marketing. Hazvinei narrated that:

I calculate my profit to see my progress. I calculate the profit for every produce I sell separately. I know from my head the units of each produce and I can easily tell that a produce is paying or not from the units that remain after each day. The units that remain determine whether I stock more of that produce or not. We are used to our work. I do not write anything down, but I know the value of the produce I pack. I know again that if I buy produce at this amount, I should pack in a certain manner to make profit.<sup>419</sup>

The profit, however, is calculated in a way that is different from corporates. Produce marketers have very special motives for economic activity and a very specific conception of profitability (Kerblay 1986). There are no written records, calculations are made intuitively and exclude some items such as labour cost. For instance, porters and farmers do not consider or calculate the exact value of their labour and they derive meaning of their job from the money they take home.

Most actors do not keep records of their costs and income to calculate profits. They measure the meaning of their activities using other values. One farmer emphasised her ability to buy bread, cooking oil and clothes and paying school fees for her children as her drive to produce for marketing. Selling at Mbare Musika is a way of life. Most traders and farmers sell at Mbare

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<sup>417</sup> I observed a young man assisting a woman arranging tomatoes in dishes leaving huge gaps below. He was shouting that my dish is not emptied by a buyer. He does it himself. The women who were being assisted did nothing about it and many people came and bought the manipulated packs.

<sup>418</sup> I observed a farmer from Macheke selling tomatoes in the afternoon. His crates had grass beneath and he explained that the roads they use are bad, the grass is to reduce breakages. He was angered by my questions during the small talk and I quickly retreated.

<sup>419</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.



Musika every year without considering the profitability of their projects. They value the conversion of produce into cash to meet their needs. Mula commented that:

I am experienced in marketing onions. My children have gone to school and eat meat from working with onions. I eat the best lunch at my workplace that involve braaied meat, a small *sadza* and produce salad. Each day if I buy meat for my family and then be able to commute back to the market, it is fine.<sup>420</sup>

Being able to perform reproductive duties gives meaning to actors and explains why they remain in horticultural production or marketing enterprises. They do not calculate their progress in terms of profit margin as many formal businesses do.

Actors playing the same role assist each other in many ways. Retail traders usually insert a price tag for the produce. Cheneso sells cucumbers close to two traders selling the same produce. She stated that they are not jealous of each other, on a good day they all finish selling their produce.<sup>421</sup> Sellers do not compete for buyers. They allow buyers to choose where they want to buy. Even if they choose to buy produce from an absent trader, traders around sell on behalf of the trader and hand over money upon their return. They reciprocate these practices among themselves.

Actors, especially *makoronyera* at Mbare Musika practice *kuberekana* (carry each other on the back) when buying produce. The practice involves pooling money together to buy produce from farmers or give buyers change. In most cases the practice is completed well, they give each other's share after the buyer has already left. Middlemen visit farms in groups and buy produce collectively and share the transport cost. Tapfumaneyi, narrated that:

We combine our savings to pay for the delivery of produce and share the profits equally amongst ourselves daily. In a bad day, we go home without money. We all eat what is there, if we have money that day it is fine and if we do not have that is it.<sup>422</sup>

Among other examples, Kumbirai and Majoni temporarily came together to bridge capital shortages to buy onions from a farmer. Kumbirai, who was related to the farmer and did not have money to pay for the onions invited Majoni who provided the money that paid for the onions. They agreed to return Majoni's capital first, and then subtract transport cost and market fees and then share the profit equally.

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<sup>420</sup> Interview, Mula, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>421</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>422</sup> Interview, Tapfumaneyi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



One thing that an ethnographer could hardly miss at Mbare Musika is traders, mostly women shouting, “*share four tomato three vasara, share four tomato, two vasara, share four tomato one asara...*”<sup>423</sup> This is a fascinating aspect of *kuberekana* that brings together buyers who do not know each other. They contribute equal amounts, buy a wholesale unit, and share the produce equally. Sometimes a member in the primary group would “carry” a secondary member and they contribute for one share and divide it equally between themselves afterwards. This is an old practice that many traders found working in Mbare Musika. The practice was first used at the Independent Market where African traders with inadequate capital came together to buy a single wholesale unit and shared among themselves.<sup>424</sup>

I was in the market one morning when a lady started calling “*share four tomato three vasara...*” Another woman joined her, and she continued calling indicating that two more partners were left; they were joined by another woman. They called indicating that only one trader was left, and the last women joined the group. They each contributed an equal amount of money to pay for a crate of tomatoes. They chose the crate and carried it to the OFM main gate where more buyers, including men, were sharing tomatoes. They began to share the tomatoes, each repeatedly picked four tomatoes from the *sandak* and showed others until the *sandak* was empty. Members chatted and thanked each other before each picked her basket and they parted ways.

Traders participate in the sharing practice for several reasons. The main reason is that they have limited money to individually buy a wholesale unit sold at a low price for resale and earn a considerable margin.<sup>425</sup> This is invaluable when prices of produce increase during shortages. A trader, who was sharing produce with three others, said, “we do not know each other here, we met for the first time today. We do not have enough money to buy a crate each and a big market to sell the whole box before the tomatoes go off.”<sup>426</sup> I participated in the practice with three women to come closer to the actors one morning. The women indicated that their enterprises were still small, and they do not have enough money. One of them could not pay

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<sup>423</sup> This is an invitation for fellow buyers to contribute money to buy a *sandak* of tomatoes. They call the number that is remaining until they are four.

<sup>424</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>425</sup> Chat and observation with many traders who were performing this practice at Mbare Musika.

<sup>426</sup> Interview, Misheck, trader, Mbare Musika, 2020.



the whole share since she did not have enough money and tried in vain to negotiate the price down.<sup>427</sup>

*Mbasera* (add-ons) is another old practice entrenched in Mbare Musika. *Mbasera* is extra produce that is given in addition to the amount bought. It is a small amount, sometimes breakages that sellers give to buyers. Many traders such as Ngwarayi give *mbasera* to their buyers, even without them asking for it, to make them happy.<sup>428</sup> *Mbasera* does not negatively affect traders' returns, but its long-term benefits are immense. *Mbasera* is preferable for many traders compared to reducing prices in negotiation. Cheneso remarked that "our buyers come and buy like what they do every day. We do not reduce prices for them and what we sometimes offer is *mbasera* since it does not affect our return compared to reducing prices."<sup>429</sup>

Cheneso reiterated that:

The buyer would be happy that I was given an extra cucumber to go and eat. In most cases traders cannot afford to take produce from their stock for personal use even if a child cries for it. They give *mbasera* to their children to eat and still make money. If you give an extra cucumber for *mbasera*, even a broken one, the buyer will come to buy again because they are happy that their children are also eating cucumbers.<sup>430</sup>

Traders in Mbare Musika give *mbasera* as sweeteners to preferred buyers (Hart 1988) to nurture relationships. *Mbasera* leaves an impression in the minds of buyers and builds *ukama* that compels them to reciprocate by buying from sellers who offers it. This is essential for sellers to expand their network of buyers.

As Block (1990) argues, a single transaction is both economic and social. Illustrative is a transaction between Ishewedu and his in-law who bought tomatoes from his stall. In reciprocation, Ishewedu thanked the in-law for buying his tomatoes. He invoked the Shona custom of *kusuma* (pass information while clapping hands to show respect) to inform his son he sells with, saying, "Les this is what our in-law has done. Give him junk tomatoes to choose what he likes. Nowadays people cook rice that needs tomato soup."<sup>431</sup> This transaction reflects that trading transactions are shaped by social relations. Ishewedu rarely gave tomato breakages to his buyers; instead he sold them for a low price.

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<sup>427</sup> I paid the small fraction that she could not pay. I realised that the young women did not know each other. They met in the market for the first time, and sometimes they would not meet again after that transaction.

<sup>428</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>429</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Chat and observation, Ishewedu, Mbare Musika, 2020.

The freshness of produce is important in marketing at Mbare Musika. Farmers harvest their crops during the day and travel to Harare during the night. At Chitora Irrigation Scheme, Nyagomo harvested, graded, packed, and stored cucumbers in a grass shed (Figure 15).



Figure 15: A Farmer grading and packing cucumbers before taking them to Mbare Musika.

Initially, Nyagomo was planning to send the cucumbers with the driver, but changed the plan and visited Mbare Musika after packing more bags than he expected. At sunset, a truck came and loaded the cucumbers, and we moved around Nyadire Resettlement Area collecting produce from farmers until midnight. The truck was loaded to the top with boxes, sacks, bundled carrots and we sat on top. Nyagomo states that they travel in the night to arrive early for the next marketing day and have enough time to sell their produce to avoid sleeping at Mbare Musika.<sup>432</sup> Another farmer stated that they travel during the night to avoid heat and keep the produce fresh.<sup>433</sup> Travelling during the night is also fast because there is light traffic and fewer police road blocks.

Advertising produce (*kufire*) is sometimes undertaken by traders when selling produce at Mbare Musika. *Kufire* involves

touting, whistling, and making jokes to attract buyers. For instance, a trader who was selling potatoes in the wholesale section one morning touted, “five-dollar, five-dollar, five dollar, *hona* (*see*), *hona, hona*, five-five-five-five-five... *Huya kune vamwe iwe unomira wega uri horomba yegudo*

<sup>432</sup> Interview, Nyagomo, Mutoko, 2021.

<sup>433</sup> Interview, Sarawoga, Mbare Musika, 2020.



here”<sup>434</sup> Buyers gathered around the trader in response to the advertising. *Kufire* produce is usually done in the morning and before closing time to sell quickly to clear produce. Traders selling the same produce close by seem unbothered with those advertising their produce. To some extent advertising reflects competition among traders.

Produce sold in Mbare Musika is graded. Farmers grade their produce into small, medium, and large sizes. Produce that is bruised or affected in any way is removed during grading. Some farmers, grade and weigh their produce, but in most cases, they count or fill packages. For example, local farmers weigh potatoes into 15kg pockets while small-scale farmers from Nyanga grade them into big and small and fill bags to the brim.<sup>435</sup> Traders also grade produce ungraded produce delivered in the market. Some traders who sell broccoli and cauliflower weigh their produce. Most traders count the items when packaging and all qualities are accepted. Produce is measured in arbitrary units like a heap of chillis, dish of tomatoes and a cup of green peas etc.

The main business at Mbare Musika is buying and selling produce. Demand and supply contribute to price making, but produce marketing reflects an interplay of economic and sociocultural factors. Actors collaborate, cooperate, and reciprocate more than they compete. They do so to overcome the challenges they encountered mainly capital shortages. Several practices that define the market structure emerged long ago and continued to work in Mbare Musika. The trading practices partly contribute to Mbare Musika’s effective functioning and resilience.

### **7.3. Financial Practices in Mbare Musika**

Money is central at Mbare Musika. Value is partly benchmarked in terms of money and the primary goal of all actors is to earn money. At Mbare Musika, money is the ocean in which all swim (Sharp et.al 2014). Mbare Musika has developed unique financial practices essential to its resilience and functioning. This section is an account of the financial practices that facilitate transactions, actors’ interactions, and mediate and store value. The financial practices reflect the essence of collective and mutual beneficial relations and interactions.

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<sup>434</sup> *Hona* is see, and the last phrase is come where there are others, you stand alone are you a big baboon that walks alone.



Selling produce on credit is an important form of financing trade in Mbare Musika. Many farmers offer produce to *makoronyera* on *hesi*, *mhoro* or *hallo* (greeting) and *makoronyera* pay after selling the produce.<sup>436</sup> Credit transactions are facilitated by the durable relations between farmers and their selling agents. Trust and *ukama* shape these market relations and credit transactions. The ties of friendship give confidence to the creditor that the other party will repay the money due to the obligation to reciprocate (Lyon 2000). Tapfumaneyi mentioned that “we get work on *hallo* from people we also give produce when our farmers are visiting. This morning I was invited to buy onions from a farmer from Chegutu by a fellow trader.”<sup>437</sup> Credit transactions reduce the need for money and facilitate the quick movement of produce to reach eaters while still fresh.

Credit sales are immensely vital in feeding poor urban families that mostly struggle to pay cash for produce. Many people in Harare earn low incomes insufficient to support their families until the next pay day. They get produce on credit from *musika* and pay after receiving their wages at the end of the day, week, or month. *Musika* traders sell to people whose situations they know. Mbare Musika experiences unpredictable gluts and shortages and a steady clientele, built through offering credit, is important for produce sellers. Hart (1988) argues that markets are far from being competitive but reflect interdependence between actors in form of credit vital to stabilise sales and regulate fluctuations. The following instances illustrate how credit transactions are conducted in Mbare Musika.

Grace, a cooked food vendor at Mbare Musika, delivers more than twenty plates of *sadza* or rice to her clients every morning. The clients who are mostly *makoronyera* and traders in Mbare Musika pay for the food later in the afternoon after selling their produce.<sup>438</sup> Chitsa, a small-scale farmer delivers cucumbers at Mbare Musika during the night. He hands the produce to Sachigaro and Tapfumaneyi who sell it on his behalf. They sell the produce on credit mainly to traders based at Mbare Musika in the morning. Later during the day, they move around collecting money and empty sacks from the traders. After completing the follow-up, they sit down with Chitsa, reconcile the sales recorded in a book and then tally it with the collected money. They hand the money to Chitsa who in turn gives them a commission.

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<sup>436</sup> This a way to greet someone. It is used in the market to mean getting produce on credit.

<sup>437</sup> Interview, Tapfumaneyi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>438</sup> Interview, Grace, cooked food vendor. Mbare Musika, 2020.





Small-scale farmers give short-term credit to *makoronyera* usually settled after selling produce in the afternoon. They wait for the agents to sell and collect payments at the truck parks. Farmers that have unsold produce leave it with agents, who sell it and send the money with transporters. In contrast, more capitalized large-scale commercial farmers offer long-term credit to *makoronyera*. For instance, Giant took more than a month collecting money for onions they offered on credit. Chibhanzi, the farmer who supplied the onions, received the payment more than a month after delivering the produce. This provided merchants with enough time to sell the onions and raise the money. Credit sales serve as a significant source of finance for promoting produce marketing.

Credit is given to clients who are acquainted, dependable, and related to increase the likelihood of payment. Tapfumaneyi claims that they found the practice already in use when he joined Mbare Musika after 2000. Credit is not offered indiscriminately; rather, it is distributed among those who have a history of productive collaboration.<sup>439</sup> Wiriranai's following narration further demonstrates this:

I do not give produce on credit to everyone because some people do not pay. I give produce on credit to those I know will readily pay me back. I do not give those who do not reciprocate by also giving me produce on credit. It is not always the case that you bring potatoes when there is demand; you need people you offer produce on credit when demand is low. Buying produce depends on *ukama* between the buyer and seller. Sometimes I buy on credit and pay later or load the potatoes and pay afterwards when the seller is no longer under pressure from many buyers.<sup>440</sup>

Credit is essential in this situation for those who already know each other and makes produce selling easier. A package vendor mentioned that when the farmer is unknown, "their" *makoronyera* guaranteed sales on credit.<sup>441</sup>

Mbare Musika has employed credit practices based on trust for a long time. According to Ngwena, during the colonial era white farmers provided credit to *makoronyera* they knew and trusted. After the dishonest *makoronyera* vanished with farmers' money, only a few trustworthy remained in Mbare Musika.<sup>442</sup> The dependable *makoronyera* deposited money into

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<sup>439</sup> Interview, Tapfumaneyi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>440</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>441</sup> Interview, Batanai, plastic trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>442</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.



farmers' bank accounts and built enduring bonds with farmers they depended on for regular produce deliveries.

Credit transactions help create and maintain economic networks and relationships. For businesses owned by traders to survive, debt settlement is crucial. Mirirai stated that:

I can stock produce on credit from Mbare Musika or *KwaGeorge* because I am a dependable buyer and there is trust between me and *makoronyera*. When I do not have enough money, I have my people I can call to buy produce on credit. *Makoronyera* give produce to me since they know that I pay their money. To continue receiving produce on credit in the future, I make sure I pay *makoronyera* their money after selling. By making timely payments, I uphold my reputation and my supplier connections.<sup>443</sup>

Produce given on credit should be paid to maintain good relationships between all parties, as failure damages the debtor's reputation. Credit practices are also crucial for helping businesses bounce back after adversities.

Despite credit practices being based on trust, sellers frequently experience bad debts. Mirirai testified that:

Except for a few close friends, I no longer lend produce to many people on credit. I helped several families in Zimre [Park] by giving them produce on credit, but some people did not pay. Now, I only give produce to people I know and trust. I give less at first, and as they keep paying, I give more.<sup>444</sup>

A boy was dispatched by his mother to purchase an onion bulb for ZW\$20. Instead, Mirirai handed him five onions, which were worth ZW\$80 (ZW\$20 less), and instructed him that “tell your mother that today's woman should be prudent, and she buys several units that are cheaper.”<sup>445</sup> She was convinced that since the debtor was her cousin, she would pay for the onions. Sellers extend credit as a tactic to increase sales to push large volumes of produce. Changamire believes that:

Musika needs a sizable customer base to be successful. I build my customers base by employing tactics like offering my loyal customers produce on credit. My customers send their kids to get produce on credit at my stall when they leave for work. They then pay after work, a week or month later. This has a significant impact on ensuring that the hungry are also fed. I supplied twenty bundles of vegetables on credit to a household belonging to the apostolic sect in Mabvuku.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> Comments made to Mirirai to the boy in Zimre Park while I was doing my interview with her in 2020.

<sup>446</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.



Credit purchases are becoming increasingly relevant in produce marketing and urban food security due to declining incomes and deepening urban poverty.

Collecting money from debtors, on the other hand, is a difficult task that requires *makoronyera* to be tough. I followed Sachigaro and Tapfumaneyi as they collected money one day, and most of their debtors made numerous excuses and complaints about the produce. After refusing some notes because they were worn out, a woman stubbornly stated they should not go with her US\$2 change. Many traders state that the produce was not properly graded, there were large cucumbers on top and small inside, some were bruised and not fresh, and the sack was not completely full. Others said business was slow and they did not sell much to avoid paying. Sachigaro replied: “you were pitiful in the morning and now you are rude because you have our produce. We will meet again tomorrow when you come to stock produce.”<sup>447</sup>

The terms of the credit transactions are renegotiated when there are difficulties to pay. A farmer who sold onions on credit called Majoni inquiring about his money on the day he was promised payment and he was offered US\$60 since the market was low. Mula narrated an incident they made a loss, and his son left the market for some time.<sup>448</sup> He renegotiated the terms of the credit and agreed to pay in instalments until he cleared the debt. In extreme cases, the privilege to get credit is withdrawn for failure to pay. Creditors turn down requests for produce by bad debtors and property is seized to compensate for money not paid.

In times of both gluts and shortages, actor’s reciprocity is invaluable. For example, Ngwenya purchases onions from Giant during shortages when demand is high, allowing him to profit, and then purchases from him again during gluts. He called this *tinchemana* (helping each other in times of need).<sup>449</sup> Subconsciously recorded past experiences and interactions shape present and future transactions and relationships. Those who have previously worked well together maintain good relations and support each other in times of need. For example, when demand was high, Sachigaro gave fifteen sacks of cucumbers to a buyer with whom they have a good working relationship, while others could only get one.<sup>450</sup> Produce dealers keep credit history of their buyers, which they use to determine who they continue to work with.

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<sup>447</sup> Comments made by Sachigaro in Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>448</sup> Interview, Mula, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>449</sup> Interview, Kumbirai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>450</sup> Interview, Chairman, Mbare Musika, 2020.



It is also surprising that in a market rumoured to be a haven for criminals, groups selling produce keep money in a single crate or sack. Payments are also made through third parties; for example, *makoronyera* may send money to farmers via transporters. Transporters deliver produce to Mbare Musika on credit, allowing farmers who do not have money to pay after they sell. *Makoronyera* sometimes spend several days carrying money for farmers or fellow traders.<sup>451</sup> Given the emphasis on *makoronyera* as tricksters, this is intriguing. Many actors value their reputation and recognize how cheating can lead to their demise and loss of income. These practices are made possible by trust and *ukama*. Again, actors place a premium on long-term mutually beneficial relationships. Because defaulters and cheaters face severe penalties, many people avoid cheating. For instance, a transporter seized maize from a farmer after he disappeared without paying for transport in Mbare Musika.<sup>452</sup>

In Zimbabwe and Mbare Musika, mutual financial aid practices have a long history. Mbare Musika has numerous *maround* (rotation clubs) and *mukando* groups (savings clubs). Savings clubs are self-help organizations in which many people contribute money on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. According to Chamlee-Wright (2002), marketers prefer savings clubs to banks because the amounts they save are a small percentage of their daily earnings, saving in bank accounts is expensive, and there are long lines at banks.

Mutual financial aid is offered among people who know and trust each other. Short-term loans from acquaintances are inexpensive and help many produce enterprises in Mbare Musika. Cheneso narrated that:

Credit has no conditions. We make non-interest short-term loans to one another. You borrow money from co-workers in the morning to buy produce, which you then sell and repay. If you are unable to pay, you negotiate with the lender to pay or borrow again the next day. It may take several days or a week prior the debtor is able to buy a few sacks of produce independently.<sup>453</sup>

Even without money, belonging to Mbare Musika and being trusted is enough to secure produce or free interest loans from friends. Mbare Musika traders rarely borrow money from banks and other financial institutions due in part to the stringent requirements imposed by financial institutions. For instance, the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank (ZWMB) offered loans in RTGS at bank rate that were not in sync with cash (US\$ or ZW\$) transactions

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<sup>451</sup> Interview, Mutsa, agent. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>452</sup> Interview with Chitsa and his colleague, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>453</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.



used in Mbare Musika. Borrowers had to convert the RTGS to cash at the black market rate costing them between 30-35% and borrowers felt this was eating into their loans.<sup>454</sup>

*Mukando* entails members contributing a certain amount of money to a pool, and the money is loaned to members at a low interest rate and shared after a set period. Members save money by joining many *mukando* clubs. Cheneso disclosed:

We can be a group of six people who contribute money from Monday to Saturday. We agree on the amount that each member should contribute each day, say US\$5. The money is distributed on Saturday, and you know you saved US\$30. After receiving savings from the daily *mukando*, you contribute the US\$30 to weekly *mukando* on Saturday. The savings are shared after a month, and you use the US\$120 in a monthly *mukando* and receive US\$1440 plus interest at the end of the year.<sup>455</sup>

*Mukando* is an important money-saving strategy. It is cumulative, and it is borrowed at 2-10% interest rate. *Mukando* provides members with low-cost loans, eliminating the need for external loans. In contrast to paying interest to banks, interest free loans help to prevent value leakages from the market. Compared to interest rates in mutual financial aid, the ZWMB, for illustration charged 10% interest rate, 5% loan administration and 1% insurance.<sup>456</sup>

*Maround* are rotational savings clubs in which members contribute a set amount and pass it on to a single member in rotation. After rotating all members, they begin again, with those who received contributions last, receiving the money first. Ngwarayi mentioned that he is a member of a five-people *maround* club. Every Saturday, they each contribute US\$100 to one member in rotation until each member receives a share before restarting the cycle again. To attract members and work successfully, a savings club needs a strong, trustworthy, and reputable coordinator. Marketers with a poor reputation who have previously failed to pay are not invited to participate in the clubs (Chamlee-Wright 2002).

Savings clubs are comprised of people who know and trust one another. According to Chimedza (2006), mutual aid financial practices have numerous challenges, but they persist

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<sup>454</sup> C., Dhewa, (2022), Women as accelerators of financial inclusions-case of Knowledge Transfer Africa, and Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank. @eMkambo Facebook page, [Twitter], 14 March, [accessed 14 March 2022], available from: <https://twitter.com/eMKambo/status/1503276275212771329?t=5ll803ejbli7e-lgwDAhhw&s=19>

<sup>455</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.



due to social trust. Their management is based on trust and a thorough understanding of their members. Murara disclosed:

The clubs are mostly made up of people who are related, know, trust, and understand each other. If a member is unable to work, it is easy to confirm since we are neighbours and friends unlike when we are strangers. When a club member is unable to pay, we give him more money, ideas, and a reasonable timeframe to raise the money.<sup>457</sup>

The groups minimise risks by excluding strangers whose control they cannot guarantee. Wiriranai revealed that a person's behavior influences the likelihood of all members paying when it is another member's turn to receive money.<sup>458</sup> Cheneso said, "to reduce risk in Mbare Musika, we do not give anyone money to keep, many people run away with it. We give money to people we know that they have nowhere else to work except Mbare Musika."<sup>459</sup> Their trust is based on knowledge of the actor's disposition, available options and their consequences, and ability (Dasgupta 1988). Actors are unlikely to flee with money because Mbare Musika is their primary source of income. Instead, they work to pay the money to continue accessing the market to earn incomes.

Raising money for savings clubs contributions of US\$100 to US\$500 per week or month is a major goal for members. As Barnes and Win (1992) state, women contribute money in a rotating fashion and work hard to raise the money so useful in taking care of their children. To Cheneso:

*Mukando* is a valuable way to save money. I need money for rent, food, and clothing. Instead of saving small amounts of money daily, I save money this way to easily pay my bills. I send groceries from *mukando* to Chiweshe to my mother and keep some I use from December to March without buying any groceries.<sup>460</sup>

Members benefit from the savings in a variety of ways. Wiriranai revealed that:

I used to be a member of *mukando*, but I am no longer because business is low. We each contributed US\$50 per week along with the other five members. The club was significant to me because it provided me with additional money; it compelled me to work to obtain money for contributions. It increased my capital and allowed me to purchase building materials for my house.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>458</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>459</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

<sup>461</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.



Savings clubs are crucial in financing businesses and for family support. The savings augment their capital and provide money to buy food, clothing, and build houses. Some members rely on savings clubs for loans to expand their operations and recover from losses. It is an effective strategy for marginalized groups to reduce poverty (Solomon 2006). Mutual financial aid schemes are increasingly becoming relevant as the crisis continues to tear the Zimbabwean economy apart.

Members are encouraged to use the money to fill the most obvious gap in their produce business or social life. Murara was part of a four-person group that contributed US\$100 per month. He stated:

As a group, we discussed how the recipient member should use the money to improve his farming or home. We used *maround* money to build houses, purchase farm equipment, pay lobola, and pay school fees. I used mine to construct a house and a toilet.<sup>462</sup>

Savings clubs are sometimes formed with a clearly stated goal for which each member should use the money. Some clubs are formed to purchase furniture, utensils, automobiles, or groceries. Members of *mukando* for groceries contribute an agreed amount of money daily and buy "essential" groceries in bulk. At the end of the month, the groceries are shared. In the wholesale market, I observed a *mukando* group of traders from Buhera sharing grocery hampers. Each hamper included two litres of cooking oil, macaroni and spaghetti, soap, sugar, rice, etc. Wiriranai, one of the participants, revealed:

They contribute US\$1 per day until they reach US\$8, at which point they buy groceries in bulk. They purchase necessities such as cooking oil, sugar, rice, soap, and salt. It makes you responsible for purchasing food for your family. Purchasing goods in bulk is less expensive than purchasing individual units.<sup>463</sup>

Raftopoulos and Lacoste (2001) argue that savings clubs, in addition to serving a financial purpose, play an important social role by increasing interdependence and reinforcing trust within communities. In Mbare Musika, actors involved benefit economically and socially from mutual financial aid arrangements.

Some actors revealed that savings clubs are declining among traders as raising funds is now difficult. Hazvinei testified that we used to play *maround* for whatever money we had. We

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<sup>462</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>463</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.



contributed money to help a fellow vendor when she had problems. We can no longer play *maround* due to economic constraints; it is no longer possible.<sup>464</sup> Murara emphasised the historical significance of savings clubs as well as the current challenges they face. He narrated that:

Long ago our situation was far much better, now savings clubs are not feasible. There was an organisation that encouraged us to form savings clubs to save and multiply money and then borrow from it at lower interest rates to boost our businesses. We used to have savings clubs at this market, and they were quite useful to us. I knew for every trip I made; I would give proceeds from a whole box to someone. These days who can you do societies with? Savings clubs to multiply bond notes? People would say *baba Boy* it is impossible.<sup>465</sup>

Despite the difficulties revealed in these sentiments, savings clubs continue to make significant contributions to the operation of Mbare Musika.

Mbare Musika is at the centre of Zimbabwe's currency politics. It is one of the first places to receive newly introduced currencies and to phase out denominations rendered worthless by inflation. Mbare Musika's actors are financially savvy and up to date, if not ahead of the state. Mbare Musika's financial decisions have effects throughout the country and other sectors of the economy. In Harare, a common phrase is "*haichadiwe kuMbare*" (the coin or note is no longer accepted in Mbare Musika). This signifies the end of 'worthless' notes and coins. During my fieldwork, the ZW\$1 and ZW\$2 bond coins, as well as the ZW\$2 and ZW\$5 bond notes, were phased out starting in Mbare Musika and then other parts of Harare. They quickly vanished from circulation, despite the RBZ's insistence that they are legal tender. This demonstrates Mbare Musika's financial power and centrality in Zimbabwe.

The "phasing out" of coins and notes by Mbare Musika in 2020 caused friction between produce dealers and money changers. Farmers and middlemen accused money changers of rejecting bond notes in favour of reintroduced Zimbabwean dollars. They requested the government to intervene, even if it meant deploying security forces to remove money changers from the streets.<sup>466</sup> Farmers thought they were suffering due to the use of multiple currencies, while vendors and money changers profited at their expense. Banana farmers and traders faced challenges because they sell their bananas in local currencies but pay their costs

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<sup>464</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.

<sup>465</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>466</sup> BUSTOPTV, (2020), Bond notes rejected. [Youtube], 21 June, [accessed 20 May 2021], available from: <https://youtu.be/kNdPe6P3s54>





in US dollars. Murara exchanged a large amount of Zimbabwean dollars for a single US\$20 bank note and felt cheated. Murara lamented that:

The customer and vendor are benefiting a lot from the effort of the farmer. *Murimi ari pagejo* (the farmer is yoked and pulling a plough). The situation was better during the time we used a single currency, even during the hyperinflation. Now the farmer [trader] buys with a different currency from the one he receives for his produce. We pay the farmer in US dollars, pay for transportation in US dollars, and sell our bananas in bond notes, which we then convert to US dollars. What I have done is painful. I gave that man thousands of dollars only to be given a \$20 bill. If I could buy directly with bond notes, get home with bond notes, and buy bananas with bond notes, that would be great.<sup>467</sup>

Sometimes, unsuspecting farmers and money changers are arrested for engaging in illicit currency trading. Some produce traders exchanged bond notes with people buying in supermarkets or boarding ZUPCO buses where they were accepted for some time.

Financial practices in the marketplace demonstrate the presence of cooperation and collaboration among actors. Actors organised themselves into groups and networks to pool financial resources for mutual benefit. The foundation of these practices is *ukama* and trust. This illustrates the interplay of economic and non-economic forces in modelling markets. The mutual financial aid schemes also contribute immensely to the function and account for the resilience of Mbare Musika. To a greater degree they promote urban food security as credit systems enhance food access by the poor.

#### **7.4. The Socio-cultural Practices in Mbare Musika**

The market is both an economic and a sociocultural space. Many people have been in Mbare Musika for many years, and some families for generations. They arrive at the market early in the morning, stay all day, and return home late in the evening. For many years, they have done so repeatedly. Mbare Musika's first generation has been joined by their children and grandchildren. Mbare Musika is what they are, and they constitute it. They spend a significant amount of time at the market and their entire lives revolve around it. Their market lives encompass social activities like celebrations and entertainment, gifts, funerals, respect, eating and drinking beer, as well as gambling and playing.

Gift offering is a common thing in the marketplace. Middlemen at Mbare Musika give produce they sell to fellow traders as gifts. Chief stated that "I do not buy anything for use at home, I

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<sup>467</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.



take everything I want from the market.”<sup>468</sup> They only buy items that are not available in Mbare Musika, such as meat. Muchengeti dubbed *magunanzi* the parcel, which included tomatoes, onions, cabbages, peas, green beans, carrots, and cauliflower. Gifts are given reciprocally; one gives and receives to complete the transaction. A man from the OFM once gave cabbages to a man selling tomatoes. In return, the recipient gave a plastic bag full of tomatoes picked from various *sandaks* he was selling.

Gifts are offered along the lines of *ukama*. I observed Mutsa giving a half full *sandak* of tomatoes to his sister over the NFM wall. Gifts are also extended to respected people who do not work in Mbare Musika. Kumbirai gave Ishewedu’s mother a bundle of onions on her visit to the market. These gifts are an important aspect of exchange that builds mutual respect among actors. Gifts cultivate oneness, promote a sense of belonging and ownership of the market. When giving produce they asserted that “*ndechedu ichi*” (belongs to us) drawing a line between insiders and outsiders.

Sometimes gifts reflect frustration and a strategy to develop a network of future buyers especially during gluts. The example of Mudhara, an old farmer reveals this. One Saturday morning in 2020, the OFM was full to the brim, but cabbages sales were depressingly low. Mudhara gave each woman who was around a head of cabbage, which attracted the attention of many people. While presenting the gifts, he exclaimed “Mudhara woyee, Mudhara woyeee!” Though a *makoronyera* commented that Mudhara *aremerwa nemusika* (Mudhara has faced insurmountable difficulties), the gifts carried both frustration and hope. The gift re-energised and inspired the old farmer who began selling again, and it is this spirit that propels actors and Mbare Musika forward.

The actors’ collective philosophy and handling of death and funerals clearly articulates Mbare Musika’s sociocultural dimension. They hold funeral parades in the marketplace to give their departed colleagues a dignified sendoff. They respect and mourn the dead, and they attend funerals. It is a community obligation for members to attend funerals and contribute to funeral expenses to ease the burden on the bereaved. Ngwarayi proclaimed that:

The entire retail and wholesale sections come together to contribute money and other resources for funerals (*chema*), attend burials of deceased members or assist with medical expenses. When one of the traders becomes ill or dies, a book circulates to

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<sup>468</sup> Interview, Chief, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.



collect contributions. Neighbours are responsible for knowing the whereabouts of those they work with and inform others if they are ill.<sup>469</sup>

In the farmers' markets funeral contributions are also collected when one of their members or close relatives passes on. I contributed a US\$1 towards the funeral of a member who passed on while I was doing my fieldwork. Everyone involved at Mbare Musika is culturally expected to take part in funerals and they know they will get the same assistance and respect when they die.

Aside from the market-wide call for help, actors have formed small and numerous social and funeral clubs based on *ukama* and familiarity. Members of these clubs bear the burden of funerals and illness collectively. Ngwarayi is a member of a club in which members contribute US\$3 each when a member or close relative dies.<sup>470</sup> The club has twenty-five members who all know and are related to one another. It has a constitution that specifies the circumstances in which it can assist. They contribute *chema* for the burial of club members, including their spouse, children, parents, and in-laws.

In another burial society, they have a chairman, secretary, treasurer, and general members. They hold positions for one year and thereafter elect new leaders. They select their leaders from among those they trust and like. Wiriranai claims that "we prefer people from Buhera in our club who have a common background, we know and understand each other. This is important for us, it makes it easy for us to work together towards a common objective."<sup>471</sup> Funeral clubs have a long history and demonstrate the essential role of sociocultural forces in marketplaces.

During my fieldwork in Mbare Musika, I witnessed a funeral procession of a *koronyera* who had collapsed and passed on some few days before. The procession passed through Mbare Musika, where he worked, on its way to Zororo Cemetery in Chitungwiza where his remains were interred. The procession included a truck carrying a coffin and people singing behind. A pick-up truck and two sedans escorted the truck. The coffin was offloaded at the place where he sold and slept. People sang, played drums, and danced around the coffin. Many people were drawn to this and joined the procession. They smashed watermelons, which is what he was selling before his death, around his coffin. *Chema* was paid in form of money and produce

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<sup>469</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.



during the procession. The procession eventually left Mbare Musika with people still singing and playing drums. This is how Mbare Musika sends off their dead; they collectively contribute to the lives, health, and burial of members.

Actors in Mbare Musika perform celebrations and entertainment that bring out its sociocultural dimension. Actors celebrate birthdays, play soccer and other games, drink beer together and make jokes. Soccer clubs entertain people. They sometimes organise braais (grilling meat over an open fire) where they meet, socialise, and enjoy themselves together. They each contribute an equal amount of money to buy products for braaiing, cooking and drinking. After the farmers' markets close, the actors disappear into Mbare Musika's beer halls, shabeens and restaurants where they drink beer, play snooker, gamble, eat and chat.

In 2020, I attended Chief's birthday celebration in the NFM. Fellow group members from Murehwa contributed US\$5 each for the celebration. From around mid-morning they bought and drank beer, played music and danced while selling produce in the market. The celebration continued until the evening when they left the marketplace for a braai. Gifts were equally offered during the birthday celebration. On another occasion, I observed a birthday celebration for a woman trader in the car park that was being used as a marketplace. Traders gathered around her, smeared her with mud, offered presents, cheered, and sang in an unusual manner. These celebrations and outings solidify and strengthen business and social relationships and networks.

Actors also hold family courts in Mbare Musika to discuss a variety of cultural issues and discipline children. Elders assert their power and authority over young people at these courts. I observed *makoronyera* from Murehwa undertaking one in which beer was consumed and authority was demonstrated. The fathers reprimanded a son who was no longer sleeping at home, and he bought beer as a fine. Traders gather in some of the 'courts' to discuss social issues affecting them or their families. Tendai and Sekai talked about their family problems while waiting to sell *paspeed* in the afternoon. Tendai narrated that:

My sister is pregnant, but her husband is not buying preparations, he is waiting for me to intervene. I told her to leave him a long time ago, but she did not listen. He has not paid a dime for lobola, but he is busy abusing her. You will see what I will do to him when he arrives. I am going to humiliate him in public.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> A discussion between, Tendai and Sekai, traders. Mbare Musika, 2020.



In Mbare Musika, social issues dominate discussions among family or trusted members. In some cases, open courts are held in which members comment on various social issues. For example, a discussion about an estranged wife (a trader in the market) was condemned for attending the funeral of his ex-husband at an open court in the NFM.

People in the market gather to read newspapers, and share news. They hold debates on marital issues, soccer teams and players, politics, and many other topics. Even buyers who come to the market unhurriedly greet and discuss many issues with acquaintances who sell produce at Mbare Musika. In the words of Changamire, *musika* attracts many young people who come to debate political, socioeconomic, and soccer issues. The market is a gathering place for young men to meet potential suitors. Some met and eventually married their partners at *musika*.<sup>473</sup>

In the marketplace, jokes are common, and some "market theatre" is performed. Comedians move around performing in Mbare Musika in return for money, food and beer. Joking is part of the daily rhythm of marketplaces, and traders who make people laugh attract and retain many buyers (Wiley 2014). The debates, jokes, and laughter create a lot of noise, making the market lively and vibrant.

Since independence in 1980, several vendors' organisations emerged to advocate vendors' rights and interests. Currently many actors in Mbare Musika are not members of vendors' organisations. One participant mentioned that:

I have never belonged to any organisation. The NFM does not have associations. When we have grievances, we choose people to represent us. When fees are raised, we take turns representing the entire group to the council or the District Administrator (DA).<sup>474</sup>

Some traders stated that they were once members of vendors' associations, but resigned after their leaders became compromised and betrayed them. They betrayed their principles and are now rallying behind the ruling party and council that harass them.<sup>475</sup>

Vendor associations are founded by outsiders and struggle to gain traction among vendors. There is little engagement between the two, and it appears that associations, like all outside

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<sup>473</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>474</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>475</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.



experts, impose solutions on market participants. For example, I have never heard any actor at Mbare Musika complain that the market is crowded and call for decongestion as the vendor's associations, council, and the state do. Association leaders either do not understand the vendors or have stereotypical views of Mbare Musika. One leader of a vendors' association suggested to accompany me to Mbare Musika for protection arguing that the people there are "wild and rowdy."<sup>476</sup> This viewpoint demonstrates that the vendors associations misunderstand and misconstrue Mbare Musika, which they purport to represent.

Actors at Mbare Musika have their own associational ways to represent their interests. Chikulo et.al (2020) state that actors form effective coalitions to defend their interests. Actors engage state and council officials to consider their needs and pleas through their committees. This was elucidated as:

People in Mbare Musika come together to find solutions to their complaints. After agreeing they send an envoy to Rememberance (Mbare Council Offices) to meet with the DA or Market Officer. The two would then direct their concerns to the appropriate office or figure out the best way to assist. The Market Officer would then provide feedback to the envoy who then relay it to market participants.<sup>477</sup>

The associations in Mbare Musika engage the council on several issues, with varying results. Their complaints are sometimes considered and resolved, but not always.

## 7.5. Conclusion

The preceding discussion demonstrates that Mbare Musika is more than just a place for buying and selling produce. The market serves a sociocultural function in addition to its economic function. Economic and sociocultural forces and motivations are inextricably linked. Transactions and prices are shaped by demand and supply, but non-economic factors also play a role. Cooperation and competition are not alternatives in markets (Gambetta 1988), but occur concurrently. Actors in Mbare Musika consider their individual economic interests, but work together to achieve them. Mbare Musika is built on mutually beneficial practices and collaboration. The interaction of actors is anchored by reciprocity, trust, and *ukama*. Actors place a high value on developing and maintaining good relationships and networks with other actors. Based on these relationships and networks, the actors collaborate in several ways. They establish mutual aid practices such as selling produce on credit, savings clubs, and funeral

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<sup>476</sup> This suggestion was made by the leader of a certain organisation while I was seeking permission to undertake my study.

<sup>477</sup> Interviews, Mula, Shingayi and Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.



clubs, which continue to work in the market. Actors such as *makoronyera* and traders spend much of their time and lives in Mbare Musika, where they celebrate important occasions, socialize, and even mourn together. Many people's lives revolve around Mbare Musika. They go to the market whether it makes economic sense or not because it is deeply ingrained in their lives and provides many non-economic benefits. The economic and non-economic practices contributes to Mbare Musika's cohesion and functioning.



## 8. Chapter Eight: The Role and Experiences of Women in Mbare Musika

*Women's urban experiences have varied over time and across geographic space, but they have always been an integral component and sometimes the dynamising factor in African urban life (Kathleen Sheldon 1996: 3).*

### 8.1. Introduction

Africa is the region of female farming par excellence (Boserup 1970) and women play a key role in rapid urbanisation in Africa through the production and marketing of food that sustains the urban community (Sheldon 1996). Women provide much of the farm labour, dominate produce markets, and are at the centre of food sourcing and preparation. Schmidt (1992) contends that women in Africa play a critical role in childbirth and subsequent life support through food provisioning. Solomon's (2006) research on market women in Sierra Leone presents a picture of women enduring the double burden of being both women and poor, which is true for many African women. It is also true that, despite several problems they face, women dominate bustling markets. Mupedziswa and Gumbo (1998) note that the inadequate documentation of women's activities in horticultural production and marketing perpetuates the underestimation of their role in urban food supplies and development. Women are more than just victims of urbanisation and poverty; they employ several strategies to deal with and reshape the harsh urban environment they encounter. Mbare Musika is organised around gender, and there are expected behaviours for women in the marketplace. This chapter examines the history and experiences of women in Mbare Musika to explain the market's resilience and functioning. It explains their dominance in Mbare Musika, their experiences, and contribution to the urban food economy.

This chapter is primarily based on oral histories and ethnographic findings. It is divided into three parts. The first section defines and explains the roles of women in Mbare Musika. It delves into the activities and experiences of women as farmers, farm workers, retailers, and buyers. Section two discusses women's dominance in Mbare Musika, particularly in produce retailing. It delves into women's past and present experiences and connects them to their participation in *musika*. The third section looks at the challenges that women face in Mbare Musika and how they deal with them.





## 8.2. The Role of Women in Mbare Musika

A close examination of Mbare Musika reveals a rough gender division of roles. Some sections of Mbare Musika and some roles are "reserved" for women, while others are for men. Women dominate produce retailing, accounting for the majority of stallholders in the retail section and satellite markets. A quick scan of the population at Mbare Musika reveals that women make up most buyers. There are also a significant number of woman farmers and farm labourers. In general, these are the market roles of women. Men dominate roles such as wholesaling, portering, and transportation.

Since the early colonial period, women responded to Harare's growing food market by increasing fruit and vegetable production in neighbouring areas as an alternative source of income (Barnes and Win 1992). Yoshikuni (2007) documents several examples of women in suburban areas such as the Ventersburg Farm who were both employed and engaged in market gardening. Women used bicycles or carried vegetables on their heads to Harare for marketing. Over time women began bringing vegetables from faraway places such as Murehwa, Mutoko, Chihota, Hwedza, and Musanhi. Women currently grow vegetables and fruits and supply Harare from far-flung areas such as Honde Valley, Uzumba, Chinhoyi, and Macheke. The extension of road networks connected these areas to the biggest market in Harare.

Elizabeth Musodzi was one of the women involved in market gardening in the suburban areas. She rose to prominence and influence in Mbare Township. Yoshikuni (2007: 82) writes, "coming to live in Chizhanje, she distinguished herself as an industrious, successful agriculturalist." Similar cases of women growing vegetables and fruits in Seke, Chiremba, and Goromonzi for sale in Harare have been documented (Schmidt 1992, Barnes and Win 1992, Horn 1994). Women were able to visit Harare from nearby reserves to market their produce because the urban influx and registration ordinances, which restricted men's movements, did not apply to women (Horn 1995). Oral histories confirm that women were pioneers in produce marketing in Harare. They contributed immensely to African produce marketing and the birth of Mbare Musika.

Women form a significant portion of farmers who grow fruits and vegetables for marketing in Mbare Musika. For example, women own plots and gardens at Chitora Irrigation Scheme and in Honde Valley where they grow vegetables and fruits for sale. Women plant, water, add manure, manage pests, and harvest crops with the help of children. They travel to Mbare



Musika to sell their produce. I took a ride-along from Mutoko to Mbare Musika with a woman who cultivated vegetables to sell in Harare to earn money to educate and feed her children.<sup>478</sup>

Many workers on the farms I visited were women. Most women work as casual labourers, hired only when a task needs to be completed, whereas men have permanent jobs. They work long hours to complete the tasks assigned to them. Women planted, weeded, harvested, graded, packed, and loaded produce onto trucks, based on what I saw on farms I visited. A man and his wife were assisted by two young women hired to harvest vegetables at Chitora Irrigation Scheme. In my research, I found that the majority of women workers are paid US\$1.5 to US\$2 for completing a given task that takes the entire day. Chitsa was chastised by a fellow farmer for paying women labourers a mere US\$1.5 after they spent the entire day harvesting his crops. The wage is paid after farmers return from Mbare Musika, where they sell much of their produce.

While we were grading and packing onions in Acturus, Goromonzi District, one woman farm worker was singing “*nhamo inhamoi isingaperi*.”<sup>479</sup> This demonstrates that women workers are aware of the difficult work they do and the low wages they receive. They complained that they were only paid US\$2 for tasks like harvesting, packing, and loading trucks that could be completed in a full day. They work long hours, sometimes from 5 a.m. until it is dark (on the day I was at the farm they knocked off after 7p.m. after loading the truck).<sup>480</sup> The women farm workers claimed that they did not get enough rest and they do tough work, such as digging hard ground to harvest onions, a task they did the day before my visit to the farm.<sup>481</sup> They are supposed to take a break at 10 a.m., but they continued to work in order to complete their tasks on time. On the day I was at the farm, we had a lunch break in the afternoon, and we were served *sadza*, vegetables and *machunks*.<sup>482</sup> The women walked a long distance to the village after a long day of work. When they got home, they washed children and prepared

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<sup>478</sup> Interview, Anonymous woman farmer, ride-along from Mutoko to along Harare-Nyamapanda highway, 2021.

<sup>479</sup> Song sung by woman farm worker at a farm in Acturus. It means what kind of suffering is she in that never ends.

<sup>480</sup> Interview, farm workers, Acturus, 2020.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Chunks is a soya beans by product from the manufacture of cooking oil that became popular as a relish in Harare during the economic and food crisis.



food for the family.<sup>483</sup> They stated that they are constantly at odds with their husbands, who demanded *utekwatekwa* (intimacy) regardless of how tired they are.<sup>484</sup>

Women were the first retail traders in Harare, and they continue to be the largest group. Tapfumaneyi stated that women are the majority of produce buyers at Mbare Musika. Women began to migrate to Harare in greater numbers in the 1940s, and many of them worked in the produce trade (Barnes and Win 1992). Urban women stocked produce from farmers who sold it in Harare. They traded the produce in early African townships like Mbare and Highfields. Due to their large number, it can be estimated that women distribute the largest volume of produce from Mbare Musika. It is also clear from this that women contribute immensely in assisting urban people to access food at convenient places and times. They operate *misika* in almost every suburb in Harare where the majority of low income earners buy produce.

During the colonial period, women had difficulties finding work in urban areas. They took advantage of opportunities in a growing food market to earn money. They opened *misika*, to sell produce to male migrant workers staying in hostels, whose food rations were inadequate.<sup>485</sup> Since the colonial era, women remained primary produce distributors in Harare and other towns. Women travel from Chinhoyi, Kariba, Bindura, Masvingo, Mutare, and other towns to stock produce in Mbare Musika for resale. Produce trading has remained the most accessible and valuable opportunity for women to earn incomes independently.

As white settlers established mines and towns, the colonial state forced African men to work for wages. Women remained in reserves, where they worked on farms, before migrating to cities to join their male counterparts for better opportunities. Opportunities for women in cities were limited by colonial laws and lack of education (Barnes and Win 1992). Produce trading became a domain for women and was considered women's work. The majority of people believed the earnings from *musika* were meager and insignificant.<sup>486</sup> Hazvinei asserted that *musika* was trivialised and despised in communities.<sup>487</sup> This state and community view explains the marginalisation of *musika* (Horn 1995). For a man, to work in Mbare Musika was

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<sup>483</sup> Interview, farm workers, Acturuss, 2020.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Interview, Makwiramiti, Mbare resident. Harare, 2022.

<sup>486</sup> Interviews, Mbuya, Ngwena, Matapi, Hazvinei, 2020, Mbuya Shingai, Mbare Musika, 2022.

<sup>487</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.



considered unworthy and laughable. Women who operated *musika*, particularly married women, were ridiculed and shunned for dishonouring their families.<sup>488</sup>

Few women work as wholesalers in Mbare Musika, where men predominate. Women who practice *chikoronyera* and obtain produce directly from farmers are an exception. Ngwena expressed that previously, women were not permitted by the council to work in the wholesale or farmers markets.<sup>489</sup> Explaining why there are few women in *chikoronyera*, Cheneso said:

I frequently bring produce from Chiweshe farms. We hire a truck and travel to farms to buy produce as a group. I once hired a truck transporting tobacco to the Auction Floors to transport butternuts from Chiweshe to Mbare Musika. It is difficult for me to do all the farm work and loading by myself. At the marketplace, we hire jagers to help us with packing, loading, and unloading.<sup>490</sup>

As a result, women pay more to bring produce to Mbare Musika than men. *Makoronyera* perform tasks such as harvesting and loading trucks, and in some cases, farmers provide them with transportation. Giant and Muchengeti contributed to the harvesting, loading, and offloading of onions in trucks. The high cost of transporting produce and the difficulty of travelling to farms discourage women from participating in *chikoronyera*.

Some women assumed roles that were "reserved" for men and performed "male duties." Ngwena identified Mai Chimuka, Mai Muroyi, and Easter Waiwa, pioneer women who worked in the wholesale market alongside their husbands. For example, he described how Mai Chimuka, who accompanied her husband, maneuvered a UD truck loaded with potatoes in the wholesale market, much to the delight of many male marketers.<sup>491</sup> There are few women who are porters or transporters. I met a woman who is a porter and was unloading sacks of cucumbers from a truck, a physically demanding job that is mostly filled by men. Women currently dominate produce retailing and the sale of plastic packages.

Women are the majority retail stallholders in Mbare Musika partly owing to the criteria used by the council to allocate stalls. During the colonial period, the Salisbury Municipality allocated stalls to women with marriage certificates, young people and men were prohibited from

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>490</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>491</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.



holding stalls in the market.<sup>492</sup> The City of Harare took a welfarist approach, allocating retail stalls to elderly women over the age of fifty. They were prioritised because they were responsible for taking care of their children and grandchildren.<sup>493</sup> The majority of these women have been stallholders since the allocation in the 1980s. Some women rent out their stalls, while others pass on them to their children or relatives.

Mbare Musika is becoming a more important and acceptable source of food and income.<sup>494</sup> A trader stated that vendors were mocked in communities, but this has changed, and vending is now a significant source of income for many people in Harare.<sup>495</sup> Mbare Musika's gender and age composition has shifted dramatically since the early 1990s. These changes are linked to Zimbabwe's persistent economic decline that lasted for nearly three decades. Hazvinei pointed out that:

Previously there were very few men selling or buying produce at Mbare Musika. *Musika* was primarily run by women. Most men could find work. Mbare Musika was dominated by elderly women; there were no young women present because they could find work in the industries. Because there are no jobs these days, many young people turned to *musika* for a living.<sup>496</sup>

The entry of young people into Mbare Musika changed the old perception of produce trading as the work of old women. Young women currently dominate, and men are increasingly taking over produce retailing. Women producers faced lower sales and increased competition from men, who flocked to Mbare Musika in significant numbers since the 1990s (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 1998, Osirimi 1995).

Women operate their *musika* enterprises along business lines (Horn 1994). They stock wholesale units from farmers at low prices, break them into small units and sell for a profit. During the 1980s, woman stocked vegetables from farmers for 2c and sold them for 5c per bundle.<sup>497</sup> Satellite traders sell produce at uniform prices in most parts of Harare. Since the early years of Mbare Musika, women traders generate stable incomes that are significantly higher than the general wage scales earned by industrial workers. The realisation of the

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<sup>492</sup> Interview, Mbuya Shingai, Mbare Musika, 2022.

<sup>493</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>494</sup> Interview, Mirirai. Ride-along from Mbare Musika to Ruwa along Mutare road, 2020.

<sup>495</sup> Interview, Trader, Ride-along from Mbare Musika to Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>496</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Chizhanje, 2020.

<sup>497</sup> Interview, Mai Mufaro, Mbare Musika, 2020.

potential earnings contributed to changing community perception of Mbare Musika, especially as the economic crisis persists.

According to Horn (1994), women specialise in roles with low financial returns and deal in small volumes of produce. Women in produce retailing earn less than men who work mostly in wholesaling. Retail traders are the final sellers, and they stand to lose money if the produce for which they paid cash is not bought. Tapfumaneyi stated that *makoronyera* arrive at the market at around 3 a.m. to buy produce directly from farmers to ensure that the majority of the customers, *mbuyadzematswana*, (grandmothers who own baskets) do not buy directly from farmers.<sup>498</sup> This significantly reduce women's profit margins because they are unable to buy directly from farmers whose produce is relatively cheap and come in large standard packages. For most women retailers, visiting Mbare Musika so early in the morning is dangerous; they arrive at dawn to find most produce in the hands of *makoronyera*, who charge an additional fee and repack the produce in smaller quantities.



Figure 16: Tswana loaded with Produce in Mbare Musika

In Mbare Musika, women retail traders are known as *mbuyadzematswana*. They used baskets to stock produce, hence the name. In most Zimbabwean villages, *tswana* is traditionally a

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<sup>498</sup> Interview, Tapfumaneyi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



women's utensil. The term alludes to how produce trading is gendered and the early involvement of women. Hazvinei testified that:

The name *mbuyadzetswanda* began a long time ago. We initially bought produce in metal dishes, which were later banned due to reports that some were used for bathing and washing. Tswana took their place for sanitary concerns. At Mbare Musika, there was a health supervisor who enforced health regulations for traders to sell safe food to urban people. Unlike what is happening currently, produce was piled on top of wooden pallets and plastics.<sup>499</sup>

Though these events may have bolstered the use of *tswana* in Mbare Musika, *tswana* was used in Zimbabwean societies since the pre-colonial period (Figure 16). *Tswana* are handcrafted in rural places like Honde Valley and sold at Mbare Musika. *Tswana* has become an essential identity for women in *musika* and handling produce in Mbare Musika.

*Tswana* was used by pre-colonial Zimbabwean communities to harvest and preserve food from the forest, fields, or markets. It is still widely used in rural areas and has found its way into urban areas. Women in early colonial Zimbabwe appropriated *tswana* and used it to carry produce to markets in Harare (Barnes and Win 1992) for its advantages. Mirirai claimed that *tswana* is durable and carries a lot of produce especially for vendors who buy a variety of produce in small quantities. It protects produce such as tomatoes from smashing and spoilage.<sup>500</sup> The use of *tswana* in Mbare Musika demonstrates the continued dominance of women in food production, processing and marketing despite the structural changes brought by colonialism.

Cooked food vending enterprises in Mbare Musika are operated mainly by women. Cooked food sellers primarily serve farmers and intermediaries at Mbare Musika. To earn a living, women externalised the once culturally domestic duty of food preparation and catering into the public arena. At houses-cum canteens, bars, clubs, improvised stalls, and butcheries, they prepare and sell *sadza*, rice, roasted and cooked meat, vegetables, and boiled eggs, among other things. They also sell manufactured products like beer and soft drinks. Some stalls in the wholesale and retail markets were converted for food preparation and vending (Figure 17). Women are the largest owners and employees in cooked food vending enterprises.

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<sup>499</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.

<sup>500</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Ruwa, 2020.

Women also operate flourishing cooked food enterprises on the sidelines of male dominated Magaba Home Industry<sup>501</sup> and other industrial areas in Harare.

For instance, at Joram's house, built between the OFM and wholesale market, food and drinks



Figure 17: Cooked vending stall in Mbare Musika.

are sold to patrons largely from Mbare Musika. Many people gather in the afternoon to eat, drink and gamble. Joram's wife and daughter prepare and sell food while he sells beer and operates a snooker table. Several houses that were left between the OFM and the NFM are involved in these activities. They even offer sanitary facilities to their patrons. Joram grew up in this house, which he inherited from his parents. He recalled cases of *makoronyera* who came to the house every day to eat and drink while counting large sums of money and leaving 1 cent coins they picked when they were still young.<sup>502</sup>

A considerable number of food vendors operate in makeshift stalls outside the market buildings. For example, Grace operates a food vending enterprise in a makeshift structure in front of Matagarika Flats. Initially, she was

employed by another trader to sell fertiliser before she started her food vending enterprise in 2010. She started her business with savings from her previous job and cooking skills she developed while cooking at home. She commutes from Epworth to Mbare Musika early in the morning to prepare breakfast, mainly tea and bread, for her clients. She then prepares and serves lunch, mainly sadza and rice with chicken, beef, and *chevon* (goat meat). She buys vegetables from Mbare Musika, manufactured cooking ingredients from shops and meat from butcheries. She employs two young women who prepare and sell the food while she receives

<sup>501</sup> Magaba Home Industry is an informal metal working industry located in Mbare suburb.

<sup>502</sup> Interview, Joram, Mbare resident. Mbare Musika, 2020.





payments. She has regular buyers in Mbare Musika and know most of them and their favourite dishes. She sells food to regular customers on credit who pay later after selling their own produce. She also gets some products such as vegetables and chicken on credit from traders in the market. She indicated that she uses more than 10kgs of mealie meal and sells food to a considerable number of people daily.<sup>503</sup>

Cooked food vending enterprises play an essential role in Mbare Musika and women's livelihoods. It is a profitable business that provides income for many women and their employees. Cooked food vendors buy considerable amounts of vegetables from the market. They contribute immensely to feeding people selling produce at Mbare Musika and adjacent areas at lower prices. They also buy mealie meal, meat, soft drinks, and beer thereby linking *musika* and formal businesses. Several women sell Delta Beverages soft drinks and beer. Most of the food vendors are women and this points to women's significant contribution to urban food supplies, family incomes, Mbare Musika and the overall economy.

During my fieldwork, I came across many young girls<sup>504</sup> who were selling drinks, water, *maheu*<sup>505</sup> and other provisions at Mbare Musika. Also, many women traders narrated how they started selling produce as young girls on behalf of their mothers.<sup>506</sup> Early involvement socialises girls as food providers and equip them with business skills that they later use to respond to urban opportunities and constraints. The young girls save money, establish networks and familiarity to start their own enterprises from these early engagement. Women who sell food and drinks hope to save enough money to enter the more lucrative fresh produce trade.<sup>507</sup> Some women also sell soft drinks to recover after losses.<sup>508</sup>

Women are key participants in family enterprises. Family enterprises many times involve the husband, wife, children, or members of extended families. Though there are exceptions, women are typically active in selling while men source produce. In one family enterprise, the husband cycles from Gazerbo to Mbare Musika to stock bananas and other fruits. The wife would then hawk the fruits door to door in neighbouring suburbs. The man added that he is

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<sup>503</sup> Interview, Grace, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>504</sup> I estimate that these girls can be from eight years going up.

<sup>505</sup> *Maheu* is a fermented and sour non-alcoholic drink made from millet, sorghum or maize mealie meal.

<sup>506</sup> Interviews, Hazvinei, Mirirai, Chairperson, 2020.

<sup>507</sup> Interviews Anonymous soft drinks trader, Plastic trader, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>508</sup> Interview, soft drinks hawker, Mbare Musika, 2020.



forced by the economic difficulties to cycle roughly 30 kilometres to Mbare Musika to assist his wife's trading efforts, which are crucial to family support.<sup>509</sup> The rise in family enterprises illustrates the realities and attitudes on women's participation in Mbare Musika.

Women enjoy less influence and control in family enterprises they are not the main participants. Most of the time, it was not made apparent how income from family enterprises is shared among members. It is clear that the member who founded the enterprise has greater control. As in the case of the Changamire family, the two brothers engaged in direct fresh produce trading while the sister remained at home performing some domestic duties. They shared the income from *musika* equally among themselves.<sup>510</sup> The sister gained little skills and experience in actual produce trading since she was not directly involved.

Women are invited to participate in family enterprises for different reasons. Mukono's wife and daughters come to Mbare Musika when there is a lot of work and after losing employees.<sup>511</sup> The father has greater control and make important decisions. In another case, Choruma, who was employed, came to assist his wife when he was on leave.<sup>512</sup> Families in farming also share duties on the farm and marketplace. For instance, Rindirai, a farmer from Honde Valley, sometimes come to Mbare Musika with his *wakunda* (daughters). Sometimes his *wakunda* travel alone to Mbare Musika. Murara and his wife alternate between tending crops on the farm and marketing produce at Mbare Musika. He sends his wife to the market when there is a lot of work on the farm.<sup>513</sup>

Women mainly undertake produce processing in Mbare Musika before they sell. They use simple processing methods such as peeling, cutting, shelling, mixing different produce and packing it (Figure 18). Food processing also involves cleaning the produce before they display it for sale. In the wholesale market, groups of women process produce and pack it into mixed vegetables. The mixed vegetables consist of combinations of three or more of the following: green beans, peas, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, chillies, or cabbage cut into small pieces. Almost every afternoon, a woman trader in the NFM prepared mixed vegetables for delivery

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<sup>509</sup> Interview, anonymous buyer, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>510</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>511</sup> Interview, Bright, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>512</sup> On a sad note, I was informed in my follow up visit in September 2022 that Choruma passed on after a short illness. His widow was in the market still selling tomatoes.

<sup>513</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

to a supermarket in Mt Darwin. Mixed vegetables are convenient, easy to cook and highly nutritious. During a period of cabbage glut in 2020, women cut unsold cabbages, boiled, and dried it into *mufushwa* (dried vegetables). Drying preserves produce to last longer and reduces food and income losses suffered by traders and farmers when demand is low.



Figure 18: Woman packing mixed vegetables at Mbare Musika.

Women are also the primary buyers of produce for home use. They make meal decisions and prepare meals in many houses. When women send men or children to buy food for the family, they list the produce they should buy. On one occasion, I went with Mai *Kandiro* who was driving her car from Springvale to Mbare Musika. She has been buying produce from Mbare Musika once every month for more than ten years. She leaves KwaGeorge Market located close to her home where produce prices are high compared to Mbare Musika. She passed through Mbare Musika on her way to Mupedzanhamo where she sells *mabhero* (second hand clothing).<sup>514</sup> People like her buy produce in large quantities and freeze it to last for a month. She selected some tomatoes and asked for replacements. They also value the freshness of produce and prefers to buy directly from farmers

who sell fresh and standard packed produce.<sup>515</sup> Like many women buying at Mbare Musika, she faces parking challenges and was followed by porters and *machanga* who offered to assist her to buy produce.<sup>516</sup>

Women in extreme poverty and old people who are homeless scavenge food in Mbare Musika. They move around the market picking produce on the market floor and others asking for damaged produce. One afternoon, I came across an emaciated woman with a child picking

<sup>514</sup> Interview, Mai *Kandiro*, food eater. Harare, 2020.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.



produce from the market floor and packing it in a plastic bag. Many old people collect plastic bottles in the market for recycling to get money for food. In the rubbish bay there are homeless people who get and cook produce from the waste. These cases also demonstrate the position of Mbare Musika as a survival place for people in extreme poverty.

### **8.3. Why Women are Dominant in Mbare Musika**

Kinyanjui's assertion that "one cannot speak of the informal economy in Africa without thinking about women" aptly describe the situation in Mbare Musika. The previous section shows that women are dominant in Mbare Musika in terms of numbers. This is easily seen when visiting Mbare Musika. Since the colonial period women dominated Mbare Musika because the few who migrated to towns could not secure jobs. The colonial laws and African patriarchal dictates combined to restrict women to the reserves and the few urban women were controlled by the needs and wishes of men (Barnes and Win 1992). Indigenous cultural and colonial legacy entrenched male dominance and marginalisation of women in urban areas (Anunobi 2002). Consequently, women have limited economic opportunities due to gender bias in education (Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah 2008). Women entered the food economy that the colonial and societal forces left open and could not control.

A substantial body of literature focuses on women's participation in horticultural production and marketing in Harare (Barnes and Win 1992, Horn 1994, Schmidt 1992). There is consensus that women's participation in produce marketing arose in response to increased food demand following Harare's growth since 1890. Chamlee-Wright (2002) asserts that historical and cultural influences are significant impediments to women's entrepreneurship, although traders responded actively to these barriers. Women produced and marketed horticultural produce to mines and towns to resist pressures to export labor. Schmidt (1992) reports women's intensification of horticultural production in Goromonzi for marketing in Harare and mines to meet tax obligations and prevent their male family members to join colonial labour. To augment the family's income, suburban women hired plots and engaged in market gardening (Yoshikini 2007). African women contributed to resisting colonial labour exploitation of African men by intensifying horticultural production and marketing.

In the 1940s, Harare witnessed increased migration of women, when Zimbabwe was industrialising and demand for food was rising. Married women were entitled by custom to a



piece of land to produce food, and some took advantage of this to produce surpluses for marketing (Horn 1994). Many women who migrated to Harare could not enter formal employment and their husbands earned low incomes. They ended up operating *musika* to augment their husbands' low incomes (Barnes and Win 1992, Osirmi 1995). For example, the mother and girls of the Mukandawiri family entered agriculture in Ventersburg for marketing in Harare because their father made "little money" to fully maintain the family (Yoshikuni 2007). Women's dominance in Mbare Musika is explained by culture, limited economic opportunities and wages, and a low level of education and training (Horn 1994, Schmidt 1992, Barnes and Win 1992). Women adapted their culturally ascribed food production and provisioning roles to suit the urban environment to generate incomes and feed their families (Cheater 1979, Horn 1994). Women's socially defined roles assisted them to develop the skills they later used in food production and marketing in urban areas.

Women were disproportionately affected by ESAP in the 1990s since they had few employment opportunities and relied heavily on subsidies (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 1998, Osirmi 1995). ESAP led to rising food prices, the elimination of subsidies, job layoffs, and worsened poverty. Clark (1994) stresses that the low capital required to start *musika* makes it the last sanctuary or first toehold of most impoverished urban people. Commenting on ESAP, Horn (1994) argues that women became crucial since *musika* linked them directly to food sources, and generated incomes they used to buy food at wholesale prices from their sales. Urban produce trading is lucrative due to the high demand for food, and they simultaneously feed their families and meet other economic needs (Horn 1995, Osirmi 1995). ESAP and later the land reform contributed to an economic crisis that eroded incomes, introduced rampant inflation and increased the cost of living. The era of economic reforms increased the cost of living at a time when many breadwinners were retrenched, forcing many to seek alternative sources of income (Chirisa 2010). Many women joined Mbare Musika to survive the harsh economic environment, and this empowered them and helped them contribute to economic development (Osirmi 1995).

Produce trading has enabled many women in Harare to earn an income to survive independently. Chamlee-Wright (2002) says that many women engaged in produce marketing in response to a financially devastating event, such as the death or illness of a husband, divorce, the husband losing a job, sickness, or significant increases in expenses. *Musika* is an important



way for widows, single mothers and other independent women to earn a living and support their families. The collapse of the male-dominated formal economy and low wages earned in the sector led many families in Harare to rely on *musika* for sustenance. The following examples demonstrate women's agency and their motivations for joining Mbare Musika.

Satellite vendors were speaking at an undesignated pick-up site in Mbare Musika one morning while waiting for transport to return home after stocking produce. A young woman in attendance was concerned about women in her neighbourhood who were in a polygamous marriage for completely relying on their husband for financial support. She emphasised the significance of the independence she gained from operating *musika*. She remarked that she do not value a marriage over generating an income independently to support herself and her children.<sup>517</sup> In this context, operating *musika* is an important means for women to free themselves from patriarchal domination and dependence.

Many women migrated from their birthplaces to Harare, where they were ushered by *musika*. Mbuya Shingai confirmed that many women fleeing the growing conflict in the 1970s in the rural areas found shelter and sold produce at Mbare Musika.<sup>518</sup> For instance, Mirirai's family left Rusape during the height of the liberation war in the 1970s to join their father, who was working in Harare. The mother was a vendor in Rusape, and when she arrived in Harare, she established *musika* as a vital alternative source of income to supplement her husband's inadequate wages.<sup>519</sup> Mirirai and her siblings were raised by a mother who operated *musika* and they were sent to *musika* to sell or deliver produce to her buyers. Mirirai stated that she began selling produce as a child and continued after her marriage. Mbare Musika was a sanctuary that provided shelter and food to new migrants in Harare who were running away from the escalating war.

Many of the women participants in Mbare Musika are widows or single mothers. Horn (1995) argues that escalating marital dissolutions increased the number of women in Mbare Musika selling produce to generate incomes autonomously to sustain themselves and their children. Hazvinei, who started selling vegetables as a child rejoined *musika* after she experienced marital challenges. She stated:

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<sup>517</sup> Conversation, Group of women from Mabvuku, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>518</sup> Interview, Mbuya Shingai, Mbare Musika, 2022.

<sup>519</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Ruwa, 2020.



I re-started selling produce after my marriage challenges to earn an income for a living. My children were little and needed to be cared for. It was challenging because I had no other source of income. I learned from my mother's experience that one can earn an income for self-sufficiency and raising a family from *musika*. She raised us on her *musika* earnings. This prompted me to restart *musika*. If you order your produce and sell it, you get money and live well.<sup>520</sup>

In addition, a trader I encountered on her way from *kwaGeorge* market to Garzebo began selling while her husband was still alive. She saved the money he left her to buy bread to begin a *musika* enterprise without her husband's knowledge or approval. After her husband died, *musika* became the sole and an essential source of income to sustain her family.

This is not unique to Harare; women in other African countries also entered the produce trade after being divorced or widowed. Wegerif (2017) describes the experience of Sarah, a rice trader who travelled to Ubaruka (Tanzania) in 2010 to seek a new life and chances after her husband died in a vehicle accident. Another example is a Tsonga street trader in Johannesburg I overheard narrating her story to her colleagues. She stated that she had literally no money for survival soon after her husband's funeral and had to start produce trading to support her family. The loss of financial support after losing a husband due to death, divorce, or other marital troubles caused women to join and persevere in produce trading.

Even though many women began *musika* owing to a lack of options, the majority of women became established and are eager to stay in Mbare Musika. They are pleased of their accomplishments and the incomes they earned from their businesses. One vendor said she remained in Mbare Musika because "I do not have any qualification or skills to work anywhere else. I only know how to work in *musika*."<sup>521</sup> *Musika* enabled women traders, including those with working spouses, to be financially independent and contribute to family needs. Women traders' earnings are used to buy food, pay rent, and pay for their children's school fees, among other things. These uses shows the importance of reproductive duties in motivating women to engage in *musika*. Women's earnings are becoming increasingly valued in Harare as the economy and wages continue to plummet and the cost of living rises.

Illustrative of this are cases of, Mai Justice and Mai Rudo, who stock produce in Mbare Musika for resale in Glenview where they reside. *Musika* is important to their everyday lives and they

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<sup>520</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.

<sup>521</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.



sacrifices everyday to look after their children. They are both widows and they stock together in Mbare Musika since they have a lot in common. Mai Justice joined Mbare Musika in 1998 because "things were hard."<sup>522</sup> As for Mai Rudo, she began *musika* soon after her marriage together with her late husband who could not find a job. They ran their *musika* enterprise together, which was their primary source of income, until her husband's death.<sup>523</sup> Their husbands' deaths left them as the sole providers of rent, food, clothing, and education for their children. I met them at Muzvinabhizimusi's stand in Mbare Musika, where they kept their baskets, and escorted them to their pick-up point. On our way, I carried another woman's basket which was heavy and difficult to carry. I appreciated their hard work and sacrifices they make everyday to support their families.

Mai Justice and Mai Rudo, like many others in Mbare Musika, consider sending their children to school as their greatest achievement. They wake up early in the morning to stock produce in Mbare Musika, sell in streets and carry heavy loads on their heads for the sake of their children. Mai Justice exclaimed, "One day my son will marry, and the wife will tell me that I am a witch, while I raised the child with hard-earned money from *musika*, carrying a heavy basket like this daily, *ndofa naye!* [I will die with her]."<sup>524</sup> The two women were fatigued and exhausted, emphasising how physically demanding it is to run *musika*. The baskets they carried had a range of produce; they stocked produce to fulfil the requirements of their customers and widen their success chances.

Zimbabwe's economic challenges influenced many women to join Mbare Musika. Women from middle-class and upper-income families are less likely to run *musika* businesses. The rising level of poverty among common people and low-income groups is a crucial motivator for women to join and continue to participate in *musika*. Mirirai narrated that:

I no longer visit Mbare Musika early in the morning like most women do. I am not feeling well and strong enough like before to navigate the crowded market in the morning. I cannot retire, though I am not feeling well, because my husband earns a low wage that cannot meet our food and accommodation requirements. My husband encourages me to continue selling to sustain the family. His wage is insufficient to cover his bus fare to work until the next pay day. He puts his wages in *musika*, and I

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<sup>522</sup> Interview, Mai Justice, satellite trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>523</sup> Interview, Mai Rudo, satellite trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>524</sup> Interview, Mai Justice, Mbare Musika, 2020.





spin it for him to go to work and buy some necessities. My husband, daughter, and son are all employed, but *musika* is our primary source of income.<sup>525</sup>

This reinforces the findings that changes and crises in the overall economy directly impacted women's engagement in *musika*. During the current economic crisis, women turned *musika* into a lucrative option for accumulation and to better their lives. Mbare Musika provides positive economic opportunities amid Zimbabwe's unforgiving economic crisis.

#### **8.4. Gender Stereotypes: Women's Encounters and Experiences in Mbare Musika**

Women's encounters and experiences reflect efforts to break and preserve gender norms and expectations. Women's roles in the *musika* are influenced by gender socialisation; culturally ingrained gender stereotypes are pervasive in produce markets (Muchabaiwa and Muyambo 2017). Women's contributions to produce marketing are undervalued and suffer a "triple burden of invisibility" (Horn 1994). Smith (1989) states that 25% of farmers registered problems with private wholesalers and 89% at Mbare Musika, where their produce was stolen and growers, especially women, faced harassment by organised groups of buyers. Since the colonial era, a huge number of women sold produce on the streets, frequently clashing with the police. The women used a variety of marketing strategies to avoid clashes with city officials. For instance, they sold early in the morning and left the street before police patrols arrived (Barnes and Win 1992). Women, unlike men, were not obliged to carry identity cards to control their movements, but marketing produce, particularly in so-called European markets, was difficult.

Currently, street marketplaces are run by politically connected individuals who allow women to trade. The increase in street vending partly indicates shortage of stalls in designated marketplaces. To avoid competition and exorbitant market fees, some women are shifting from approved marketplaces to the street.<sup>526</sup> They enjoy brisk business in the afternoon after the farmers markets close. Women traders in Harare trade on the streets, pavements, and car parks. As indicated in Chapter Five, some council markets are poorly sited, resulting in low activity, and market fees are sometimes "high" and unaffordable. Some localities, such as Letombo in Msasa, have no produce markets, which motivates women to build *musika* along roadsides. Women who sell outside Mbare Musika use strategies such as bribing the police

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<sup>525</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>526</sup> Interview, Tendai and Sekai, Mbare Musika, 2021.



and paying politically connected people to continue operating in unlicensed markets. At *paspeed* in Mbare Musika, they pay an anonymous woman who allocates and oversees trading space.

Though *musika* contributes significantly to urban produce supplies, it is thought to be tarnishing Harare's "sunshine" image. As previously stated, *musika* is undesirable in the city due to allegations that it is filthy, lacks sanitation facilities, and is a nuisance. For example, in 1927, the Southern Rhodesian Native Association was concerned about women selling fresh food on city streets. It proclaimed that the streets where they sold were very disgraceful to the whole community and approached the government and municipality to provide an alternative place for women to sell their produce. Though officials appreciate the role that *musika* plays in urban food supplies and alternative income sources, especially for women, the greatest tide is for its elimination. In 2021, Tafadzwa Muguti, Secretary for Provincial Affairs and Devolution in the Office of the President and Cabinet-Harare Metropolitan Province (Harare Provincial Development Coordinator), supported the clean-up arguing that:

...being in the informal sector is not a licence to disregard the law. If anything, being a small business owner, you need to understand the laws of the land and the municipal bylaws of the area you want to operate in. Firstly, we need you to be a registered company; we need you to be given a business permit by the local authority; you need to register with ZIMRA [Zimbabwe Revenue Authority]; you need to be formalised. We cannot keep on as a country perpetuating this whole informal debate. People are informal not because the law says they should be informal. They are informal by choice.<sup>527</sup>

This tough pronouncement captures the historical, present and likely future troubles for people in *misika* in Harare. The state's intervention in Harare's unregulated marketplaces through a series of operations disproportionately impacts women, who dominate the sector. Traders selling on the streets surrounding Mbare Musika, as well as unauthorised extensions in the retail section, faced several demolitions, Operation Murambatsvina in 2005 being notable.

Mbare Musika have been subjected to state sanctions and condemnation, particularly during epidemics. Like in many African towns, the state maintained a negative attitude towards *musika*, which it explains by citing cleanliness issues (Sheldon 1996). Since the colonial period,

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<sup>527</sup> Change Radio Zimbabwe, (2021), Zanupf government has NO MERCY on Zimbabweans-Tafadzwa Muguti. [youtube], 29 June, [accessed 27 October 2021], available from: <https://youtu.be/hHPt9xQsGEM>



women selling produce and cooked food in public have suffered official wrath. In 1993, the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare ordered women running thriving cooked food vending operations under a tree outside the wholesale market at Mbare Musika to halt their operations to prevent a looming health hazard. Despite the mounting cholera cases in the country, women ignored the ban and persisted with their operations.<sup>528</sup> A firm hand against *musika* was implemented many times since the colonial period, no matter it proving not to be the most viable and effective way to reconcile *musika* operators' needs, pandemics and urban development.

The media also play an important role in perpetuating baseless allegations against Mbare Musika. During the 2008 cholera outbreak, for example, a local newspaper strongly opposed women selling cooked food to farmers at Mbare Musika at night. It accused women vendors of 'unsanitary' practises by alleging that they sold various cooked meals prepared over open stoves with water collected from a nearby toilet. The food was prepared in old, dirty pots or tins and was left uncovered to ensure buyers could choose the portion they wanted. The newspaper bolstered its argument by quoting an unidentified resident who described the situation as horrible, unsanitary, and a ticking time bomb requiring immediate official intervention.<sup>529</sup> These erroneous generalisations from limited observations are frequently used to justify state harassment and violence against women traders. Though much work must be done to improve *musika*'s food safety, it would be unjust to completely ban the enterprises.

Contrary to what Horn (1994) argues, husbands and families interfere with women's *musika* enterprises, particularly during the early stages, regardless of the income being low. Mirirai, for example, faced disapproval from her extended family, including her husband, in-laws, classmates, and neighbours. She recalled being sent to school with her mother to deliver vegetables and onions to her teachers. Classmates teased and insulted her, claiming she smelled of onions, and that the odour kept them from concentrating in class. She persisted because of her mother's encouragement, who stressed the critical role the vegetable trade played in providing food for her family.<sup>530</sup> Mai Mafunge's experience lends credence to this observation; she stated that her husband and in-laws initially opposed her *musika* venture, but

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<sup>528</sup> The Herald 5 February 1993.

<sup>529</sup> The Sunday Mail, 1 January 2008.

<sup>530</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Ruwa, 2020.



subsequently supported her after realising the significance of the income she was earning.<sup>531</sup> Women traders persevere until those around them appreciate their *musika* and encourage them after noting their contribution to family support.

Men in Mbare Musika make sexually charged jokes and tout to women. They use crude language to make comments about women's bodies, reproduction, and courtship. Mula and his colleagues, for example, congratulated a woman trader who had given birth and was unable to attend the market. They joked that she was giving birth frequently and inadvertently like a cow, even though she is single. She replied that she had locked her womb and that it would not happen again. One of the men replied that they would use bolt cutters to open it again and they all burst into laughter. When selling produce, some touts make comenst insulting women to encourage them to buy. Potatoes are frequently advertised as *mushonga wemagaro* (a medicine to enlarge women's buttocks). The advertisement call literally translates as: "Sister, the medicine to enlarge buttocks is here; come and buy the medicine to enlarge your buttocks, potatoes, potatoes; the medicine to grow buttocks."<sup>532</sup> The comments turn the marketplace into an obscenity and scare some women away from visiting Mbare Musika.

Women experience several problems when navigating the crowded marketplace. These obstacles include physical harassment, such as being shoved down. When the market is busy in the morning, it requires a lot of strength. On one occasion, an elderly woman was pushed and collapsed on top of wooden crates full of tomatoes in the OFM. Women, particularly occasional visitors, are victims of assault and manipulation. Regular visitors can protect themselves and know many of the offenders. I observed a drunk man abusing women who were buying green mealies at the NFM one afternoon. He constantly made sexually suggestive comments and caressed some women who were picking maize cobs. After the intervention of a man who was also buying green mealies, he released one of his victims. The abuser moved on to the next woman, remarking on her cleanly shaved armpits. The woman defended herself by calling for him to shut up, insisting that she did not come to Mbare but grew up in the township and if he dared to touch her, she would beat him. The man backed down when he

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<sup>531</sup> Interview, Mai Mafunge, satellite trader. Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>532</sup> Comments commonly made by a touts advertising potatoes and sometimes cabbages in the wholesale market at Mbare Musika.



saw her determination. Women in the marketplace sometimes band together to defend themselves against abusive men.<sup>533</sup>

In the same vein, women's dressing gets unwarranted attention in Mbare Musika. There is an acceptable and expected dress code for women, historically enforced by council officials and mainly men in the market. Market women dress in white and blue, green or red dotted aprons that identify them. They also wear *zambias* around their waists. In the marketplace, women are required to dress "decently" in long dresses. In the 1980s and 1990s, mothers were required to firmly fasten their babies on their backs with *mbereko* (a baby fastener) to be allowed in the marketplace. Short-dressed women were prevented from entering the market. Women wearing short dresses are booed as they enter the market. Hazvinei opined that:

It was beneficial to women's dignity. It kept their bodies concealed when they knelt or bent to buy. It also helped them to relax and focus on buying rather than worrying about exposing their intimate parts. Razorman strictly enforced these conditions, and the market has order.<sup>534</sup>

The dress code for women reflects men's continuous control of women's behaviour. Men continue to construct and enforce cultural ideals that define a respectable and moral woman. Some young ladies are challenging these beliefs by wearing miniskirts to Mbare Musika.

Women who disobeyed the prescribed dress code in Mbare Musika experienced a difficult time. Push carters, for example, asked a woman in leggings walking through the wholesale section, "what do you do when you visit the toilet when you dress too many things like a small child?"<sup>535</sup> The worst case involved a young woman who entered the OFM wearing a miniskirt. She drew the ire of both buyers and sellers, who booed, whistled, yelled, and even touched her. People in the crowd that gathered around her made derogatory remarks. The woman stood firm in the face of the mob, refusing to wrap a *zambia* she was offered by another woman. Shingayi states that this is a usual occurrence for women who come to the market dressed "indecently," and long-ago unfortunate women were raped in the commotion without trace of the perpetrator.<sup>536</sup> The abuses make Mbare Musika intimidating and

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<sup>533</sup> Interview, Mai Edzai, Mbare Musika, 2021.

<sup>534</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.

<sup>535</sup> This comment was made by one of the push carters who were seated in the wholesale market waiting for clients. They have the habit of passing comments to women who pass in front of them.

<sup>536</sup> Interview, Shingayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



contribute to the market's negative image. Many women are scared to visit Mbare Musika to buy produce, weakening the market's contribution to food supplies.

Women in *musika* balance their marketing activities with domestic duties. A trader explained that she needed to hurry home to feed and nurse her new-born baby. She left the infant at home when it was six weeks old since "a baby is not eaten."<sup>537</sup> She needs to work to support her family. Domestic duties influence how women work in the marketplace. While selling vegetables, most women traders cook, wash, and care for children. Hazvinei relocated from the council market to her gate to simultaneously sell and perform domestic duties.<sup>538</sup>

Horn (1995) believes that urban women prefer *musika* to formal jobs because it allows them to balance selling produce with domestic duties. Many mothers take care of babies and toddlers in the market. Women strap babies to their backs in markets to be able to sell and keep them around. In the city centre, women use ropes to bind toddlers, as if on a leash, so they can move around but not go far. Young children accompany their parents or guardians to Mbare Musika and play at stalls while elders sell. Some children pass through the marketplace on their way home from school in the afternoon, play next to their mothers' or guardians' stalls, and proceed home together after the market closes. Farmers occasionally bring infants to Mbare Musika. For example, a farmer brought an infant in the OFM. The infant cried and the mother hesitated to breastfeed it in public. This invited the intervention of a trader who shouted, "hey mother breast feed your child, are your breasts burned by a hot iron?"<sup>539</sup> Despite her discomfort, she eventually breastfed the baby in the marketplace.

Some ladies are opposed to taking children to Mbare Musika for whatever reason. Cheneso stated that the marketplace is toxic and can harm children's growth and character. She went on to say that youngsters learn nothing positive in Mbare Musika, where there is no order and dirty language is common. When we enter the marketplace, we adopt a personality that our children should not witness.<sup>540</sup> Cheneso believes that "if you are saintly, you cannot make money; you must be loud, combative, tough, and uncompromising to get produce. I am a good

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<sup>537</sup> Interview, Tendai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>538</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.

<sup>539</sup> This was an observation in the Old Farmers Market of a group of farmers from Uzumba who were selling tomatoes. The group constituted Danga, who is likely the husband, three women and two babies. The comments were made by one of the traders who were selling tomatoes close by.

<sup>540</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.



person and a Christian, I behave differently outside the marketplace.”<sup>541</sup> Cheneso's allegations contradict the actions of the women I observed. Most women traders get along well with one another and value a good reputation. Despite this, many parents bring their children to Mbare Musika, sometimes to assist them in selling or to play while selling. Some of these young people went on to become independent *musika* operators.

Horn (1995) asserts that women traders contribute immensely to feeding their families and communities by carefully selecting produce that suits their incomes and needs. Women seek the most cost-effective means of obtaining supplies, as well as working excessively long hours to meet their customers' needs. When stocking produce, they consider the needs and incomes of their customers. Traders from low-income residential areas purchase low- to medium-grade produce that is generally cheap, considering the low incomes of most of their buyers. Illustrative is the case of, Mai Makomborero, a retail trader from Sunningdale, spent over 30 minutes inspecting tomatoes before buying two boxes. She unpacked tomatoes from boxes, examined their texture, and scrutinised nearly every box on display for sale. Fungai, an agent who sells tomatoes, said, "grandmother, do not be bothersome; take any box; the tomatoes are the same"<sup>542</sup> but could not stop her. Other women who wanted to buy were unhappy with her meticulousness, but she was undeterred. She wanted to make sure she stocks tomatoes that would sell quickly. She displayed the power that women satellite traders may wield when stocking. She carefully selected produce because her buyers from Sunningdale want high quality produce.<sup>543</sup>

Women in Mbare Musika can hold positions of power and command a great deal of respect. Several women are elected to the committees that manage Mbare Musika alongside council officials. They make key decisions on participants' behalf and represent them in meetings with external parties. Women gain power in part because of their political allegiance to ZANU-PF. Women, like the "aunt" from Buhera who works in the wholesale section, wield enormous power among her kinsmen who refer to her as aunt. The bulk of women who run *musika* are well-known and popular in their communities. Horn (1994) argues that women gain reputation and status in the communities where they operate because of their critical role in

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid.

<sup>542</sup> Comments from Fungai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>543</sup> Interview, Mai Makomborero, Mbare Musika, 2020.



food supply. Women are respected by their husbands and families for the money they earn and contribute to the family basket. Some women used Mbare Musika to improve themselves socially and economically, as well as to go from marginalisation to prominence.

Men occasionally take advantage of women in the marketplace. They bargain with women using insulting words and power, and they take more units than they paid for. Also, some women at Mbare Musika are manipulated by the men they do business with. For instance, I came across a woman who was not paid her money by the men who hired her push carts and made excuses for not paying her money.<sup>544</sup> The woman has no information about the cart hiring trade and power to enforce the contract. Justin, a porter, reported that the woman has bad luck because most of the time, those who use her push carts do not pay her.<sup>545</sup>

*Machanga*, who wait around market gates and car parks, prey on women buyers. They convince women to assist them with buying and take them to where fresh and cheap produce is sold. Melody, a regular buyer at Mbare Musika claimed that:

Many women are afraid of the common catcalling, which is harassment. Not to mention the men who would approach you and offer to carry your bag or direct you to someone selling cheap produce. I expect Mbare Musika to be simply a market where I can look for what I want without being harassed, occasionally grabbed, and sometimes vilified. There is far too much harassment; the police and city council should work together to make the market safer.<sup>546</sup>

Women who are not regulars at Mbare Musika are particularly vulnerable to *machanga*. Regular visitors ignore *machanga*'s pleadings and continue with their business. Some unfortunate women who refuse *machanga*'s and Jagger's assistance offers are verbally and physically abused.

When women traders and buyers argue in the marketplace, they may exchange harsh remarks. For example, I observed a conflict between two women, a trader and buyer, following a botched deal. The buyer returned the tomatoes she bought, and the trader erupted and yelled obscenities. These confrontations are not common and should not be

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<sup>544</sup> Interview, Shupikai, push cart owner and trader, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>545</sup> Interview, Justin, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>546</sup> Interview, Melody, Whatsapp 2020.





taken as evidence of individuality and selfishness. Traders go to great lengths to avoid disagreements in the marketplace to safeguard their reputation and customer base.

### **8.5. Conclusion**

As shown in Mbare Musika, women play a crucial role in food production and marketing, urban food security and income generation in Africa. Women responded to colonial and cultural constraints in the urban setting by engaging in *musika*. Many women encounter difficulties in securing jobs in urban areas because they lack education and training. They therefore engage in *musika* to earn incomes autonomously and supplement inadequate wages earned by their husbands. During the early colonial period, women undertook horticultural cultivation and marketing to pay taxes and keep their male relatives from forced colonial labour. Women's experiences in Mbare Musika are comparable to those of women in other African markets. Many women joined *musika* after their husbands died or divorced, and had to carry the responsibility of looking after their children.

Women adapted their culturally defined household food provisioning roles to the wider urban food provisioning. This became a crucial strategy for earning a living and providing food for their families. Mbare Musika was previously looked down upon, and operating a *musika* was considered a woman's job with insignificant earnings. This changed over time and women's incomes are now critical to many families as wages in the formal sector continue to fall in the unforgiving economic crisis. Men joined Mbare Musika as incomes from produce trading grew in importance compared to wages. Several women ascended from obscurity to positions of power in Mbare Musika, their communities, and families. Some women rose to positions of leadership and make critical decisions and wield considerable authority. They empowered themselves economically and socially and earned great respect from running *musika*. Many women are proud of their daily sacrifices to feed, house and send their children to school. Women in Mbare Musika, however, continue to experience gender based barriers and harassment in their ongoing quest for self-empowerment. The gender barriers undermine their *musika* enterprises and access to the market. Regardless, women's innovation, creativity, resourcefulness, and determination contribute significantly to Mbare Musika's resilience and functioning.



## 9. Chapter Nine: Joining Mbare Musika, People's Aspirations, Achievements and Challenges

*Do you think we like selling in the streets like what we are doing? We also want to have formal businesses and jobs for better lives (Mama Lula).<sup>547</sup>*

### 9.1. Introduction

Throughout its history, Mbare Musika has attracted many people and has been a source of opportunities and food. The thriving fresh produce business through Mbare Musika has provided opportunities for a plethora of people (Chikulo et al. 2020, Heri 2006). This chapter reconstructs stories about Mbare Musika using personal histories and ethnographic data. Since the 1990s, many people have been drifting to Mbare Musika and took different roles. The chapter investigates why farmers opted to sell at Mbare Musika, why urban people joined the market, and how they joined the market. The chapter also explores the motivations behind actors' decisions in the market. It recounts the actors' aspirations and challenges in Mbare Musika and how these experiences shape horticultural production and marketing. Finally, the chapter evaluates Mbare Musika's impact on people's lives and how it has influenced their perception of the market. It also examines the role Mbare Musika in entrepreneurship skill development and overall economic development.

There are five sections in this chapter. The first section covers why farmers sell their produce at Mbare Musika. The second section gives the reasons for people in Harare to work and buy produce in Mbare Musika. It explores the socioeconomic circumstances and their contribution in driving urban people to Mbare Musika. Section three relates how actors join Mbare Musika, paying attention to their source of money, skills, and motivation. The fourth section documents actors' encounters and experiences and how they make their marketing decisions. The final section evaluates Mbare Musika's contribution to the lives of those involved, food supplies and economic development.

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<sup>547</sup> Mama Lula is a street trader in Johannesburg who I interviewed together with Marc Wegerif in Johannesburg in 2019. She said these words while sobbing in the interview. There were some skirmishes between the Johannesburg Municipal Police and street traders some few streets down from where we were seated with Mama Lula. This was my first day to meet Marc and Mama Lula. What she said left a huge impression in my mind and shaped my research focus and this chapter.



## 9.2. Why Farmers Sell at Mbare Musika

Mbare Musika is the largest market in Zimbabwe, where generations of farmers sold their produce. Many farmers were exposed to Mbare Musika by their parents, who had joined earlier and continued to sell in the market after becoming independent farmers.<sup>548</sup> Heri (2006) estimates that by 2004, approximately 1.5 million farmers were producing horticultural crops, and this figure has since increased. Scoones (2010), weighs in, emphasising that small-scale farmers are investing in horticulture projects and are accumulating from below. Dhewa (2016) estimates that over 70% of produce grown by small-scale farmers is marketed at Mbare Musika, even though its overall contribution to the national economy is difficult to quantify. According to Nyamunda (2015), the growing urban population and domestic demand in the 1940s spurred trade. Horn (1997) asserts that migrants in Harare created a lucrative market for farmers to sell their crops. The growing population and food needs in Harare provided a huge demand for fresh produce and attracts many farmers (Heri 2006).

During the colonial period, large-scale white farmers were the primary produce suppliers at Mbare Musika. They marketed produce in Mbare Musika because they were dissatisfied with the practices of the Salisbury Municipal Market. As noted in Chapter Four, it was also difficult for commercial farmers in Zimbabwe to penetrate the export market. Large-scale farmers continued to rely on Mbare Musika to market their produce. For example, in 2000, a well-capitalised farm in Ruwa shifted to producing cabbages, tomatoes, and onions for the domestic market after losing its soya beans export markets in South Africa and Europe (Figure 19). Accessing export markets was difficult for small-scale communal farmers from the start. Murara, a farmer, stated that unlike white farmers, black farmers in Honde Valley do not have representatives outside the country to assist them in exporting bananas. Mbare Musika is their easily accessible option for selling their bananas.

Small-scale communal farmers primarily produced and sold vegetables through Mbare Musika. Danho from Murehwa is one of the farmers who market mainly through Mbare Musika. Danho produced on a three-hectare plot near a perennial river for irrigation. He used a water pump for irrigation, bought inputs, and hired labour to work on the plot. After finishing high school in 1990, he joined Mbare Musika as an assistant to his brother. In 1994, he left Mbare Musika

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<sup>548</sup> Interviews, Chitsa, Pedzisai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

and began horticultural farming in his village because selling produce was not rewarding. He declared eloquently that:

I survive all year by farming horticulture commodities for Mbare Musika. I use a river to irrigate a three-hectare garden where I alternate onions, vegetables, green peppers, and maize each year. I also produce sweet potatoes and roadrunners (chicken that survive on scavenging for grass, plants, insects and worms).<sup>549</sup>



Figure 19: Trucks loading onions at Muchena's farm in Ruwa for delivery to Mbare Musika.

Danho, along with other small-scale farmers, hired a truck to transport their produce to Mbare Musika. He sold his produce independently, unlike other farmers, because he is familiar with Mbare Musika, having worked there in the past.

Large-scale farmers who produce large

volumes, unlike small-scale farmers, are unable to market their produce around their farms. Muchena Farm produces approximately 300 tonnes of onions and tomatoes each annually.<sup>550</sup> The farm sold its produce mainly at Mbare Musika. Mucheri, a farm manager at Muchena Farm, revealed that corporations purchase small quantities from the several tonnes that are ready for the market every day, whereas Mbare Musika absorbs more than 10 tonnes of our produce every day.<sup>551</sup> To prove his claim, he showed me an invoice from a company that had ordered 250 bags of onions. They are drawn to Mbare Musika by the large population of Harare. Large quantities of their produce are ready for the market daily and should be marketed promptly.

<sup>549</sup> Interview, Danho, farmer. Murehwa, 2020.

<sup>550</sup> Interview, Mucheri, Ruwa, 2020.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.



Despite their notion that *makoronyera* exploit them, farmers continue to market at Mbare Musika. Mucheri revealed that “many farmers in Ruwa sell directly to households to prevent exploitation by *makoronyera*. Because we produce in large quantities, we cannot sell directly to households.”<sup>552</sup> Despite the challenges they face in Mbare Musika, commercial farmers continue to market through it since it is the most profitable and accessible market in the country. Mucheri said commercial farmers are aware that actual money (US dollars) circulates at Mbare Musika.<sup>553</sup> Mbare Musika is a profitable market because farmers receive immediate cash payments.

Irrigation schemes, such as the Chitora Irrigation Scheme in Mutoko, face the same situation as commercial farmers. I visited Chitora Irrigation Scheme in 2021 and found most plots under carrots, cucumbers, onions, and tomatoes. Chitora Irrigation Scheme was established in 1994 using funding from the Government of Zimbabwe and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to empower the youth. Young people who volunteered to build a dam and irrigation facilities are the beneficiaries of the irrigation project. Each beneficiary received “a quarter,” which is divided into four sections of a few acres and they produce vegetables all year round. Farmers from Chitora Irrigation Scheme mainly market their crops at Mbare Musika.<sup>554</sup> They used some crops for their own consumption. The marketing department is responsible for finding markets for farmers, but it has difficulties securing reliable markets to sell produce. Some produce is marketed through supermarkets and contract farming arrangements. Nyagoma stated that contractors and supermarkets were unreliable; many times they do not show up to buy produce, leaving Mbare Musika as their main market.<sup>555</sup>

Local marketplaces such as *misika*, roadside markets, schools, clinics, and households consume a small portion of produce grown in farming areas. Smith (1989) notes that many farmers sell their produce in Harare because rural and middle-class towns offer limited marketing opportunities for horticulture commodities. Chitsa, who farms in Mutoko, admitted that:

Mutoko, Dombotombo, and Marondera markets are too small to absorb all their produce. The population in those areas is too small for sufficient demand. Mbare

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<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Interview, Nyagomo, Chitora Irrigation Scheme, 2021.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.



Musika has a huge population; people come from Harare's suburbs and other towns to buy at Mbare Musika every day.<sup>556</sup>

Small-scale farmers from Honde Valley leave local marketplaces in Hauna, Mutare, Rusape, and Marondera for Harare. Murara, who began selling bananas in Mutare in 1998 and later shifted to Harare said "in Harare, we sell quickly because there are many more people than in Mutare. Just look at how many bananas people sold. Harare is faster than Mutare."<sup>557</sup>

According to Dhewa (2016) Mbare Musika offers small-scale farmers a chance to speak to people from diverse backgrounds who eat their food and they get rich feedback that help them to improve their produce. Mbare Musika attracts masses of buyers without advertising and this inturn attracts many farmers.

Mbare Musika has remained popular among farmers due to its more flexible marketing terms compared to alternative marketing outlets, such as contract farming. Scoones (2014) states the pros and cons, risks, and opportunities of the contract farming boom in Zimbabwe. Small-scale farmers raised concerns with contract farming. For instance, Nyagomo, a farmer, revealed that:

Contractors and supermarkets have strict standards, even though they weigh produce and are likely to pay more. We continue to sell at Mbare Musika, where all grades of produce are bought. We do not easily get contracts to supply shops; shops also buy from Mbare Musika.<sup>558</sup>

Contractors and supermarkets are unpopular with farmers owing to delays in payment. Farmers choose to sell at Mbare Musika because, as Mucheri stressed:

*Makoronyera* pay cash, up to \$10,000, for their produce. They pay in US\$, which everyone wants, as opposed to RTGS, which supermarkets deposit into bank accounts after a certain period. Unlike supermarkets that dictate prices to farmers, Mbare Musika allows us to set our own prices for our produce.<sup>559</sup>

Farmers prefer cash payments in US\$ to avoid the present economic and monetary problems.

Chitsa prefers to sell in Mbare Musika as:

Supermarkets pay money in banks or ecocash after several weeks, which is difficult to access. When cash was readily available, I accepted payments through ecocash or my

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<sup>556</sup> Interview, Chitsa, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>557</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>558</sup> Interview, Nyagomo, Chitora Irrigation Scheme, 2021.

<sup>559</sup> Interview, Mucheri, Ruwa, 2020.



bank account. I no longer use the account since I do not want to waste time looking for cash.<sup>560</sup>

These forces partly explain the enormous volume of produce delivered at Mbare Musika daily. Many farmers choose Mbare Musika because it is easily accessible and requires no supply contracts.

The financial crisis has pushed some people out of employment and into farming businesses. Murara revealed that he started farming and marketing bananas after he was laid off by an electrical company he worked for. He is no longer seeking a job where unskilled workers like him earn low wages, deposited in banks forcing them to buy in supermarkets.<sup>561</sup> Farmers are pleased with incomes from their horticulture projects compared to what they may earn from jobs. Dereck, a farmer in Honde Valley described how, in one case, intermediaries battled for his sugarcane, they purchased immediately on arrival at Mbare Musika. He pointed to a sugarcane garden and said he expected an income that would sustain him for a whole year if he found the market rewarding.<sup>562</sup> Farmers fare better than other workers, who earn low incomes, use banks, and are vulnerable to the currency crisis.

Farmers combine their trips to Mbare Musika for crop sales with purchases of agricultural equipment, inputs, repairs, and manufactured goods in Harare. Murara testified:

After I finish selling bananas, I buy goods that are not available or prohibitively expensive in Mutare or Honde Valley. I buy pipes made in Harare. I go to the industry and buy ten pipes to take to Honde Valley.<sup>563</sup>

Farmers buy affordable fertilisers, seeds, insecticides, irrigation equipment, ploughs, scotch carts, building supplies, groceries, and produce to take back to their farms.<sup>564</sup> To some degree, this is a cost cutting measure for farmers and it provides loads for transporters to cover the cost of the journey back to farms.

Until recently, farmers faced serious transport challenges to take their produce to Mbare Musika. In the 1990s, small-scale farmers from Murehwa used a truck from a local transporter to deliver produce to Mbare Musika.<sup>565</sup> The transporter was unreliable since he travelled to

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<sup>560</sup> Interview, Chitsa, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>561</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>562</sup> Interview, Dereck, Honde Valley, 2021.

<sup>563</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>564</sup> Interview, Chitsa, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>565</sup> Interview, Danho, Murehwa, 2020.



Mbare Musika occasionally and charged per unit of produce, sometimes he would go without customers and inconvenienced farmers intending to visit on a day he was not travelling. He later hired the truck to farmers and charged per trip.<sup>566</sup> In Honde Valley farmers had difficulties transporting bananas to markets. Dereck narrated that long ago farmers moved produce with small pickup trucks to the highway and hitch-hiked haulage trucks travelling to Harare from Mozambique for transport to Mbare Musika.<sup>567</sup> Smith (1989) argue that small-scale farmers gained greatly from road expansion after independence and are now able to access urban markets; yet they face greater transportation costs, and some small-scale farmers are unable to recoup their transport costs after selling. Indeed, the roads are significant in linking farmers to markets, but they become impassable during the rainy season.

Many roads in the countryside are bad and are impassable after rainfall (Figure 20). The Honde Valley Caretaker, a resident in Honde Valley, commented on the state of the roads on twitter:

Thousands of tonnes of bananas are transported to various parts of Zimbabwe and the world via this road... Few weeks ago, [I] spent about four hours on this same 'modern bridge' as it was overflowing. My greatest fear is that, in its current state, this bridge will collapse. If it does, [Harareans] will not have bananas from the beautiful Honde Valley...<sup>568</sup>

Honde Valley is a remote area on the border with Mozambique. Its undulating terrain and poor dirt roads make accessibility difficult, especially during the wet season.

The large bus station in Mbare Township makes Mbare Musika easily accessible to farmers and buyers from many parts of Zimbabwe. Jethro from Chihota, whose mother was a farmer, recounted how they used scotch carts to transport vegetables to the local township and then loaded them onto busses bound for Mbare Musika. Women from Chihota travelled as a group to Mbare Musika to sell vegetables. His mother paid school fees for his education from her earnings from *musika*.<sup>569</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Six, the transport situation recently improved due to an increase in the number of trucks available for hire. Some farmers accompany their produce to Mbare Musika and can be seen sitting precariously on top of

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> Interview, Dereck, farmer. Honde Valley, 2021.

<sup>568</sup> The Honde Valley Caretaker, (2022), My greatest fear is that, in the current state...@NickNyachega, [Twitter], 22 January, [accessed 22 January 2022]

<sup>569</sup> Interview, Jethro, resident. Ruwa, 2020.



produce in trucks.<sup>570</sup> They wrap themselves in blankets to shield themselves from the wind, cold, and dust.



Figure 20 State of the roads in Honde Valley after rainfall (Source Honde Valley Caretaker, Twitter post).

Farmers in Mbare Musika suffered accommodation issues. Charter House, which is available for overnight accommodation to farmers, is too small to accommodate all the farmers who visit Mbare Musika daily. During a consultative meeting in 1998, farmers underlined the urgent need for the council to provide overnight accommodation and security for farmers and their produce at Mbare Musika. Mabel Chinomona, MP for Mutoko North, agreed that the Harare City Council should provide farmers with adequate overnight accommodation and sanitary facilities at Mbare Musika.<sup>571</sup> Farmers are, however, still experiencing the same issues many years after they were raised. They sleep in the open at the market while guarding their produce and are vulnerable to bad weather. They lose produce to thieves at night and relieve themselves in the streets because paid toilets are closed at night.<sup>572</sup> Mucheri stated that they

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<sup>570</sup> On my way from Mutoko we sat precariously on the back of a truck to Harare. Farmers had blankets to cover themselves, but we reached Mbare Musika at around 3am frozen and covered with dust. This was too risky and frightening that I could not sit on top of produce on my way from Honde Valley where their roads are meandering and steep.

<sup>571</sup> Herald, 1 August 1998.

<sup>572</sup> I observed human waste along an alley between the Old Farmers Market and OK Supermarket that is obviously from people who have been sleeping in the market during the night. Toilets, that are paid, are closed during the night making the situation worse for people and this greatly compromised the market cleanliness.

do not engage the council concerning market infrastructure and conditions at Mbare Musika because they are not directly involved in marketing their produce.<sup>573</sup>



Figure 21: Storage and accommodation structures at a banana market in Mbare Musika.

The story of Honde Valley farmers in the Banana Market segment demonstrates how dire the accommodation situation at Mbare Musika is. Farmers bring green bananas to the market to ripen before they sell. In the summer, bananas ripen quickly and are ready for sale a few days after arrival at

Mbare Musika, whereas in the winter, bananas take longer to ripen. As a result, farmers spend more days camping out at the market before returning home. Murara affirmed that:

People back home believe we are making a lot of money, but consider the costs and difficulties we face. After spending many days at Mbare Musika, we find our plantations in disarray. Our produce is frequently stolen by children from Mbare, and we have no control over them. A farmer was arrested for assaulting the children.<sup>574</sup>

Farmers at the banana market eat, sleep, and store their goods in makeshift shelters divided into men's and women's sections. They have open sides and dusty floors with no adequate protection for the bananas or their sellers (Figure 21). There are no public toilets, bathing, cooking, or running water facilities. Such facilities are only available in the surrounding houses for a price.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

<sup>574</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.



Lack of capital is another major challenge affecting small-scale farmers in the horticultural sector. High-yielding cultivars are more expensive, though they sell quickly at Mbare Musika. King, a small-scale farmer from Murehwa, remarked that:

I can work hard, but have no money to purchase inputs. I cannot afford the seeds for the irati onion variety, which cost about US\$120 per 500g. I buy those affordable cultivars, but they are not in big demand in Mbare Musika. The Irati onion variety has a high demand and is the most rewarding variety, but its seeds are expensive. Farmers producing it earn a lot of money and drive cars.<sup>575</sup>

King recounted an incident in which he was assigned to sell irati onions by his father-in-law. The onions had an exceptional quality and can be dried, consequently, they were all bought quickly before he sold a single bundle for K2 (another onion variety) he had brought to Mbare Musika. He stressed metaphorically that his father-in-law earned money he had never seen in his life after planting only 250g of irati onion seeds.<sup>576</sup> Charter Seeds, an agricultural inputs distributor, referred to irati onion as the game changer for it shines and outclasses other varieties in Mbare Musika.<sup>577</sup>

Farmers are investing in irrigation equipment and expanding horticulture ventures to produce crops which they sell at Mbare Musika. These ventures benefit farmers, communities, and the whole economy. A lot of people are employed in horticultural projects; the bulk of them are women from disadvantaged and marginalised groups (Heri 2006). Produce marketplaces in cities employ many young people. Overall, the horticulture sector employs 15% of the country's workforce (Heri 2006). Farmers recruit workers from local communities, hire trucks to transport produce to markets, and serve as a market for input suppliers and other manufactured goods. Farmers who buy farm equipment and building materials after selling produce in Mbare Musika support the metal industries adjacent to Mbare Musika.

Chibhanzi, a farmer who rents land and sells only at Mbare Musika, envisions producing enough onions to feed every family in Harare and Bulawayo.<sup>578</sup> He grows irati onions, a high-

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<sup>575</sup> Interview, King, Murehwa, 2020. The *irati* onion variety that he mentioned has been described by Charter Seeds as an early season short day variety with excellent quality and skins.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid.

<sup>577</sup> Charterseedsofficial, (2020), Onion variety irati performed excellently again this year...@Charterseeds [Twitter], 05 October 2020, [accessed 26 June 2021], available from: <https://twitter.com/Charterseeds/status/1313040356913668096?t=XbNm5soF7GUlc93emHciKQ&s=19>

<sup>578</sup> Meeting, Chibhanzi, his manager and agents, Acturus, 2020.



yielding variety that sells quickly in Mbare Musika.<sup>579</sup> He says that some of the onions sold by vendors in Harare come from his farm and are stocked at Mbare Musika. His agents estimated that they sold onions for more than \$15,000 in Mbare Musika in 2020.<sup>580</sup> During my visit to his farm in September 2020, Chibhanzi arranged a meeting with his manager and *makoronyera*, who were preparing to deliver onions to Mbare Musika. He said, "*ava varume handide navo*" (I am proud of these men)<sup>581</sup> to express his delight with how they work. His main issue was the lack of a farmers' association to organise and control produce marketing. He proposed to makert his onion aggressively to put pressure on dominant farmers and their agents to force them to meet and discuss ways to control produce marketing.

Mbare Musika has shown its capacity to supply enough produce to feed an expanding population. In the view of Chikulo et al. (2020), the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) caused a collapse in productivity and the informalisation of the economy. This contrasts Scoones (2010), who argues that productivity increased a few years after the land reform. The high volume of produce delivered at Mbare Musika, even by small-scale farmers, twenty years after the implementation of the FTLRP, indicates growing yields. Mbare Musika is certainly always full of produce and continues to provide farmers with a profitable and easily accessible market.

### 9.3. Why People in Harare Join Mbare Musika

Many people in urban areas rely on Mbare Musika for food and incomes. Mbare Musika is a "workplace" for many people who play different roles. Also, Mbare Musika has increasingly played a significant role in food security in Harare and other towns in Zimbabwe. Chikulo et al. (2020) posit that Mbare Musika is the preferred market despite challenges such as gluts, conmen, and poor market infrastructure. Some have argued that Mbare Musika has become central because there is no better alternative, but its vendors are losing out because buyers are terrified to visit the market.<sup>582</sup> Mugure (2015) argues that the poor have not been passive victims of the economic collapse; instead, they have moved to *musika* for food and incomes. Many people eke out a living in *musika*, and the market is a critical component of Zimbabwe's

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<sup>579</sup> Charter Seeds (2022), Irati onion AKA the game changer...Charter Seeds [Facebook], 20 April, [accessed 06 May 2022], available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/charterseedsofficial/videos/1206436023494624/?mibextid=TfNwVoErvbAdloke>

<sup>580</sup> Interview, Giant & Muchengeti, agents. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>581</sup> Meeting among Chibanzi, his manager and Giant and Muchengeti, Aucturus, 2020.

<sup>582</sup> The Herald, 1 October 1996.



economy. Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah's (2008) assertion that produce marketing has a significant potential to alleviate rising unemployment and poverty and cushion the poor from rising food prices succinctly summarise the contribution of Mbare Musika in Harare.

Harare, like many African cities, has seen an upsurge in poverty and unemployment due to rapid urbanisation and limited economic progress. The expansion of secondary industries and increased colonial land expropriation in the 1940s boosted rural-urban migration to Harare (Mlambo 2009). The African urban population increased from an estimated 22,126 in 1936 to 45,993 in 1946 and then quickly to 75,249 in 1951 (Raftopolous and Yoshikini 1999). Migration from rural areas to Harare further increased due to the intensification of the liberation war in the 1970s. Harare experienced a population boom and rapid urbanisation following Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. The post-independence period witnessed increased rural-urban migration following the relaxation of colonial immigration controls. The population increased from 386 040 in 1969 to 658 400 people in 1982 partly due to influx of young migrants of ages 20-34 years (Zinyama 1993) who were looking for better opportunities. In 1980, the population of Harare was slightly above half a million, and by 2022, it was 2,427,209 people.<sup>583</sup> According to Muzondidya (2009), the economic growth of the post-independence period was ephemeral; few jobs were created, and unemployment grew substantially after 1980. Sylvester (1991) notes that in the 1980s, Zimbabwe's economy grew at 3.8% per annum, and it costed approximately US\$43, 000 to create a single job in the manufacturing sector.

At the same time, the population was growing by 3%, and Zimbabwe recorded a spectacular success in education. An estimated 10 000 new jobs were created annually against 100 000 school leavers in the 1980s (Chung 2005). Unemployment rose from 32.2% in 1990 to 40% in 1992 and 44% in 1993 (Zvobgo 2009, Mlambo 2012). The implementation of ESAP worsened urban poverty and unemployment. Many workers were retrenched, and as inflation set in, the cost of living skyrocketed in Harare. ESAP greatly affected women, who are mainly responsible for food provisioning and are in the poorest economic groups (Chisvo 2001).

Rapid urbanisation and shrinking opportunities increased the number of "urban marginals", who are unemployed (Bayat 2000) who resorted to *musika* to survive. In Zimbabwe, many people joined *musika* since the 1990s as the failing economy led to massive unemployment

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<sup>583</sup> Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat), (2022), population and housing census: preliminary report on population figures.



among the youth, worsened inflation, and eroded earnings (Magure 2015, Moyo 2007). Changamire emphasised the role of poverty in joining Mbare Musika. In his words: "I ventured into *musika* not by choice, nor am I proud of it. Poverty and unemployment forced me."<sup>584</sup> In agreement, Mbuya Shingai pointed out that Mbare Musika was dominated by old married women and grandmothers prior to the 1990s, thereafter the number of young people increased due to worsening unemployment.<sup>585</sup> Unemployment in Zimbabwe is high among the youth in urban areas. In 2020, the World Bank reported that urban unemployment is higher among young women and women workers who face a tough labour market.<sup>586</sup> Many unemployed youths now rely on *kungwawhangwavha* (hustling in cities) for income. Some graduates protested the severe unemployment by selling fresh produce on the streets while wearing their graduation regalia. Many unemployed urban people joined Mbare Musika to earn incomes to survive and live a dignified life (Bayat 2000, Tawodzerwa 2023).

Up until the 1990s, selling produce at Mbare Musika was seen as work for uneducated people. Matapi, a Mozambican, joined Mbare Musika at the age of fourteen in the 1980s because he was uneducated to find a job easily. During this time, many people were employed, and job opportunities were plentiful.<sup>587</sup> Shingayi, a trader in the OFM, narrated that:

I grew up in Mbare Musika; there is no trade in Mbare Musika that I have not participated in. I never worked for a company. Since completing secondary school, I shifted between Mbare Musika and Tsiga Market, selling vegetables, maize, wheat, and groceries.<sup>588</sup>

The rapidly declining economy since the 1990s has radically altered the situation. Ngwena stated that many people, even graduates, are now joining Mbare Musika because the manufacturing industry is declining and pays insufficient wages. In this sense, Potts (2006b) sees *musika* as the progressive adoption of previously undervalued economic strategies practiced by lower class urban youth and women.

The number of young people joining Mbare Musika has grown since the economic crisis deepened in 2000. Zimbabwe's economy plummeted to a world record low in 2008. The economic crisis was characterised by hyperinflation, massive unemployment, poverty,

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<sup>584</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>585</sup> Interview, Mbuya Shingai, Mbare Musika, 2022.

<sup>586</sup> Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science & Technology Development and the World Bank, Revitalising Zimbabwe's tertiary education sector to support a robust economic recovery, September 2020.

<sup>587</sup> Interview, Matapi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>588</sup> Interview, Shingayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.



plummeting salaries, food shortages, and overall untold hardships among ordinary people. Muchadenyika (2020) asserts that the impact of Zimbabwe's socio-economic crisis is most visible in urban economies that shifted from industrialising to ubiquitous marginal economies. Many companies closed, contributing to the already high unemployment rate. Muchadenyika (2020) reiterates that "while industry capitulated, the informal economy boomed." *Musika* rose from insignificant levels to become the backbone of the urban population. The "informal sector" rose from around 9% in 1980 to between 70% and 94% of the whole economy between 2008 and 2022 (Magidi 2022, Tawodzerwa 2023).

Many young people who migrated from rural areas to cities in search of better opportunities ended up joining *musika*. Batanai, for example, migrated from Marange to Harare after finishing secondary school in 2004 to look for a job. He was unable to find work and joined his sister to sell packages in Mbare Musika. He testified: "there were few people in Mbare Musika when I joined, unlike now. The market became crowded due to indigenisation.<sup>589</sup> Now there are no industries forcing everyone to engage in vending."<sup>590</sup> *Musika* is invaluable to many people who were unable to find work in the current economic downturn. Msasa, a trader, began *kuhodha* in Mbare Musika in 2003, following her husband's death, which exposed her family to economic difficulties.<sup>591</sup> Food trading is the most valuable aspect of *musika* since it generates income while also providing food to urban families (Tawodzerwa 2023).

Women's involvement in produce marketing was partly influenced by the poor wages earned by many African workers formally employed. Wages were hardly adequate for survival, forcing women to supplement paltry incomes by undertaking agricultural activities (Mlambo 2014). Price deregulation and labour retrenchment through ESAP caused higher inflation and eroded wages. Consequently, urban workers struggled to survive on declining wages (Muzondidya 2009). In response to declining wages, some workers quit poorly paying jobs to participate in Mbare Musika. The feminisation of poverty (Chinyemba et al. 2006) increased women's

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<sup>589</sup> The policy of indigenisation was adopted in 2008 after the signing of the Indigenisation and Empowerment Act by President Robert Mugabe. The law required that all foreign companies offer 51% of their shares to indigenous Zimbabweans and that the foreign company remain with 49%.

<sup>590</sup> Interview, Batanai, Mbare Musika, 2020. The interview took a political tone, he stated that he is a staunch supporter of ZANU PF and is a relative to the current first family. This was the reason he gave me for his initial unwillingness to take part in the study. He later own consented for an interview. He viewed Mbare Musika as an extension of indigenisation policy adopted by the government in 2008.

<sup>591</sup> Interview, Msasa, Msasa, 2019.



participation in income generating activities to supplement low wages earned in the formal economy.

Illustrative is the case of Cheneso, a single mother, who moved from Chiweshe to Harare in 1998 to find opportunities. She was employed in a restaurant in Graniteside Industrial Area as a cook. She joined her sister in Mbare Musika, who was already selling produce because she earned low and inadequate wages from her job.<sup>592</sup> Another case is that of Ngwarayi, a trader, who narrated that:

I left my job as a security guard in 2004 because I earned a low wage that was further eroded by inflation. I joined the market because there are few well-paying jobs. I am not planning to leave Mbare Musika where I enjoy freedom and a better income than when I was working.<sup>593</sup>

Traders at Mbare Musika earn significantly more than the average industrial worker or public service employee. Changamire, for example, indicated that he earns more than a teacher and that his income is crucial for buying food to feed his family, so they do not go to bed hungry.<sup>594</sup> Due to the ongoing economic crisis, Mbare Musika is increasingly becoming critical in urban people's lives as it offers affordable food and incomes.

Satellite traders and supermarkets stock produce at Mbare Musika, where prices are low. They break bulk and add a markup to make profit when they resell. A trader at Mbare Musika stipulated that the market sells a variety of produce at affordable prices that meet the needs of food eaters and traders from different backgrounds.<sup>595</sup> Hazvinei stocks all her produce at Mbare Musika for her retail business in Chizhanje because it reduces the cost of moving around to different places stocking produce.<sup>596</sup> Changamire further stated that "Mbare Musika is the first to receive new produce every season, and this helps us to introduce them in the suburbs, where we sell and enjoy a huge market."<sup>597</sup>

Many individual food eaters in Harare are also attracted by relatively low prices to buy produce directly at Mbare Musika. Melody drives from Harare's Avenues to Mbare Musika once every month to buy produce for her use. She buys directly from Mbare Musika since,

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<sup>592</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>593</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>594</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>595</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>596</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Chizhanje, 2020.

<sup>597</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.





it is convenient and a one-stop market. I buy vegetables, fruits, herbs, and traditional foods for the whole month. I enjoy traditional foods such as pumpkins, nuts, *madora*, and *rapoko*. Mbare Musika is the place to go for all of them at reasonable prices.<sup>598</sup>

Some food eaters in Harare buy produce in large quantities at relatively low prices and refrigerate it to last longer. I observed a woman who paid US\$2 for twenty-four heads of onion in the OFM. She explained that "onions would soon be in short supply and expensive. I buy many onions and dry them in my kitchen until the next onion harvest."<sup>599</sup> To further illustrate the accessibility of produce at Mbare Musika, the Travel Guy posted on twitter that:

Today I woke up to be in Mbare Musika. Things happen here, money circulates, produce sells at friendly prices. Could be my shopping place for several items. Must say bye to these marauding retailers who have a penchant to profiteer, racket, and squeeze the last cent out of me (*sic*).<sup>600</sup>

Some scholars disagree that produce at Mbare Musika is comparatively cheap and accessible. Tawodzera (2023) uses the example of a bundle of vegetables plus bus fare to indicate that it is more expensive for households to buy directly from Mbare Musika than from satellite markets. In contrast, food eaters buy a variety of produce, thereby spreading transport cost and ultimately lowering the overall produce cost, especially given comparatively high produce prices in retail markets in most suburbs.

Furthermore, Mbare Suburb has Zimbabwe's largest bus terminal. This makes Mbare Musika, built adjacent to the terminus, accessible to many people from Harare and beyond. Buses continue to play an important role not just for passengers, but also in moving produce to other towns. I observed buses loading produce to take to Bulawayo, Beitbridge, Bindura, Mutare, Victoria Falls, and Masvingo. I met traders from Chinhoyi, Bindura, and Victoria Falls who used buses to travel to Mbare Musika to stock produce.

#### **9.4. How Urban Participants Join Mbare Musika**

Family members and friends who are already in the market support new members in joining Mbare Musika. Members already in Mbare Musika assist new members with capital, skills, motivation, and adaptation strategies. Entrance to Mbare Musika is not necessarily open to anyone, but rather to those with connections. *Ukama* makes a significant contribution to the

<sup>598</sup> Interview, Melody, Whatsapp, 2020.

<sup>599</sup> Interview, Grandmother, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>600</sup> Travel Guy, (2019), Today I woke up to be in Mbare Musika...@PTChimusoro, [Twitter], 17 Apr, [accessed 17 July 2022], available from: <https://twitter.com/PTChimusoro/status/118388468768550912?t=xlsoGi2uysAkCsLag&s=19>



entry and success of new members' enterprises. Many people in Mbare Musika joined with the aid of a relative, and some inherited their parents' stalls. For this reason, certain families maintained their presence in *musika* and produce trading became their way of life.

Many respondents participated in *musika* as children, playing, assisting, or being sent to stalls by their parents. Mula, a *koronyera*/trader, migrated to Harare from Murehwa in the 1980s. His father was a farmer-*makoronyera* who grew onions in Murehwa and bought some from other farmers to sell in Mbare Musika. Mula helped his father sort, grade, and wrap onions at *kuMasquatter*, where his father rented a room and sold onions in Mbare Musika. In 1997, he worked for Mukono, his father's young brother. After getting married, Mula's wage became insufficient to sustain his family, so he established himself as an independent onion dealer and at times go for employment. He also assisted his two sons and his brother's sons to join Mbare Musika, and they sell as a group.

Participating in Mbare Musika as children helped many market actors later in their marketing activities. Hazvinei, a satellite trader, began selling produce when she was a young girl. She stocks produce at Mbare Musika and sells it in Mabvuku. She reminisced:

We were not ashamed; we had accepted it. Our mother taught us how to market. While she was doing other things, we sold at *musika*. My brothers carried vegetable baskets and peddled to motorists along Mutare Road. My childhood lessons and skills made it simple for me to start my own *musika*.<sup>601</sup>

She went on to say, "we endured insults from the community; we understood *musika* was our way of life and a source of living. Our father worked, but his salary was insufficient to maintain the family."<sup>602</sup>

Changamire is a trader from Mabvuku who was born in 1986. He shared a slightly different account:

As a toddler, I used to accompany my mother to her *musika* at Matongo. Then, they were selling goods on the open market. My mother would leave me to check her stall while I played. I was still young and could not walk unaccompanied. When I realised what was going on, I felt embarrassed about going to *musika* while other kids were playing. After 1999, I realised there is life in *musika* and that we can uplift our lives from it. My school fees, levies, clothing, and books were all provided from *musika*. We

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<sup>601</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.



did not go to sleep hungry because my mother bought food with her *musika* proceeds. After school, I began peddling tomatoes throughout Mabvuku in a pushcart.<sup>603</sup>

This testimony may appear exaggerated, yet there are several cases of children selling in Mbare Musika and hawking door to door in Harare. Muchadenyika (2020) notes that as the urban economy became more informal, the number of juvenile vendors increased. Changamire and his two siblings inherited their mother's stall after she died in July 2007. Their late mother's co-traders encouraged and aided them financially. He explained:

My mother was popular among the vendors at Matongo. Many individuals paid *chema* and volunteered to help us continue with *musika* at her funeral. People in Matongo knew we survived on *musika* and insisted that the money be used to keep it going. We were granted approximately ZW\$2 million. I augmented the funds with earnings from part-time work. I transported people's goods with my pushcart and cultivated land for many people.<sup>604</sup>

Many actors inherited their parents' enterprises. The skills they learned from their parents and the support of fellow older traders were vital to their successful takeover.

The market committees investigate new members' backgrounds through relatives who are already members of Mbare Musika. Wiriranai was supported by his brother, who recommended that he rent a stall in Mbare Musika. His brother was also assisted by relatives to join *musika*. Wiriranai stated that the situation has greatly changed and that new members can now join on their own. A few years ago, prospective participants were listed in a book and awaited clearance from market committees.<sup>605</sup> Wiriranai pointed out that:

The committees preferred people they could trace in case of a problem, such as a customer filing a complaint about theft, the member responsible could be easily identified. The ZANU-PF committees were powerful here, and they checked people before they joined the market.<sup>606</sup>

The involvement of ZANU-PF aligned committees was to ensure allocation of stalls to loyal supporters and make Mbare Musika its stronghold. The admission of closely related people partly contributed to the building of tightly interwoven networks.

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<sup>603</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020. On my other visit, his market was closed. He was employed first by Nyaradzo Group, a funeral services company, and then by the Roman Catholic Church as a cook. At his stall, there was only a pushcart that was no longer used.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>606</sup> Interviews, Wiriranai, Justin, Antony, Mbare Musika, 2020.



Dhewa (2020) claims that "the dominance of middlemen has prevented the old generation from passing market knowledge to the young generation directly. Young people have always to start from scratch in understanding the market."<sup>607</sup> Oral stories I gathered and my observations depict contradictory realities. Old members have a social obligation based on *ukama* to pass on skills and resources to young members. Older participants provide capital, expertise, and marketing stalls to their children or novices from school. Apprenticeships prepared and familiarised young people with the produce trading ropes at Mbare Musika. Knowledge and resource transfers from older family members to the younger generation explain the continuities and durability of many businesses. Cheneso learned how to stock, bargain, and sell tomatoes from her sister's friends, who took her through the process. She was able to sell all her tomatoes and establish her own links, but initially relied on her mentors' customers.<sup>608</sup> The support nourished and equipped new members to work independently and for their enterprises to survive critical early stages.

New traders may obtain the initial capital for their businesses from relatives. Wiriranai was given an initial capital equivalent to US\$30 to stock potatoes by his brother who was already in the market. He augmented the initial capital by grading potatoes for senior *makoronyera*. His relatives taught him trading skills and connected him to farmers and fellow traders. He claimed that the help was critical to his survival in Mbare Musika. He said, "you can come with a lot of money to the market, but if you do not know how to trade, you will lose it all."<sup>609</sup>

Some traders stumble and are assisted in recovering by family and friends. Kumbirai mentioned that he re-established himself in Mbare Musika with the help of his friends. He left the market in 2017 after failing to handle the business he inherited from his mother due to illness, family troubles, and disorganisation. He later met a farmer in Chegutu who was looking for a market to sell his onions. He invited a friend who was still in Mbare Musika and they bought the onions together. He said his market ties lifted him up; they were the source of money to re-enter the market.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> C. Dhewa, For how long are middlemen going to be part of trading agricultural commodities. @eMKambo [Twitter], 14 July 2020 [accessed 14 July 2020], available from: All eMKambo. Wordpress.com tweets no longer accessible.

<sup>608</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>609</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>610</sup> Interview, Kumbirai, Mbare Musika, 2020.



A few members joined Mbare Musika on their own. They had to be courageous and bold to gain admission to Mbare Musika. I met a *koronyera* who joined *musika* in the 1990s after failing to find a job in Harare. He stated that "I joined Mbare Musika alone during the time it was still frightening, and I had to be strong. I used to see people getting stabbed in the market, but things have greatly changed."<sup>611</sup> Establishing connections and networks quickly was critical to the survival of their businesses.

### **9.5. Encounters and Experiences in Mbare Musika**

Mbare Musika is experienced differently by different people, even though they are present at the same time. A single day can carry multiple stories and meanings for actors. The circumstances and experiences are unique and cannot be generalised. On the same day, one farmer may experience high sales while another suffers low sales for the same produce. Actors have distinct market experiences and perspectives, and a transaction rarely benefits everyone. As a result, actors use different strategies to benefit from transactions. Actors' activities and responses to market swings are essential market strategies to widen margins and sustain enterprises.

Many *makoronyera* visit Mbare Musika at night to buy produce from farmers before the arrival of *mbuyadzetswanda*, their main buyers, to whom they sell at a markup. Retail traders stock produce at Mbare Musika early in the morning to ensure quality and freshness. Hazvinei reported that she goes to the market early in the morning to buy straight from farmers before the produce is selected. Satellite traders used to buy directly from farmers at any time, but now they compete with traders based at Mbare Musika.<sup>612</sup> They are all competing to deal directly with farmers. In most cases, traders at Mbare Musika leverage their relationships with farmers to get produce ahead of retail traders.

Satellite traders prefer to purchase directly from farmers to increase their profit margins. They claim to know farmers and their boxes. Farmers' boxes, such as potato pockets from Nyanga, are huge and brimming. For tomatoes, *box remurimi* (farmer's box) is also larger than *makoronyera's* boxes. *Makoronyera* repack produce into small units (*kukenduza* in Chapter Seven) and reduces traders' profit margins. To widen their margin, traders prefer to buy from farmers whose packages contain more produce and are relatively cheaper.

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<sup>611</sup> Interview, Tashinga, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>612</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.



Mbare Musika is generally congested in the morning, with people moving "erratically". Frequent visitors understand how to navigate the packed marketplace. Changamire stated:

I understand how to move around the market and avoid other people. I also know where to buy certain produce. To find good quality, cheap goods, the market requires a lot of patience and moving around comparing produce and prices. The price of produce is essential in determining from who I buy produce.<sup>613</sup>

Buyers move around and examine the produce before selecting one that meets their needs and budget. Sellers selling similar produce arrange their produce close to each other for buyers to see. Some sellers tout, invoking *ukama*, real or imagined, "can we give you brother, your fresh tomatoes are here (sic)."<sup>614</sup>

Some buyers come to Mbare Musika towards the afternoon when the farmers market is about to close when most farmers are preparing to return to their farms. Farmers reduce prices during this period to clear all their remaining produce. Buyers use this to bargain and negotiate price reductions, as well as to obtain produce on credit. Traders with little capital easily negotiate for credit in the afternoon when the market is less crowded and bustling. Food eaters also come to the market at this time to avoid the crowds and get bargains.

There are farmers who dominate and control prices in Mbare Musika during their harvesting periods. During the dry season in 2020, for example, a farm in Chegutu supplied tonnes of tomatoes in *sandaks* marked PK. This was during the dry season, when a shortage was anticipated, but this irrigated farm supplied tonnes of tomatoes daily for close to two weeks. This resulted in an unanticipated glut at a time when prices were expected to rise. Traders at Mbare Musika complained that the supply had lowered prices and prevented them from profiting. Farmers and middlemen at Mbare Musika make little money during gluts, but satellite traders and eaters benefit from reduced prices.

Farmers changed their production regimes based on past experiences and market knowledge. This include farmers switching to better seed varieties and investing in irrigation to align supply with high demand in Mbare Musika. In Chitsa's account:

Market patterns are very important to me; there are some crops I no longer plant because they are not profitable. I stopped producing green leafy vegetables that are easily produced and result in a glut. I alternate tomatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers,

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<sup>613</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>614</sup> I often hear *musika* sellers saying this to passing people and it attracts those who want to buy.



and green mealies that sell quickly and target high demand periods. I cultivate cucumbers for marketing in the summer and on hot days because they have a lot of water and are in high demand.<sup>615</sup>

Chibhanzi used his knowledge and experience in Mbare Musika to shift from other onion varieties to "irati onions that sell themselves in Mbare Musika (sic)."<sup>616</sup> Indeed, as I witnessed from 2020 to 2022, the irati variety sells quickly and successfully, even during gluts, compared to other varieties. In 2020, traders waited until 10 pm. for Giant and Muchengeti to deliver irati onions from Chibhanzi's farm. The onions sold out in a couple of hours despite the availability of heaps of other onion types. I overheard a trader who commented that "if you hear people saying they made a loss from these onions, they are lying."<sup>617</sup>

Many of my research participants believe that the marketing of fresh produce has been declining for a long time. To back up their assertions, the middlemen point to piles of unsold produce after a marketing day and others that were decomposing. Wiriranai remembered that "in the past, we stocked and finished selling produce daily, unlike now. We no longer stock daily, and it takes days to sell quantities that we used to sell in a day."<sup>618</sup> While dumping rotten cucumbers, *Babamunini*, a wholesale market trader, confirmed that things were difficult; *mari dzirikunyura* (people are losing). "*Imarika iyi yose yandarasa*" (this is all money that I threw away), he said, pointing to the decaying cucumbers.<sup>619</sup>

Many sellers agree that low business reflects inadequate incomes due to the protracted economic crisis in Zimbabwe. Wiriranai believes that:

Long ago, people bought more produce than they do now. Industries were functioning well, and people earned better incomes. I could sell and get income enough to buy food and pay rent for a month in a single day. People no longer have money to buy produce.<sup>620</sup>

Hazvinei concurred, stating that "our sales these days are low due to the economic difficulties people are enduring. When things are going well, we thank God that we have money to buy

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<sup>615</sup> Interview, Chitsa, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>616</sup> Charter Seeds (2022), Irati onion AKA the Game Changer...Charter Seeds [facebook], 20 April, [accessed 06 May 2022], available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/charterseedsofficial/videos/1206436023494624/?mibextid=TfNwVoErybAdloke>

<sup>617</sup> Comments, Anonymous trader, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>618</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>619</sup> Interview, Babamunini, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>620</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.



goods and live.” She left the local council market to sell at a makeshift stall at the gate of her house, partly due to the low business she is experiencing.<sup>621</sup>

Produce marketers agree that their condition was worse during the hyperinflation that peaked in 2008 and better during the Government of National Unity (GNU), which introduced a multicurrency system from 2009 to 2016. Changamire relates that:

Between 2009 and 2013, the market paid well, but after that, things became more difficult for vendors. Because of the difficult economic environment, I took a break for a while. When the country's economic situation is difficult, many businesses struggle, including *musika*. People require fruits and vegetables, but lack money to buy them. When the economy is steady, the market likewise stabilises because people have more money to spend. People need exquisite produce like grapes, pears, watermelon, and apples. They no longer buy since they do not have enough money to spend.<sup>622</sup>

Despite dwindling income, Mbare Musika has become a source of produce for many people in Harare. Hazvinei confirmed that people know and continue to rely on *musika* as a source of food, though unlike in the past when they earned weekly or monthly wages, they have low incomes.<sup>623</sup> The increase in the number of people selling vegetables at Mbare Musika and Harare shows the growing importance of Mbare Musika, though it has impacted some individual traders' incomes.<sup>624</sup>

People who have been selling at Mbare Musika for a long time are aware of market trends and react promptly to avoid losses. Cheneso stated that:

It is clearly visible that there is a shortage or glut of a particular produce. Okra and butternuts, for example, are in short supply and command high prices. If I see a farmer with these produce, I stock and sell them.<sup>625</sup>

Some sellers' decisions on what to sell are influenced in part by observable market trends. Sauti, a trader, claimed that he was not selling anything that day, when I interviewed him, but was just observing to see what he could sell to avoid *kuuraya mari* (making a loss). Following that, he visits farms to source in-demand produce.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Mabvuku, 2020.

<sup>622</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>623</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Chizhanje, 2020.

<sup>624</sup> Interview, Mai Mufaro, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>625</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>626</sup> Interview, Sauti, tander. Mbare Musika, 2020.





Traders and *makoronyera* use their networks to gather and share market intelligence. They observe, converse, and share market information. Cheneso claimed:

It is simple for us to see each produce's demand. Produce on high demand is sold and finished quickly, while produce on low demand remains piled up for long periods. Prices are high for produce on demand, and buyers move around asking for the produce. *Makoronyera* visit farms in search of produce on high demand.<sup>627</sup>

During the dry season of 2020, when tomatoes were scarce, *makoronyera* slept at the market, waiting for farmers to deliver them. The tomatoes were sold a few minutes after delivery. Shingayi reiterated that sometimes tomatoes become scarce, causing us to be vigilant and sleep in the market while waiting for work [deliveries]. He told me they create syndicates, with some members sleeping in the market and others taking over to sell in the morning.<sup>628</sup>

As a result of their experiences in Mbare Musika, many small-scale farmers changed their marketing strategies. Though they continue to rely on *makoronyera* to market their produce, they are involved in the marketing process as much as possible. Chitsa claimed that:

Farmers were awakened, and they, too, want higher returns from their produce. They no longer sell produce to *makoronyera* who visit their farms. *Makoronyera* paid less than half the price they sold at Mbare Musika to ignorant farmers and made a lot of money in Mbare Musika. Small-scale farmers now bring their produce to Mbare Musika to receive high prices.<sup>629</sup>

This is corroborated by Pedzisai, a small-scale farmer who sold his cucumbers independently in 2020, despite having to sleep in the market guarding them. He explained that he sold the cucumbers autonomously to get a high income.<sup>630</sup> Experienced farmers like Mudhara market their own produce.

Farmers understand the risks and benefits of horticultural ventures. Chitsa remarked that "farming is gambling. We work in the hope that one crop will be profitable."<sup>631</sup> They are aware that some crops coincide with gluts and receive low returns, while others coincide with scarcity and pay handsomely. Pedzisai emphasised that the failure of one crop does not

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<sup>627</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>628</sup> Interview, Shingayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>629</sup> Interview, Chitsa, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>630</sup> Interview Pedzisai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>631</sup> Interview, Chitsa, Mbare Musika, 2020.



prevent him from producing another; he values generating enough money from the marketable crop to finance his next crop and meet other costs.<sup>632</sup>

Farmers have shown perseverance and hope in the face of marketing problems. Danho, for example, delivered 300 bundles of vegetables and found the market flooded. He sold a bundle for ZW\$20, then ZW\$15, ZW\$10, and ZW\$5, and finally dumped the remaining vegetables. For him, the marketing experience was excruciating; he sat hopelessly and frequently smoked cigarettes. He shook his head and exclaimed, "At this price, the farmer would not go back to the field."<sup>633</sup> A farmer selling next to him joked that Danho should go *kumasowe* (the Apostolic Church) for *muteuro* (spiritual intervention) before coming to Mbare Musika.<sup>634</sup> Danho replied, "I would not go *kumasowe* to sell produce. *Misi haifanani* (days are different). It is alright if I miss the day to make money. I earned money with sweet potatoes and onions. It is okay if I fail with vegetables."<sup>635</sup> Farmers face days like this all the time, but they are not disheartened. They recognise that some crops fail and others succeed in the same season.

Mbare Musika is complex; it has many stories and experiences for different actors. A single day and transaction affect the actors involved differently, and it is difficult to generalise the market conditions and transactions. Depending on one's role, some suffer while others benefit in the same day and transaction. A glut benefits buyers and farmers suffer low incomes, while a shortage causes high prices; the buyer suffers and farmers earn high incomes. Actors use their past experiences and information from other actors to make decisions, but they hardly tame and control the market. The (mis)fortunes of actors are determined by their position on that day, but the future holds a different set of circumstances. Actors continue to use various strategies to sway things in their favour, but there is no assurance that their strategies can work. Despite the difficulties, actors continue to trade and wait for an opportunity. For many actors, operating at Mbare Musika is a philosophy and a vital aspect of their lives, with meaning that extends beyond financial gains.

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<sup>632</sup> Interview, Pedzisai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>633</sup> I observed Danho in the NFM closely in the market for more than three hours. He made this statement to show his frustration with the unrewarding market situation.

<sup>634</sup> Comments from a man who was selling vegetables next to Danho in the New Farmers Market.

<sup>635</sup> Comments by Danho, Mbare Musika, 2020.



### 9.6. The Position of Mbare Musika in the Lives of Actors

Mbare Musika's resilience is further highlighted by its contribution to the lives of actors. Mbare Musika has supported lives of many people who hold on despite the difficulties they experience. Mbare Musika has made a significant contribution to urban food security, mainly among poor people. Mbare Musika's historical and present contributions, as well as players' perspectives on the market, shed light on its possible future function. Participating in Mbare Musika is not just a survival strategy for many actors; it is a long-term, serious business for money generation. Mupedziswa and Gumbo (1998) note that it is difficult for women traders to realise savings as incomes are from hand to mouth and that accumulation is impossible due to limited diversification of opportunities. I disagree with these findings, as some women have managed to earn higher incomes beyond the hand and mouth notion. A considerable number of people acquired houses, cars and other assets from Mbare Musika.

Mbare Musika is a haven for entrepreneurs, some of whom have made fortunes. In 1996, a newspaper reported the story of a man from Mbare Musika who, "from humble beginnings of owning one trolley five years ago...is now the proud owner of 140 trolleys, which he hires out, earning him an average of ZW\$900 on a busy day."<sup>636</sup> He hired seven workers to do maintenance and follow up on those who disappear with the trolleys. He was working with the council to obtain a licence and establish his business.<sup>637</sup> Ishewedu asserted that Mbare Musika produced successful business people such as Chitanda, Makumbe, Roy, Mudhara, Dzaru, and Mverechena, who started in Mbare Musika as farmers or traders, diversified into bus service businesses, and acquired considerable wealth.<sup>638</sup> Similarly, a young potato trader concurred that *makoronyera* with sufficient capital are generating huge earnings and importing fleets of trucks to deliver crops.<sup>639</sup>

For a long time, the government and many Harare residents regarded Mbare Musika with derision and contempt. The market is regarded as a market for the poor, with low-quality produce and meaningless revenue, and this has affected urban policy and attitudes to this day (Horn 1995). Matapi elaborated, saying:

*Musika* was once thought to be useless and of low status. We were despised and found it difficult to propose to and court women for marriage. There was plenty of work in

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<sup>636</sup> Herald, 22 April 1996.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

<sup>638</sup> Interview, Ishewedu, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>639</sup> Interview, Benjamin, trader. Mbare Musika, 2020.



the industries back then. Only at the marriage ceremony did our in-laws understand that *makoronyera* had a lot of money and earned more than average factory workers.<sup>640</sup>

*Musika* operators and their families were stigmatised in their communities. Ngwena reported that "working people prohibited their children to befriend our children, and they sanctioned their children when they discovered that they were playing with *makoronyera's* children."<sup>641</sup>

Hazvinei shared the same sentiments, she narrated, "things have changed now; people now appreciate the market; long ago, commuters frowned on us and refused to sit next to or socialise with us in buses, claiming vendors were dirty and unsanitary."<sup>642</sup>

Through greater engagement with traders, people outside Mbare Musika learned that the incomes from produce marketing were significant. Matapi underlined that communities began to respect Mbare Musika because we employed workers from industries on weekends when we had more work and paid them roughly ZW\$10, which was significantly more than the income they earned in their formal jobs per month in the 1980s.<sup>643</sup> Communities' perceptions of Mbare Musika shifted as it positively contributes to members' lives amidst the intensifying economic crisis. Changamire asserted that:

Our goal has been to elevate ourselves as vendors and change the public's perception of us. I once bought costly branded outfits in Botswana, and members at my church could not believe a vendor could afford them. Why not me, I wondered? My preacher used me as an example of how people should not struggle while some rely on *musika* to survive. People at my church were sceptical that I was merely doing *musika*. My mother-in-law even ordered my wife to investigate the main source of my money, which I disguised with *musika*.<sup>644</sup>

Many families embraced their members' participation in *musika*. Mai Mafunge's husband was first opposed to her involvement in *musika* but changed his mind once she bought a residential stand and built houses with her money.<sup>645</sup> Some produce dealers accomplished things that employed people struggle to achieve with their wages.

Almost all my informants were pleased that Mbare Musika's earnings allowed them to educate their children and siblings. They prioritised educating their children to provide them with greater future job prospects. Ishewedu emphasised that many traders are grateful to Mbare

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<sup>640</sup> Interview, Matapi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>641</sup> Interview, Ngwena, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>642</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Chizhanje, 2020.

<sup>643</sup> Interview, Matapi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>644</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>645</sup> Interview, Mai Mafunge, Damofalls, 2020.



Musika for assisting them in educating their children, some of whom now have decent professions. They left *musika* since their children are taking good care of them.<sup>646</sup> Many respondents were proud that they earned enough from Mbare Musika to buy residential stands, cars, furniture, and clothing, build rural homes, and pay lobola. For example, Kumbirai indicated that he visits Mbare Musika daily because it is his primary source of income for buying food, clothing, paying rent, and buying assets. They bought two residential stands in Chegutu before selling them to help pay for his mother's medical expenses.<sup>647</sup>

The Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association (BVTA) issued a press statement on May 1, 2022, recognising vendors' hardships and triumphs. They concluded, "we honour the heroic struggle of all informal economy workers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic."<sup>648</sup> The celebration and honour were relevant considering the vendors' successes and sacrifices. Mbare Musika made significant contributions to urban food security, particularly for the underprivileged who cannot afford to buy from supermarkets. The popularity of *musika* in Harare's densely populated suburbs attests to this.

Supermarkets near Mbare Musika do not sell fresh produce, and those that sell produce close to other *misika* in Harare struggle to sell it.<sup>649</sup> Produce sold at Mbare Musika is relatively cheap compared to supermarkets. Traders at Mbare Musika also sell in flexible quantities and work long hours, offering more convenience to urban families than what supermarkets do. A variety of vegetables and fruits are sold at the market contributing in many ways to a health diet of urban people. *Musika*, more importantly, offers unprocessed produce high in nutrients like vitamins and fibre important for a healthy diet. Indigeneous vegetables and fruits sold in Mbare Musika are in high demand for their health benefits, for instance, they assist in managing chronic diseases like high blood pressure.

Mbare Musika's actors regard themselves as business owners who enjoy the freedom that comes with entrepreneurship. Many are no longer interested in employment; they enjoyed

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<sup>646</sup> Interview, Ishewedu, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>647</sup> Interview, Kumbirai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>648</sup> BVTA, (2022), Press Statement on International Workers Day, @bvtatrust, [Twitter], 01 May, [accessed 01 May 2022] available from: <https://twitter.com/bvtatrust/status/1520809771389042688?t=4u2oVHfYulOAOs-c9EiFHw&s=19>

<sup>649</sup> This conclusion came from the observation I made in supermarkets close to Mbare Musika like OK Supermarket and other fresh produce markets around Harare. Produce in some supermarkets was turning bad while in their cold storages partly indicating their inability to compete with produce markets that sell at relatively low prices.



the benefits of being autonomous. Wiriranai affirmed that working independently is good for him since he can set his own standards and enjoys complete freedom.<sup>650</sup> Participants disapprove being employed and earning RTGS per month, which is eroded by inflation, whereas every day, they received US\$ in Mbare Musika. Some claim that, unlike employees, they can drink at any time of day, indicating their freedom from labour rules.<sup>651</sup>

Many factors contribute to the actors' successful stay in Mbare Musika. Some traders are said to use *muti* (luck charms) to succeed and make a lot of money. A trader indicated that he turned down a *muti* offer to increase his sales by an elder in his area.<sup>652</sup> The majority of respondents indicated that competence and resilience were critical to their businesses' survival. Many people in Mbare Musika practice what is known as *kuchokocha* (buying and selling) to make money. Hazvinei stated she remains resolute in produce trading since it is the only way she earns a living. She keeps her capital in the business and reinvests her profits. Even if it is little, it grows through stocking and selling.<sup>653</sup> Cheneso emphasised that *tinongohodha nekutengesa* (we simply stock and sell) to thrive.<sup>654</sup>

Actors encounter several difficulties when conducting their businesses. Their marketing responses and attitudes are shaped by these issues. A farmer stated that they face many difficulties and would never return to Mbare Musika if they considered them.<sup>655</sup> Lack of capital is a significant impediment, particularly for young and women traders. They lack the strong connections with farmers that established traders rely on to get produce on credit. According to a young potato dealer, they are aware that potato trading is a lucrative business, but they are hindered by lack of capital.<sup>656</sup> Most Mbare Musika actors have no access to banking services and therefore rely on friends and family for loans. Changamire declared,

As a vendor, there is nowhere I can knock on a door and get a loan, not even at a bank. I do not have any collateral. Despite having a bank account, I have never taken a loan. When times are tough, I get assistance from my neighbours and siblings.<sup>657</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>651</sup> Interview, Ngwarayi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>652</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.

<sup>653</sup> Interview, Hazvinei, Chizhanje, 2020. This quote was translated from a street lingo; (*Ndipo pega pandinokwanisa kutenderedza mari kuti ndiwane chouviri. Maprofits haadyiwe, mari yebasa haidyiwe. Chero ikaita shoma unopika uripabasa kuburikidza nekutenga more stuff*).

<sup>654</sup> Interview, Cheneso, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>655</sup> Interview, Murara, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>656</sup> Interview, Benjamin, Mai Mufaro Stadium, 2020.

<sup>657</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020.



Changamire occasionally works, bets on soccer, makes toys for children, and grows maize and beans to supplement his income. The Zimbabwe Women's Micro Finance Bank (ZWMB) launched a lending scheme in 2021 to help traders at Mbare Musika. The bank encountered certain difficulties while attempting to connect the loan facility with the needs of vendors.<sup>658</sup>

Insecurity in instances of illness is a big concern for actors at Mbare Musika. They support one another in times of sickness and death, but they nevertheless lose income during these tragic situations. The bulk of the actors have modest earnings and are unable to support their families during illness or upon death. Old people who are visibly fragile and unwell continue to work in Mbare Musika, showing a lack of insurance against old age or sickness. Muzvinabhizimusi, who is elderly and diabetic, complained of diarrhea one morning yet worked every day like any other trader.<sup>659</sup> Many people in Mbare Musika have no or little savings. The currency crisis also wiped out many actors' savings, further making them insecure.

Some actors, particularly young people, see *musika* as a temporary occupation while they look for jobs. They are at Mbare Musika not by choice, but due to difficulties in securing jobs. Changamire claims that:

In contrast to *musika*, a formal job offers some security. *Musika* gets sick if I become sick. When it rains, *musika* gets soaked. I want a job where I will be paid, have health and life insurance, and can earn even if I am absent due to illness. I am unable to pay for the services with my vending earnings.<sup>660</sup>

In my follow-up interviews, I found that two of my original interlocutors had left Mbare Musika after getting jobs elsewhere. Many are hoping for the economic crisis to end so they can get jobs. Some are getting driver's licenses to look for jobs.<sup>661</sup>

It is impossible to control supplies because all produce ready for market is delivered promptly, resulting in gluts. A potato trader remarked that market fluctuations create a great deal of uncertainty, occasionally bankrupting us. I work with perishable produce; sometimes a whole

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<sup>658</sup> C., Dhewa, (2022), Women as accelerators of financial inclusions-case of Knowledge Transfer Africa, and Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank. @eMKambo Facebook Page, [Twitter], 14 March, [accessed 14 March 2022], available from: <https://twitter.com/eMKambo/status/1503276275212771329?t=5ll803ejb1i7e-IgwDAhhw&s=19>

<sup>659</sup> Interview, Muzvinabhizimusi, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>660</sup> Interview, Changamire, Damofalls, 2020. In a follow up interview, I found Changamire was no longer operating *musika*. He was employed as a cook at a Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>661</sup> In a follow-up interview with Ishewedu, his son Lesly was doing driving lessons.



truck of potatoes can spoil in my hands.<sup>662</sup> Storage facilities are poor with many vendors keeping their produce at home, sometimes in their bedrooms. Mirirai stated:

The most serious challenge we face is that we deal with perishable produce and sell in open markets where produce easily go bad. Even at home, I do not have a refrigerator. When the market is slow, it is difficult to keep produce fresh, and often considerable quantities go to waste. I sell onions with roots to plant them if they are not bought, and I also plant potatoes when they sprout shoots. I own a field where I grow some of the vegetables I sell.<sup>663</sup>

She threw away sliced watermelon that had turned bad while I was interviewing her. The lack of storage facilities is a big setback in Mbare Musika, aggravating post-harvest produce losses and costing farmers a lot of income. Mbare Musika's drainage infrastructure is also poor. It becomes muddy and impassable during the wet season. Actors complained about the mud, rotten produce, and walking on maggots.

## 9.7. Conclusion

Mbare Musika is significant in Harare and many people's lives. As Zimbabwe's economic crisis continues to expose many people to poverty, Mbare Musika grew from being a scorned market to a revered market. Many farmers and urbanites rely on it for unprocessed food and incomes. Thousands of farmers sell their produce at Mbare Musika because it is easily accessible and convenient compared to contract buyers and supermarkets outlets. They are drawn to Mbare Musika by a huge produce demand due to Harare's high population, absent in small towns closer to where they farm. Also, at Mbare Musika large amounts of cash circulate and farmers get immediate cash payments. When compared to other market channels, the market accepts all produce grades and absorbs large quantities. Some farmers sold at Mbare Musika for many decades, and their children took over the businesses from their parents. Farmers face significant impediments at Mbare Musika, but they continue to market through it. They adopted several strategies to improve their chances of selling and increasing their incomes.

Urban people who rely on Mbare Musika have multiple and complex stories. Many people joined Mbare Musika because they were unable to find jobs in the formal economy. Job opportunities in Harare are shrinking against rapid urbanisation. Following the adoption of

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<sup>662</sup> Interview, Wiriranai, Mbare Musika, 2020.

<sup>663</sup> Interview, Mirirai, Ruwa, 2020. While I was at her street corner, she threw away sliced watermelons that she failed to sell the previous day.





ESAP in 1990, the economy stagnated, and unemployment in Harare skyrocketed. Many people were laid off, and inflation set in. Following the unprecedented economic downturn that peaked in 2008, many people became even poorer. Millions of people were impoverished by the hyperinflation, and they relied on *musika* for survival. Mbare Musika sustained many lives and prevented starvation even a famine by making food accessible at affordable prices.

Some families have maintained several generations doing business in Mbare Musika, and marketing produce has become their way of life. Established market participants assisted new entrants with expertise, capital, contacts, and trading places. Mbare Musika helped many urban participants to support their families. They are proud to have sent their children to school with *musika* earnings. The market cultivates entrepreneurship, and many people saved and invested money from *musika* to become successful business owners. Earnings from *musika* vary, many people go well beyond survivalist operations and save money and accumulates important business skills. These accomplishments explain people's continuous presence in Mbare Musika and contribute to the market's overall resilience. Mbare Musika has many challenges that need to be solved to improve it, especially its infrastructure and waste management. Nevertheless, its buoyancy and vital historical and current role in food security is indelible despite its continued invisibility in policy making and scholarship.



## 10. Chapter Ten: Discussions and Conclusions. Mbare Musika; Resilience and Functioning

*At Mbare Musika...fresh produce changes hands through disorganised, fragmented, and not-so-transparent value chains, most of the times, undermining the farmer...While places like Mbare Musika are notorious for chaos and insecurity, the new farmers market (Aspindale Farmers Market) is a break from the old way of doing things where markets were seen to be dingy and derelict (Emmanuel Kafe).<sup>664</sup>*

*...I taught in Domboshawa in the [19]90s never will you see the tomatoe farmers struggling for food. I remember very well that our students' two trips a week to Mbare Musika was equivalent to a teacher's monthly salary (sic) (Stanford).<sup>665</sup>*

### 10.1. Introduction

The quotes above demonstrate how different people perceive Mbare Musika. The media's and many scholars' perceptions of the market as chaotic, fragmented, and disorganised do not reconcile with Mbare Musika's resilience and effective functioning. The key actors in the market, whose opinions are often concealed, portray the market largely as a source of food and income. I found that Mbare Musika is at the core of food security, food supplies and income generation in Harare as the formal economy continues to eject millions of people. *Musika* demonstrates how the economy may be democratised to benefit many disadvantaged people. The market has evolved from a despised market to an integral aspect of many people, agriculture, and the broader economy in Zimbabwe. In this chapter, I recap the key findings on Mbare Musika, connecting my findings to theory, literature. This thesis documents Mbare Musika's past and contemporary roles in feeding a growing urban population, as well as identifying its potential future roles. I draw links between Mbare Musika and similar markets in Africa and believe that some of the lessons presented in this thesis may be of interest and value to those studying and working with markets in other countries.

### 10.2. Discussions

This is a thesis based on historical and ethnographic research. It investigates the history of Mbare Musika from 1930 to 2019 and historicises Mbare Musika's contemporary structures, relations, and practices. The history and contemporary developments in Mbare Musika tell a

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<sup>664</sup> E., Kafe, (2019), Market structures need face lift. Sundaymail, [accessed 22 June 2022], available from: <https://www.pressreader.com/zimbabwe/the-sunday-mail-zimbabwe/20190210/20181917364333460>

<sup>665</sup> Biti Stanford, (2020), @ZANUPFOfficial destruction I taught in Domboshawa...@BitiStanford, [Twitter], 10 May 2020, [accessed 20 May 2022], available from: [https://twitter.com/BitiStanford/status/1259585159780802560?t=QoxYUqweqbP3T\\_LKT4rqiw&s=19](https://twitter.com/BitiStanford/status/1259585159780802560?t=QoxYUqweqbP3T_LKT4rqiw&s=19)



more positive narrative than the common negative one. Mbare Musika is a robust, well-organised market making a significant contribution to people's lives, agriculture, and the entire economy. I argue that Mbare Musika has a deep-seated order based on *ukama* and trust that, although invisible to many analysts, contributes to its resilience and functioning. Mbare Musika emerged during the colonial period and endured various social, economic, political, policy, and environmental changes. Mbare Musika was built by African farmers and traders in response to the rising food demand following the growth of the city of Harare. The rapid urbanisation of Harare continues to sustain Mbare Musika and all efforts to suppress it have failed since its formative years during the colonial era. The elimination of *musika* failed over the years mainly because it is integral to people's lives, urban food security and urban development. Actors in *musika* view their activities as moral and legitimate and see no justification in state interventions against them.

Mbare Musika is almost invisible in the Zimbabwean historiography and policy discourses despite it being an invaluable horticultural market. Mbare Musika is an important food market that shaped Harare's development and Zimbabwe's agrarian and agricultural development. Surprisingly, since the colonial era, the state was not directly involved in its development except through the municipalities of Salisbury and Harare. The absence of written sources on *musika* swayed scholarship away from it, prolonging its invisibility. The few written sources available entrench the negative allegations against *musika* and say little about its significant contribution to urban food security. This thesis makes a modest contribution to Zimbabwean agrarian and urban food history by giving new historical and ethnographic evidence that shows the invaluable role of *musika* in urban food security, produce marketing and agricultural development. It also refreshes the old debate on the role of market and non-market forces in economic organisation.

The thesis is based on historical and ethnographical sources. It is evidence that history is more than written sources. It uses oral histories and ethnography to bridge the dearth in written documents on Mbare Musika. Observations, small talks, interviews are vital research tools that yield rich narratives about the past and current realities. They give a voice to ordinary participants in *musika* that too often have their voices silenced in official narratives. Through these sources, I was able to give a voice to ordinary participants in Mbare Musika. I was able



to capture the activities of actors beyond what people are made to believe from official narratives.

This thesis underscores the central position of Mbare Musika in urban people's lives. Mbare Musika provides people with affordable food especially as the economic crisis continued to erode incomes and wages. Mbare Musika also offers income earning opportunities to many people who fail to find jobs in the formal economy. Mbare Musika saved Harare from exploding as a result of deepening poverty by offering people access to affordable food and incomes to buy food. It also served the country's horticultural sector and farmers' incomes by providing an accessible and reliable market. Mbare Musika is a cornerstone of the country's horticultural industry, urban food security, and the fight against poverty and marginalisation.

I found the human economy that shapes my study present in Mbare Musika. Following Hart (2010) I found that ordinary people understand their interests and the significance of their activities better than outside specialists who claim to speak for them. Actors in Mbare Musika, especially the marginalised women and youth, do not sit back and fold their hands; instead, they continue to push themselves into the cracks of the conventional economic system to grab opportunities to earn incomes and cope with inequality and worsening urban challenges. Vambe (2007) convincingly remarks that urban residents are not helpless victims of urban difficulties; the rise of Harare offered opportunities that marginalised people exploited to gain some form of dignity and for survival. Actors in Mbare Musika continue to shape the market and economy through their daily actions as emphasised human economy thinking (Hart, Leville, and Cattani 2010).

The thesis gives fresh evidence to the debate on the role of economic and non-economic forces in economic action. Unlike the economists' model that emphasises individualism, self-interests, rational actors, anonymous individuals, and unfettered markets, I find that non-economic forces are more important in Mbare Musika. As Polanyi and Granovetter argue, economic action is embedded in social relations. Also, as Wegerif notes in his study of Dar es Salaam, that competition exists alongside collaboration and cooperation in markets and food systems. Collaboration and competition are not necessarily opposing forces; rather, they coexist (Gambetta 1988). Trust and *ukama*, what some theorists call social capital, are important in the functioning and organisation of Mbare Musika. I argue that *ukama* and trust form the glue that sticks Mbare Musika together and accounts for its resilience.



The thesis brings more empirical evidence to support the idea of a symbiotic food system (Wegerif 2020). The symbiotic food system builds on the idea that economic action is embedded in social ties. I borrow this idea to analyse the networks in Mbare Musika and coined the idea of a symbiotic food market. In a symbiotic food market, participants self-organise into networks based on trust and *ukama* that benchmark cooperation, collaboration and reciprocity. Trust and *ukama* are essential in many mutual aid arrangements in a symbiotic food market reflected in Mbare Musika. These are important resources that actors rely on and account for actors' and Mbare Musika's overall success. A symbiotic food market is driven by both economic and sociocultural goals. People in a symbiotic market want to make money, but profit is not the only or even main driving force of economic action. The marketplace is a space where social relations are nurtured and Mbare Musika is entrenched in its actors' lives.

Trust is central to transactions in Mbare Musika and is a social lubricant that promotes production and exchange in the absence of written contracts between transacting parties (Dasgupta 1988, Fukuyama 1995). *Kuvimba* (trust) is important in building a good reputation and for the success of *musika* enterprises. Chapter Six and Seven demonstrate the importance of trust in transactions. Produce is offered on credit to known and trusted people. Actors also developed their credit and loan systems that rely on trust and *ukama*. Contrary to the way they are often seen as exploitative and manipulative, traders and *makoronyera* value a good reputation and use that reputation to build huge networks of farmers and buyers that are essential for their success.

Actors in Mbare Musika display symbiotic relationships through practices such as gifting, reciprocity, and mutually beneficial exchanges. Greedy and self-interests are marginal forces in Mbare Musika. Actors organise themselves into groups to overcome operational challenges. This form of organisation seeks to benefit all members of the group. Chapter Six highlights the role of *ukama* in the organisation of Mbare Musika; for example, people from Buhera who sell potatoes organised themselves into a group known as *maBuhera* and collaborate in many ways. Related and trusting actors established funeral clubs and savings clubs that benefit all members of the group. These solidarity networks contribute to the effective function and resilience of Mbare Musika.

The dual marketing system that was implemented by the colonial state survived and continues to influence the operation of Mbare Musika. Mosley (1987) asserts that the division of races



into white and non-white has significant implications on food marketing in Salisbury. Many African farmers continue to find difficulties in marketing their produce in corporate markets and Mbare Musika is a viable alternative. Mosley (1987) notes colonial systems of segregation, subsidies paid to inefficient white farmers, and low wages paid to Africans suppressed the food market in Salisbury. In response to these systems that excluded them, Africans built *musika* as an alternative source of food and marketing that proved to be effective.

I document that, soon after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the Harare Council expanded market infrastructure as part of the effort to rectify colonial injustices. The council maintained that Mbare Musika was critical since it provided food, income, and jobs to the poor, women, and youth. The market was expanded to accommodate more farmers and traders to address the rising practice of street vending, a concern to council officials since the colonial period. Several people's markets were built in practically all Harare suburbs to clear vendors from streets. Partly through municipal authorities' support, *musika* was integrated into urban food markets in Harare. *Musika* is widespread and a common feature of Harare's urban landscape today.

Chapter Five demonstrates the intensification of politics in Mbare Musika after 2000 when the ruling ZANU-PF first felt their power threatened. The political battles between ZANU-PF and MDC (later the MDC-Alliance and Citizens Coalition for Change-CCC) for the control of Harare had a significant impact on *musika*. The council claims that ZANU-PF is purposefully undermining its efforts by refusing to release budgets and interfering with the market for political mileage. ZANU-PF groups like Chipangano and land barons interfered in the running of Mbare Musika, rendering it ungovernable. They allocated stalls, collected revenue, and physically assaulted council officials on duty. Alleged MDC supporters were expelled from the market, while loyal members were rewarded with stalls and powers to collect revenue. On the other hand, ZANU-PF blamed the opposition run councils for maladministration, poor service delivery in markets as seen by poor waste management and deteriorating market infrastructure at Mbare Musika. Clean-up operations that peaked with Operation Murambatsvina undermined the operation of *musika*. The power struggles between the ruling and opposition political parties sustained uncertainties about the future position of *musika* in Harare.



It has been argued by some academics that Africa is experiencing a rapid expansion of supermarkets to cover many parts where they were absent before in what is dubbed a 'supermarket revolution' (Crush and Frayne 2011, Weatherspoon et.al 2004, Goldman et.al 1999). Weatherspoon et.al (2004) remark that supermarkets are shifting from being a niche for high-income urban people to serving the poor. They believe that supermarkets are becoming the primary source of fresh produce due to rapid urbanisation, a growing middle class, and the excellent quality of the produce they offer. Weatherspoon and Reardon (2003) asserted that supermarkets would influence the marketing of fresh produce in Africa and would be significant in alleviating poverty among small-scale farmers.

Battersby and Watson (2018) disagree with this view and found that traditional markets remain dominant in fresh produce marketing in cities in Southern Africa. This is consistent with the the CSM's (2016) findings that 'territorial' markets remain important in linking farmers to markets and can potentially increase their incomes. The much touted global 'value chains' perceived as modern, profitable, efficient, and necessary for development actually subject farmers to inequity, debt, and precarity (CSM 2016). Supermarkets source produce from large commercial farmers and offer few opportunities for small-scale farmers to market their produce. Weatherspoon and Reardon (2003) balance their conclusion by recognising that supermarkets' market share for fresh produce remains modest and that traditional markets are dynamic and continue to dominate fresh produce marketing. My research shows that Mbare Musika, just like 'traditional' markets in other cities, such as in Lusaka (Abrahams 2009) and Dar es Salaam (Wegerif 2020), remains the main source of produce for the urban poor despite the presence of supermarkets like Pick n Pay, Spar, Ok Zimbabwe, Food Lovers, Bon Marche etc. in Harare.

*Musika* remains a backbone in the urban food economy (Tawodzerwa 2023) mainly because the middle class is shrinking and real incomes are falling, forcing many people to go for cheaper food. Supermarkets are unattractive to many of the urban poor because they are centralised and charged higher prices for produce compared to *musika*. Mupedziswa and Gumbo (1998) note the shift towards cheap food stuffs in Harare due to declining real incomes since ESAP. According to Bernstein (2010), the food produced presently can feed the whole world population, but because of marketing problems especially in global value chains many people go hungry. Crush and Frayne (2011) emphasise that the primary objective of supermarkets is



to make profits and not reduce food insecurity of the urban poor. *Musika* contributes immensely in countering this trend by keeping prices low making produce affordable and accessible to the poor.

The viability of food systems is linked to how food is sourced and traded (Tawodzerwa 2023). Mbare Musika has remained dominant in produce supplies in Harare because it attracts many farmers and buyers. Farmers are attracted mainly because it has favourable payment systems and is big and easily accessible. Low incomes limit food access among the poor urban people (Crush and Frayne 2011). Mbare Musika works for low-income earners since it has a wide range quality and unprocessed produce sold at relatively low prices. The big network of *misika* linked to Mbare Musika distributes large volumes of produce quickly contributing to Mbare Musika's competitiveness. *Musika* is linked to the whole economy and many supermarkets procure produce from Mbare Musika (Battersby et.al 2016). Improving infrastructure, hygiene, cleanliness, and storage facilities would bolster the position of Mbare Musika as the centre for fresh produce supplies in Zimbabwe.

Women play an important role in Mbare Musika. Chapter Eight is dedicated to the stories of women in Mbare Musika, some of whom began marketing as young girls. Women are dominant in *musika* mainly because they are marginalised by both the capitalist economic system and patriarchal sociocultural norms. Mbare Musika offers women a chance to enter the outside sphere to generate incomes to meet their reproductive and food provisioning roles. Chamlee-Wright (2002) asserts that due to the complex web of emancipating and oppressive forces that women in Zimbabwe face, they had to find strategies for survival and economic empowerment. Women's activities in *musika* contribute immensely in cushioning many urban families from food insecurity and poverty due to inadequate wages and shrinking job opportunities common in Harare's conventional economy. Their income, for instance, contributes much towards meeting the food needs of their families in the ongoing economic crisis.

Because of women's dominance in Mbare Musika, produce trading was at first portrayed as women's work and inconsequential. This perspective changed as incomes earned by women in *musika* became increasingly important in families amidst rising unemployment and falling wages in the formal economy as the economic crisis continues unabated. The economic activities and income levels of actors at Mbare Musika cannot be generalised or regarded as





simply survivalist or hand-to-mouth. Chamlee-Wright (2002) observes that even among women selling similar produce, the success range is staggering. Some women earn enough to live comfortably, while many can pay for basic needs such as shelter and food. Women suffer a lot of marginalisation and harassment in Mbare Musika, but their incomes enhanced their socioeconomic and political status.

Mbare Musika is popular for several reasons. Farmers are attracted to Mbare Musika mainly because of its huge population that translates into a huge market and they can sell quickly. Farmers also highlight the difficulties in connecting to corporate supply chains and the unfavourable terms corporate buyers offer. Mbare Musika offers cash payments and is easily accessible and reliable. Urban people are attracted by the opportunities in Mbare Musika. Millions of dollars circulate at Mbare Musika and this attracts the huge crowd and powerful people. Scoones (2015) notes that Mbare Musika is a bright spot in a depressed economy.

The role of *makoronyera* in Mbare Musika, as with ‘middlemen’ and agents elsewhere, is controversial. *Makoronyera* literally means con artist in shona, but it evolved to mean soothing complex in *musika*. This thesis defines *makoronyera* as farmers’ agents who sell on behalf of farmers for a commission. I attempt to distinguish them from other actors at Mbare Musika including traders in farmers’ markets. In their formative years *makoronyera* were violent and exploitative and short changed farmers. I concur with Matondi, who in a youtube interview, states that *makoronyera* are a necessary link in Mbare Musika and they do not make a lot of money at the expense of farmers. They often earned between US\$5 to US\$10 after selling all day.<sup>666</sup> I argue that *makoronyera* contribute immensely to connecting farmers to urban markets and ensuring urban food security. They finance farming, carry out marketing, circulate information, offer credit to traders, and take a great risk in holding and transporting perishable produce. Their role is invaluable to the growth of agriculture, the protection of farmers from exploitation, and reducing losses.

Mbare Musika has a lot of things that should be improved to consolidate its position in Harare’s food supplies. Chapter Five notes the poor infrastructure, high level of produce waste, poor waste management, and poor service delivery as problems that undermine the operation and status of Mbare Musika. Chapter Nine also underscores the absence of

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<sup>666</sup> Prosper Matondi (2021), Prosper Matondi climate change activist. [Youtube], In conversation with Trevor, 21 June, [accessed 15 April 2023], available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mFRu3eZ85I>



accommodation and clean and accessible toilets as a major problem. Mbare Musika is often viewed as a red (danger) zone in times of pandemic outbreaks, though no solid link is established between the market and spread of diseases to substantiate the concerns. There are also exploitative practices, such as overcharging buyers by *machanga*, harassment of farmers who chose to sell independently, and sub-standard packaging that scares away some farmers and buyers. These factors sustain the negative views of Mbare Musika and undermine its potential role in urban food supplies and food security.

### **10.3. Lessons from Mbare Musika**

Rapid urbanisation in many countries, particularly in Africa, is accompanied by declining opportunities for advancement in the formal economy. It is against this backdrop that food markets like Mbare Musika emerged, evolved, and continued to thrive. According to Myers and Murray (2006), rather than being perceived as a euphemism for urban marginality with just survivalist purposes, these markets serve as platforms for meeting both individual needs and collective aspirations. Myers and Murray (2006) further stress that *musika* should be viewed as a unique path of development and that they play a crucial role in African urbanisation.

*Musika* rise naturally from people's needs and later became focal points of economic activity; they have stronger social values and have had a long link with human life (Nam 2013). Mbare Musika, like many other similar markets, link small-scale farmers, who otherwise frequently struggle to sell their produce, to the urban market. Mbare Musika is the major market for small-scale farmers and can serve as a springboard for improving farmers' incomes and promoting rural development. According to Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008), the produce trade in Accra provides avenues for young people and women to make a living in the face of rising poverty, and it has the potential to alleviate poverty and unemployment. In Cameroon, women's incomes became significant in supporting families following the fall in the cocoa industry dominated by men (Guyer 1987). Mbare Musika also contributes to entrepreneurship and skills development which are essential for future economic growth and development. Officials should reconsider and base their interventions in *musika* on consultations given its essential role.

As noted in other countries, *musika* is significant in urban food security and food supplies to the rapidly growing cities, in this case the city of Harare and other towns in Zimbabwe. For



instance, Porter et.al. (2007), notes that Nigeria and Ghana have significant traditional marketing systems that connect diverse regions and have remained critical to urban food supplies. Guyer's (1987) conclusion that small-scale, diversified production and market trade fed Yaounde at a lower cost with narrower margins that large corporations are not prepared to accept reflects the functioning of Mbare Musika. Mbare Musika is a reliable source of food and it endured even the hyperinflation (2008) era when many corporates were closing their doors due to dropping profit margins. Guyer (1987) emphasises that artisanal system remain significance in feeding African cities. *Musika* is likewise a resilient and a reliable way to feed people in Harare, and will form the basis for urban food security and food supplies in the foreseeable future.

*Musika* offers urban people unprocessed and indigenous produce valued for their health benefits. Kazembe et.al (2017) conducted a household survey in Namibia and found that people purchase most staples from supermarkets and *musika* is the source of healthier foods such as vegetables and fruits bought regularly in small quantities. Likewise many people from poor suburbs in Harare rely on *misika* for fruits and vegetables. *Musika* is a core aspect of urban life in poor suburbs in Harare. It is an invaluable source of food and incomes for a growing population. As Kazembe et.al (2017) argue eradicating *musika* would increase hardships to many families and worsen nutritional challenges. The history of Mbare Musika has shown that produce marketing is integral to many people's lives and it is immoral to eliminate it. Eliminating *musika* without offering an alternative would expose many urban poor to malnutrition, starvation and increase the possibilities of a famine.

African markets should be viewed through an African gaze that appreciates their nature and operation. According to Lyon (2003), the first impression of Southern Ghana's urban food markets is typically one of chaos and disarray, but below this, there is a wide range of complex economic and social institutions influencing urban food supplies and reducing market prices. Lyon (2005) states that *Susu* group members built trust through working together in the market for many years and cooperate, keep verbal agreements and reciprocate action based on cultural norms. Mbare Musika is also structured around trust (*kuvimbika*) and kinship (*ukama*)-based social networks that encourage cooperation and collaboration. Many analysts miss this structure and perpetuate negative ideas about African markets rather than constructively criticising them. Many African markets have real challenges, but that should not



become a justification to eradicate them. An African gaze at *musika* assists in appreciating *musika*'s invaluable role to food security, women's empowerment, and agricultural and overall economic development. An African gaze at *musika* would shift interventions towards improving their operations instead of dismissing or undermining them.

#### **10.4. Conclusion**

The main aim of this thesis is to explain Mbare Musika's resilience and how it has been feeding people in Harare and beyond. I challenge the view that Mbare Musika is chaotic, disorganised, and fragmented. Mbare Musika has grown from being an illegitimate market during the colonial period to become the centre of fresh produce marketing in Zimbabwe. I document the history of Mbare Musika that shows phenomenal growth and resilience in the face of opportunities and challenges. I argue that Mbare Musika has a deep-seated order built around *ukama* and trust, invisible to many casual observers that contribute to its structure, functionality, and overall resilience. Mbare Musika resembles a symbiotic food system in which actors collaborate and cooperate in many ways to achieve their individual interests. In Mbare Musika, social relations are important in shaping its structure and functioning. People want to make money, but they do not value their activities or the marketplace in an economic and profit sense only. People go to the market even when it makes no economic sense to fulfil social and reproductive functions.

Mbare Musika continues to be invaluable in urban food supplies and food security, as a place for entrepreneurship opportunities and income generation. It is an invaluable market for farmers. It became even more central in Harare since the 1990s due to the persistent economic crisis that worsened poverty and unemployment, and eroded wages. Women in *musika* play an important role in food supplies to their families and Harare, though their efforts remain invisible. They uplifted their economic, political, and social status through earnings from Mbare Musika. Mbare Musika groomed popular entrepreneurs and can be a rallying point for business development in the future. Mbare Musika, by being open to all, has promoted greater equality, in particular for all farmers to access markets and for the poor and the rich to access healthy food. The market demonstrated resilience and adapted quickly to opportunities and crises. More importantly, Mbare Musika fed millions of vulnerable urban people and for that reason it is likely to play a significant role in urban food security in the future amidst rapid urbanisation and deepening poverty in Harare.



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- Interview, Changamire, satellite trader. Damofalls, 19 July 2020.
- Interview, Cheneso, trader. Mbare Musika, 20 September 2020.
- Interview, Chief, trader. Mbare Musika, 28 November 2020.
- Interview, Chitsa, farmer. Mbare Musika, 04 November 2020.
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- Interview, Joyce, satellite Trader. Ride-along from Mbare Musika to Ruwa, 13 July 2020.
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- Interview, Kandiro, food eater. Harare, 16 September 2020.



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## Appendix



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomothe



19 October 2021

Dear Mr S Hahlani

<b>Project Title:</b>	An Actor Oriented History of Mbare Musika Fresh Produce Market, Zimbabwe 1930-2019
<b>Researcher:</b>	Mr S Hahlani
<b>Supervisor(s):</b>	Dr MCA Wegerif
<b>Department:</b>	Anthropology and Archaeology
<b>Reference number:</b>	19408120 (HUM043/1019)
<b>Degree:</b>	Doctoral

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 19 October 2021. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

**Prof Karen Harris**  
**Chair: Research Ethics Committee**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**  
**e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za**



HUMAN CAPITAL DEPARTMENT  
TOWN HOUSE, HARARE, ZIMBABWE  
POST OFFICE BOX 990  
TELEPHONE 752979 / 753000

EMAIL: [hcd@hararecity.co.zw](mailto:hcd@hararecity.co.zw)  
ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE HUMAN CAPITAL DIRECTOR

CITY OF HARARE

January 14, 2020

University of Pretoria  
Private Bag X20  
Hatfield 0028  
South Africa

Dear Stephen Hahlani

**RE: AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH: STEPHEN HAHLANI**

This letter serves as authority for Stephen Hahlani to undertake a research survey on the topic: "AN ACTOR ORIENTED HISTORY OF MBARE MUSIKA FRESH PRODUCE MARKET,ZIMBABWE 1930-2019".

The City of Harare has no financial obligation and neither shall it render any further assistance in the conduct of the research. The researcher is however requested to avail a soft and hard copy of the research to the undersigned so that residents of Harare can benefit out of it. The research should not be used for any other purpose other than the study purpose specified.

Yours faithfully

  
RTD MAJOR M. MARARA  
ACTING HUMAN CAPITAL DIRECTOR

Harare to achieve a WORLD CLASS CITY STATUS by 2025



All correspondence should be addressed to

"THE SECRETARY"

Telephone: 706081/9  
Fax: 734646  
Telex: ZIM AGRIC: 22455 ZW



MINISTRY OF LANDS,  
AGRICULTURE, WATER AND  
RURAL RESETTLEMENT  
Ngungunyana Building  
1, Borrowdale Road  
Private Bag 7701  
Causeway  
Harare

Ref: J-122

Mr Stephen Hahlani  
Department of Anthropology and Archaeology  
University of Pretoria  
Private Bag X 20  
Hatfield 0028  
South Africa

07 January 2020

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH: MR STEPHEN  
HAHLANI: UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA: SOUTH AFRICA**

Reference is made to your letter dated 13 September 2019 on the above subject.

It is noted that you are enrolled for a PhD in Development Studies at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Your proposed thesis title is "An actor oriented history of Mbare Musika Produce Market, Zimbabwe 1930-2019". It is further noted that you are requesting for authority to undertake observations and conduct face to face interviews with participants at Mbare Musika, with representatives from this Ministry and selected workers.

In view of the above, I as the Head of Ministry, I hereby grant you authority to conduct the research. However, you are also advised to seek authority from City of Harare and Ministry of Local Government which administers all local authorities.

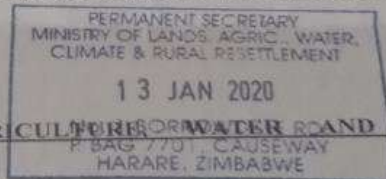
Please be advised that the information collected during data collection or data generation should be used for academic purposes only.

Further, upon completion of your research you are required to submit a bound copy of the full final research report to this Ministry.

*Dr J. Basera*  
Dr J. Basera

**SECRETARY FOR LANDS, AGRICULTURE, WATER AND RURAL  
RESETTLEMENT**

Cc File



Appendix 3 Approval Letter Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement.



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON NATIONAL VENDORS UNION  
ZIMBABWE MEMBERSHIP (STEPHEN HAHLANI)

This letter serves to confirm that Stephen Hahlani from the University of Pretoria South Africa has been granted permission to carry out a survey on the National Vendors Union Zimbabwe Membership.

The study is part of an integral component towards fulfilling the requirements for PHD programme.

The authority is given in the spirit and understanding that the findings of the survey will be used specifically for the purposes of the objects of the study.

Your support as an informal economy worker is hereby solicited. Kindly assist in any way possible for him to realise his research endeavors.

Thank you

Duly signed



Alphonse Haruzivishe  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
0772429710



Appendix 4 Approval Letter National Vendors Union Zimbabwe (NAVUZ).



to thank you for your time and consenting to play a part in documenting the history of such an important institution. Don't feel compelled to answer all the questions I will ask in the interview.

**Research guide for primary actors**

**Questions**

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where do you come from/stay?
4. Is that the place where you were born? (If born outside the town, when and why did you move to Harare?).
5. What is your marital status?
6. For how long have you been operating here?
7. What were you doing before you came here?
8. Why did you leave what you were doing before and what made you take the current role?
9. What are the requirements for operating at Mbare Musika?
10. Do you own the place you use and are you guaranteed of its use?
11. What is your role and what are your duties at the market?
12. Have you changed roles at the market since you joined the market?
13. How did you start your business?
14. Did you get any assistance in starting your business? If yes, from where and in what form?
15. How often do you visit the Mbare Musika and what do you do in preparation of your visit?
16. Do you come alone or with other people at the Mbare market? Why do you come alone (with others)?
17. How do you come and leave the market?
18. Where and from who do you buy your stock? Why do you buy from them?
19. Who do you sell to? Why do you think they buy from you?
20. Why do you buy from/sell your produce at the market?
21. How do you set prices for your produce?
22. What are the precautions, if any you take when you are moving around the market?
23. Do you work alone or you work with others?
24. How do you relate with your suppliers and customers?
25. What do you like about your buying and selling at Mbare Musika?
26. What are the good and bad times that you witnessed since you started participating at Mbare Musika?
27. What are the positive and negative issues that affected your business since you started?
28. Do you think you can stay at the market for longer?
29. What is the contribution of Mbare Musika to your life?
30. What are the economic and social success or failures that you have made at the market?
31. What are the factors that make you to win more customers and sell more or lose customers and sell less?

**Conclusion:**

Thank you for taking part in the interview. I would be glad if you are free to share with me your contact details for I may want to get in touch should I want more information on any of the issues you have shared with me.

**Annex ii**

**Interview Guide for Key Informants:**

**Greeting:**

**Introduction:**

I am Stephen Hahlani, a PhD in Development Studies student at the University of Pretoria. I am doing research on the history of Mbare Musika to gain insights into its origins, growth, organisation and what it means to participants. My proposed title is; "The growth and operation of Mbare Musika, Harare in Zimbabwe 1930-2019". I want to thank you for your time and consenting to play a part in documenting the history of such an important institution and supporting my doctoral studies. Don't feel compelled to answer all the questions I will ask in the interview.

**Questions**

1. What is your name and how old are you?
2. What is your profession?
3. How long have you been working in this capacity?
4. What are your duties/responsibilities?
5. What is the nature of your contact with fresh produce markets?
6. Do you have any direct involvement with Mbare Musika?
7. If you are directly involved, what are the trends and challenges you have seen?
8. In your view, what is the role played by Mbare Musika in promoting agriculture and food supply?
9. What are the policy issues around the operation of Mbare Musika?
10. In your view are they the ideal food provisioning systems that the urban areas should have?
11. What are the trends in the growth of operation of Mbare Musika?
12. What are the factors behind these growth trends?
14. What are your policy interventions in the marketing of fresh produce in urban

areas?

15. What motivates these policy interventions and how has these motives vary over time?
16. How do you design and implement policies and how has this change over time?
17. How have food system actors been responding to these policy interventions?
18. How successful has been these policies in improving the food markets and supply of food in Harare?
19. What are the policy gaps and how are they being addressed?
20. How do you work with other key stakeholders in urban food marketing and supplies?
21. How has fresh produce marketing contributed to the economy, society and overall development?
22. What is the future of urban provisioning like in Zimbabwe?

**Conclusion:**

Thank you for dedicating your precious time to this interview session. I am really grateful for supporting my studies and in the documentation of the history of an institution that formed part of our work/lives.