

# **Living on the Periphery and Challenges of Mobility: a Tale of Transport-Induced Social Exclusion in Southlea Park, Harare, Zimbabwe**

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## **Abstract**

This article explores how geographical location contributes to the social exclusion of communities on the fringes of the city. It uses a case study of Southlea Park, a low-income settlement on the southern periphery of Harare in Zimbabwe, to highlight the conditions contributing to lack of adequate transport, and thus, creating barriers to mobility. It draws data from a 6-month ethnographic study to show how lack of adequate transport and road infrastructure and the high costs of commuting have contributed to the social exclusion of residents, whose access to opportunities outside the community has been severely constrained. Based on these results, it argues that geographical location is a major factor contributing to transport disadvantages of communities on the periphery of Harare, and indeed, other cities in Zimbabwe, and thus, perpetuates their exclusion from the broader economy. It concludes by alluding to the policy implications of the study.

## **Keywords**

Peri-urban; Transport; Accessible transportation; Social exclusion; Harare; Zimbabwe

## **Introduction**

In most development countries, the cities have grown dramatically over recent decades, in large part due to natural factors, such as migration (Aerni, 2016; Lee, 2015; UN DESA, 2014). The growth of these cities has often been accompanied by associated challenges of uncontrolled settlements and development of shantytowns or slum area (Sinclair, 2019). Since developing country cities have struggled to cope with the challenges of urban growth and migration, the International Organisation of Migration has argued that the 'issue should be at the frontline of urban planning and sustainable development' (Aerni, 2016: 2). For most developing countries, these challenges come with associated challenges of management, which are further amplified by questions around demographic data and fluidity in how urbanity is defined (Frey & Zimmer, 2001), as well as the complexity of what really constitutes urbanity (Cohen, 2004). With rapid urban growth, also comes an expansion of the urban into the peri-urban sphere, which in turn, pushes the peri-urban into what was the rural (see Thebe & Rakotje, 2013) .

The new peri-urban communities that sometimes mushroom clandestinely and are mostly home to the poor, are distance from the CBD, and have weak to very weak connectivity to the urban associated with 'inadequate enabling infrastructure' (Dutta, 2012: 278). Because of these challenges, mobility of these communities to the CBD, where economic activities take place, becomes a significant constraint as their access to accessible transportation is hampered, which in turn leads to their social exclusion (Lucas, 2010, 2011; Hernandez & Titheridge, 2016; Uteng & Lucas, 2018). Accessible transportation is associated with the independent living of individuals and facilitates inclusiveness, allowing individuals choice and freedom of mobility (Somenahalli et al., 2016; Suen and Mitchell, 1999).

The City of Harare, Zimbabwe's capital is a typical case of a rapidly urbanising city, due to its attraction as a centre of economic activity, administration and livelihoods (Marondedze & Schütt, 2019). Its population has increased almost threefold between 1982 and 2012 (642, 191 in 1982 to 1,435,784 in 2012 (Kamusoko et al., 2013). According to recent statistics, the city's population now stands at 1,9 million inhabitants (ZimStat, 2020).

The new spaces of urban expansion that are mostly located on the periphery of the city, are home to low-income groups, have weak infrastructure, and are characteristically poor (Chirisa & Muhomba, 2013; Tawodzera, 2011). Furthermore, these areas of urban expansion are also characterised by lack of planning and are not sufficiently serviced, which makes it difficult for any development body to institute much needed development (Chirisa & Muhomba, 2013; Chirisa et al., 2014).

In these peri-urban spaces, social exclusion is a major consequence of constrained mobility, partly due to challenges of accessible transportation (mostly related to poor infrastructure, location and affordability). The problem of accessible transportation limits access to livelihood opportunities in the urban centre since access to these require daily commute. In these areas, the public passenger transport service (commuter transport), which facilitates access to markets and areas of economic opportunities, is unreliable and mostly inaccessible to large parts of the population due to high costs.

The objective of this article is therefore to explore and identify how problems of accessible transportation, mostly induced by geographical location, lack of infrastructure and unaffordability contributes to the social exclusion of people living on the fringes of Harare. In particular, it analyses how transport deprivation provides barriers to their mobility and consequently, their participation in socio-economic activities that are key to livelihoods and social interaction.

We explore these issues in the context of Southlea Park, a low-income settlement on the southern periphery of the City of Harare, where residents need to commute to access opportunities and services in the CBD. We show how residents of this urban periphery have struggled for accessible transportation for daily commute to the city, either to work or to access other necessities, and how transport deprivation stifles independent living and freedom to participate in the broader economy.

We structure this article as follows: we first review literature in an attempt to contextualise social exclusion due to transport deprivation. We next provide a brief outline of the ethnographic approach adopted by the study, before a brief description of the case study. Next, we discuss issues of exclusion in Southlea Park. We discuss the situation in Southlea Park in

terms of geography, road infrastructure, and accessible transportation, and their implications for the mobility of residents.

### **Mobility and Lack of Access to Transport and Social Exclusion**

Urbanisation and urban planning affect the mobility of people, as well as, the accessibility and availability of resources, such as transport. Studies have shown that transport can contribute to social exclusion of the commuting public by providing barriers to mobility (Kenyon et al., 2003; Mackett & Thoreau, 2015). By social exclusion, we mean the loss of ability by people to participate fully in society (Church et al., 2000). As a process, it is relational, multidimensional and dynamic. As Levitas et al., (2007: 9) points out, it is:

...the lack of or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationship and activities, available to the majority of the people in the society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.

Although different processes can cause and contribute to social exclusion, transport related exclusions manifest themselves particularly in relation to mobility, and in a rapidly urbanising world, it is associated with urbanisation (Kamruzzaman et al., 2016). Thus, Kenyon et al. (2002) describe transport related social exclusion as the process by which people are prevented from participating in the economic, political and social life of the community because of reduced accessibility to opportunities, services and social networks.

Accessibility is closely linked to issues of mobility, and if we are to understand social exclusion in terms of the different zones that constitute the urban domain—the Central Business District (CBD), Urban Suburbia Area, and the peri-urban—these become principal principles driving economic and social growth. Suen and Mitchell, 1999 identify five aspects associated with mobility: availability of transport services to where one needs to go and when he/she needs to travel; being informed about these services; knowing how to use them; being able to use them; and having means to afford them. Mobility, may thus, be seen as the potential for movement that is associated with the impediment component of accessibility (Hernandez, 2017). It is a requirement for participation in ‘modern life’ (ibid: 119).

Many individuals face mobility limitations or handicaps due to a physical, sensory, or cognitive impairment; accompanying children or baggage; a language barrier; or unfamiliarity with the local area (Suen & Mitchell, 1999). In most countries, while around 12 to 16% of the population may have an impairment that limits their mobility; around 20 to 25% of public transport passengers at any one time usually have mobility handicaps (ibid). Mobility is not confined to the willingness of the commuter, but as Ascher (2007: 8) argues:

... mobility is a key condition of access to employment, housing, education, culture and leisure and family. The right to work, to have a home, to training involves the right to mobility... in a sense, this right to mobility is a precondition of the other rights.

Measuring an individual’s commuting patterns, however, poses some challenges since it involves identifying that individual’s travelling patterns (Mackett & Thoreau, 2015). The travel pattern of an individual is composed of endogenous and exogenous factors that, in turn, inform modal choice in commute, time of commute and reasons for a commute (Bhat, 2001). An efficient public transportation system has the capability of providing an adequate level of

mobility in urban localities (Stucki, 2015). For such a system, consideration should be made of mobility of the population, accessibility of the service through infrastructure like terminals, bus stops, access roads, and connectivity to other modes of transportation (Cheng & Chen, 2015).

Accessibility is often associated with mobility, and has been used in planning and evaluation of the transport system through activity-based approaches, such as choice theory and travel behaviour (Axhausen & Gärling, 1992; Bums & Golob, 1976). Accessibility to public transport and the usability of public infrastructure is a necessary precondition for equal participation (GiZ, 2018).

Suen and Mitchell, 1999 also identify accessible transport as important to independent living for everyone. They argue that accessible transport allows every individual, regardless of background, to travel to destinations of their choice without any impediment. Put differently, the more people can easily access public transport, the better it is for their inclusion.

## **Methodology**

We adopted an ethnographic approach to study transport-induced social exclusion in Southlea Park. A short ethnographic study was conducted for a period of six months between August 2019 and January 2020. The ethnographic study entailed three main techniques. Apart from detailed interviews with commuters and residents, where we focused on the problems associated with accessible transportation, we also conducted participant and non-participant observations that were aimed at gaining insight on physical transport infrastructure, mobility trends, and dynamics of responses by residents. Participant observations involved commuting between the CBD and Southlea Park during peak and slack hours in an attempt to experience the challenges and anxieties of these communities.

We interviewed 30 residents, all living in Southlea Park. We adopted a purposive sampling approach by interviewing both people who were dependent on transport for daily commute and those who were working in the community. Our selection of participants was guided by availability and willingness to participate, rather than an attempt to get a representative sample. We attempted to maintain a gender balance in our sample to avoid bias, and to gain the perspective of both men and women, and regular commuters and irregular commuters. We interviewed 15 men and 15 women, and out of these 20 were regular commuters, while 10 either worked locally or commuted to the city only occasionally. We assigned all individuals who agreed to participate pseudonyms, which we used to identify them when compiling the discussion. Upon the completion of fieldwork, we processed data through a thematic analysis process, where codes were assigned and themes identified.

## **Southlea Park in Harare**

Southlea Park is a recently established (and formerly a working class) settlement on the southern fringes of the City of Harare. It is located about 22 km south of the capital city, Harare and falls under the Harare South Constituency. It was established following the land reform and resettlement programme when the government acquired land under the Odar Farm (Government of Zimbabwe [GoZ, 2006]). The government offered a consortium of 56 companies about 605 hectares for housing development for their employees (ibid).

The area is, in people's description, a consortium-based housing development, which was an initiative by a number of employers to develop houses for their workers (Chirisa et al., 2014).

In other words, the first residents were employed and had some disposable income, which allowed them to develop their own houses over the short to medium term (ibid). Initially residential stands were mainly reserved for individuals working in the consortium companies. However, with the deepening of the economic crisis and retrenchments, residential stands were made available even to people outside the initial target population. This move attracted mostly outsiders, who were seeking cheaper and affordable land on the urban periphery.

Because of its cosmopolitan outlook, Southlea Park is a highly heterogeneous society, with wide disparities between its residents, which makes it a highly unequal society, where middle-income groups exist alongside the poor and unemployed. The area is typical of many peri-urban localities in Harare, which resulted from the expansion of the city outwards in response to rapid urban growth and the informalisation of the Zimbabwean economy in the postcolonial era (McGregor & Chitiza, 2020). Infrastructure development has been very slow, and for some years, it has halted, a fact recognised as contributing to the social exclusion of residents.

Although the area has experienced growth in economic activities, including the development of small businesses ranging from construction, pharmaceuticals, food and retail, it is still poorly serviced in terms of water, sanitation and road infrastructure. Big businesses have been conspicuous by their absence. Besides, the land that was originally designated for business development has been re-designated and converted into residential stands, a move that has led to an increase in the population of houses by 3 000. Thus, housing units have increased from an official list of 6 000 to 9 000, which has taken up valuable land that was earmarked for development purposes (Kachere, 2015).

However, the absence of big businesses is partly tied to the lack of development, particularly an accessible road; residents have mobilised and collaborated with some businesses to develop a road, but consortium management often undermined these efforts. Lack of development, is reflected in the absence of proper schools and health centres, which has forced residents to send children to neighbouring schools that are far from the area; others have resorted to sending children to makeshift schools. A lobby of residents to government to establish a school have born no fruits. All this, means that residents have to find services, markets and economic opportunities outside the community, which makes them highly mobile. Paradoxically, the community has remained virtually inaccessible.

### **Living in the Periphery and Social Exclusion**

Geography, or in this case, distance from the city has emerged as a major contributor of social exclusion for a majority of residents in the Harare periphery. For bigger cities, like Harare, there is significant distance between the peri-urban locations and the CBD, and accessible transportation has become a major challenge. For example, Southlea Park is about 22 km from the city centre, the commute from the city takes longer, and the terrain is rough and presents major challenges for both transporters and commuters. State neglect in the form of infrastructural development, like an access road and affordable public passenger transport is certainly a major factor for linking residents to the city.

The cost of developing infrastructure is generally high, and made even difficult by informality and lack of planning. For residents, however, the need for mobility is further amplified by the lack of facilities and services locally, which they have to access outside their communities. In Southlea Park, the per-urban economy is very informal and people need to travel to the city to access the mainstream economy, including acquiring goods and wares sold in local informal

market. According to residents, these are only available from markets in the city, while the city also provides a more reliable market for informal proprietors.

Moreover, the absence of big retail stores like OK Stores and TM, means that access to affordable priced basic goods is blocked. In such cases, accessible transportation becomes paramount for residents for their inclusion in the wider economy. The residents indicated that most economic activities require early commute and a reliable and affordable transport service. Affordable transport is particularly important for informal workers and sections of the poor in Southlea Park. Thus, while geography affects all residents, low, middle and high classes, the other two classes are better able to overcome the challenge than the poor. It is clear that, as Church et al. (2000) argue that by residing at the periphery, one is socially excluded because the periphery is generally not built up, like other areas of the city.

For a residential area in the periphery of Harare, in a context of a national economic crisis that has affected basic service delivery, it is not surprising that basic transport infrastructure has become a luxury. By transport infrastructure, we refer to access roads (mainly tarred roads), railway lines, public transport and other pick-up points, etc. Although all these are important for public commute and safety, road infrastructure emerged as a key determinant for mobility for Southlea Park residents.

According to the information provided by local residents, road access has been a major area of concern since the place was established, and all efforts to develop a conventional road that would link the community to the rest of the city have been fruitless. Access into the community is often hampered by lack of a tarred road, which would render free movement even during the rainy season. The only road connecting the area to Harare city is an unconventional gravel road that is in a state of disrepair.

During the rainy season, the road is clearly unusable because of the huge potholes that develop, and transport operators complained about the risks of accidents and damage to their fleet. Also, the state of the road means that only certain types of vehicles, like high rider all-wheel drive vehicles and trucks, can successfully navigate the terrain. This has had negative spin-off effects with private transport operators shunning the area. One resident who complained captures the situation:

I stay at the far end of Southlea Park, and due to the poor road network, no commuter operator provides a service to this far end. They do not want to risk their vehicles. They prefer to terminate at the top; Even then, drivers must navigate the gullies on the road before they reach safe tar. Therefore, it takes time for the vehicles to reach the tarred Masvingo Highway and the commute takes longer. During the rainy season, it is even worse because the roads are not maintained. The worrying thing is that I started staying in Southlea Park in 2012, and things have not changed (interview with Peter, January 2020).

The problem with road infrastructure has forced some operators to withdraw their service as the cost of servicing the route were hindering profits. As one of the operators explained, 'the road causes breakdowns to vehicles, while wear and tear is accelerated because of the bad state of road' (interview with VaShava, September 2019).

Many sections, like the far end where Peter resides have gone without commuter transport service for years, and people have to travel long distances in order to access transport services.

During the rainy season when the road is completely inaccessible because of potholes, the distance that residents travel to access commuter omnibuses is even longer. Residents understand that it is ‘because of the state of the road that transport operators have been prevented from providing an efficient service’ (interview with Mai Mayo, August 2019).

The absence of a commuter service in the community leads to extended time for commuters on the road. For example, Peter works about 40 km away and travels for 80 km every day. He says he leaves his house at 04.45am to start work at 07.30am, and walks for between 15 and 20 min to the nearest pick-up point. If he is lucky to get transport early, he has to endure over 30 min of rough road before finally reaching the tarred Masvingo/Harare Highway. Sometimes, he arrives late for work and he says, he is known for his transport excuses. The experience is even worse in the evening because transporters prefer shorter distances. He says, ‘you are lucky if you get home before 21.00 pm’.

In the evening, when transport is scarce, the *Mushikashika* (Pirate Taxis) service the route (exploiting the gap left by commuter omnibus operators). Also during these peak periods, the *Mushikashika* service charges excessive fares to compensate for the rough road and the distance. Unlike the commuter omnibuses, these take risks and provide a service at a price. Like the name ‘*mushikashika*’, which is Zulu for something underhand, these operators hustle for survival, and have developed strategies that set them apart in the transport industry. They have also gained a reputation for unruly behaviour and recklessness, and sometimes criminality.

In normal conditions, only a small number of their fleet is roadworthy and they are notorious for overloading. With their capacity (these are mostly small saloon vehicles that can only carry five passengers), operators have to charge higher fares; sometimes twice or thrice higher, depending on the time of the day and state of the market. We realised that the commuter fares are higher in the evening when people are rushing home.

Although they have managed to bridge the geographical gap between the peri-urban and urban world, in a context of an economy in crisis, these high fares charged have further impoverished poor peri-urban residents. According to one of the commuters: ‘the fares fluctuate and depend a great deal on circumstances’ (interview, Agnes, November 2019). However, these peri-urban residents, as in most parts of the country, cannot afford fluctuating fares, which creates budget difficulties. Mkoma Kumbirai, a carpenter working in the city complained:

The expenditure on transport is very high and many people cannot afford it. Some walk, but you cannot walk 40km. Prices fluctuate: in the morning you can pay \$Z7.00 and in the evening, it has risen to \$Z13.00, if you have to travel at night, you may be charged \$Z15.00. This is not sustainable.

Jessica, a 46-year-old factory worker also shares her experiences with commuting costs, particularly how they have imposed a huge financial burden. ‘In the morning you sometimes pay \$Z8.00 and in the evening they know that people want to get home and transport is scarce..., they can charge \$Z12.00 or even \$Z15.00. This forces us to hitch hike in an attempt to get home’.

Similarly, Clement who is a student on internship says she uses \$Z30.00 on daily commute. He works for 22 days in a calendar month and is on a \$Z660.00 monthly salary, which does not cover his commuting requirements. ‘I need around \$Z900.00 for commuting..., that is, if

the prices remain stable...., this is what is worth of my monthly commuting', he explains. To overcome the budget deficit, he often hitch hikes, which has become a popular strategy for people living on the city's periphery. However, even hitch hiking does not solve the problem as 'you can only hitch hike until the Southlea Park Junction along the main road and complete the rest of the journey on foot' (interview with Clement, December 2019).

Others also indicated how commuting takes the bulk of their income, and how commuting costs prevent them from frequenting the city, where most opportunities are found. Tonderai, for example, is 42 years and a street vendor. He indicated that he has reduced her trips to the city to buy stock because of transport costs. Mary, on the other hand, says she avoids high transport costs by taking a staff bus, but at times when the staff bus is not available, her community costs are high. She can pay as much as \$Z40.00 in a single day because of fluctuating fares.

In terms of incomes, wages have hardly kept pace with the transport costs. For example, the government gazetted a minimum wage of \$Z2 549.00 for those in the low-income category, which translated to \$US62.50 (at the time of fieldwork), yet the average transport cost for a daily return trip was \$Z25.00. People in the private sector mostly work a 5-day week, but some workers also work half days on Saturdays, which translates to 6 days of commuting and \$Z600.00 in commuting costs per months. Given that transport fares fluctuate in Zimbabwe, and respond to market forces, the monthly commute bill keeps fluctuating. Hitch hiking, has thus, become a survival strategy for the majority of residents in Southlea Park.

A household with more people requiring daily commute finds itself paying even more. A few of the people who commute daily, like Tonderai, whose wives and children also commute to work and college, are paying more for transport. However, these are only a minority. For others, commuting expenses prevent them from sending children to better schools in the city and from the labour market. Mkoma Shady, for example, opted out of his jobs as retail worker in the city because he could not afford the ever-increasing cost of transportation and joined the local informal sector.

In interviews, some residents felt that their movements have been confined by the high cost of transportation. They only seek and work local jobs; only travelling when such travel is necessary. When travelling becomes necessary, they mostly avoid conventional forms of transport (like commuter omnibuses and the *mushikashika* service), and hitch hike instead.

Nhamo, for example, works at a local shop in Southlea Park. He does not commute daily since he walks to work. He has avoided travelling to the city centre, even though basic products are relatively cheaper. He indicated that he mostly buys all his requirements locally. If he has to travel to Harare, he walks the long gravel road to the Masvingo-Harare Highway, where he waits for long distance haulage trucks. 'These are affordable...., they have become the preferred mode of transport for many people here', he explained.

Again, the situation looks worse for people considered under the broad domestic work category (including gardeners, cooks and housekeepers, who according to Statutory Instrument 37 of 2020, are entitled to \$Z160.00 and \$Z168.48 per month respectively. While this category of people dominates the population in the urban periphery, where rentals are cheaper, the gazetted salaries can hardly cover their monthly commuting costs. Like Mkhoma Shady, these individuals face an even strong disincentive to continue working and some have now entered the informal sector locally, where no transport is involved.



While differences exist across residents with regard to affordability, the problem of liquidity affected essentially everyone. Many residents had no access to cash, in a context of a liquidity crunch, and the cost of commuting increased, as people have to access cash in the black market. One of the residents explained:

When we are paid our salaries into bank accounts, getting cash is difficult. I have to either ask my wife to go to the bank when I am at work since I leave home early. That is an extra cost. She can only withdraw the daily restricted limit of \$Z100.00. An alternative is for me to go to the black market, where the exchange rates are steep and I have to spend more to get less. When transacting from my bank account to Ecocash, I incur bank charges plus Ecocash charges. Now getting an agent to give you cash, the mark-up even goes up to 50% of the amount you want. To get \$Z50.00, you need to send the agent \$Z100.00 from your account. So, paying for transport becomes very expensive as operators prefer cash payment (interview with Craig, January, 2020).

Although the liquidity crunch in Zimbabwe affects virtually everyone, for people living on the fringes of the city, the distance and the fact that they have to pay more exacerbate the situation in places like Southlea Park. Some people we interviewed indicated that it is cheaper to pay transport fares in cash than using mobile money, but cash is a scarce resource and they have to pay more. The added costs are, to many, a major source of exclusion as travelling is intricately tied to one's ability to pay extra.

The government too has not prevented transport-related social exclusion in these per-urban communities. Residents said they have not been able to benefit from the reintroduction of cheaper transport offered under the Zimbabwe United Omnibus Company (ZUPCO) subsidy scheme due, at least partly, to an unfit fleet. After its demise in the 1990s, ZUPCO was revived in 2019 in an attempt by the government to cushion citizens against the high costs of public transport, under a partnership with private operators. Under the scheme, ZUPCO provides fuel and a stimulus cheque to private operators, who in turn provide transport at subsidised prices.

While the re-emergence of ZUPCO may appear to have provided relief to commuters, at a time of economic hardship, for residents in per-urban areas like Southlea Park, this has not been the case. According to residents, the company has been unable to provide an efficient service, which has led to long queues, overloading and delays. Due to its location on the periphery of the city and the problem of clientele at certain times of the day, the service is available at specific times and the intervals are highly spaced. Consequently, scrambles often develop when buses arrive; this poses some safety risks, particularly for women, who indicated that unruly male passengers often subject them to sexual harassment.

Most women we interviewed indicated that they avoid the bus service out of concern for their wellbeing, and instead opt for private operators. Residents complained of an unroadworthy fleet that service their area, and the frequent breakdown and disruption to their journey. One of the residents cautioned: 'it is often lucky if you reach your destination,...in the majority of cases, you are late for work because you have a breakdown' (interview with Tawanda, January 2020). Equally important to note is that the fleet operating on the peri-urban routes is old, often comprising of subcontracted buses from private operators, while the newly imported ZUPCO-owned buses service suburban areas and long distance route, like city to city.

## Conclusion

In the face of economic crisis, accessible transportation becomes an area of grave concern for people residing on the fringes of the City of Harare, whose access to economic and employment opportunities is mediated by mobility. Given the role that transport plays in linking the peri-urban and the city, supporting livelihoods, and integrating these communities into the mainstream economy, problems of accessible transportation certainly constitutes to social exclusion.

We have tried to highlight how the social exclusion seemingly induced by transport disadvantage is actually a consequence of geography and the costs of location. Transport exclusion in our case study has been necessitated by the distance of Southlea Park from the city centre, lack of adequate transport infrastructure, high cost of commuting, and the government's failure to provide sustainable transport alternatives. In peri-urban areas, a crisis in infrastructure provision induced by the neglect of peripheral areas creates conditions for exploitation and profiteering by *mushikashika* operators, who compensate for distance and bad roads by charging extra.

For Southlea Park residents, the high cost of commuting has emerged as an important aspect affecting their mobility in a context of economic crisis, particularly the liquidity crisis. The lack of mobility for the majority of residents, who have been confined to the local economy or are forced only to travel when it is necessary to do so, has worked to exclude these residents from areas of opportunities, which others have free access to, due to accessible transportation.

Even the resuscitation of ZUPCO—the subsidised public passenger service—has failed to change the situation, as the service is limited, and highly unreliable. We view this as closely linked to the state of road infrastructure and geographical location; ZUPCO cannot risk its new fleet by servicing a dangerous route. Location is thus a major factor denying people access to critical services in peri-urban Harare, and thus, perpetuating their exclusion from the wider economy.

Similar situations of isolation and neglect can be found elsewhere in Zimbabwe, especially as the majority of peri-urban settlements are unplanned and thus, remain unrecognised. The circumstances and struggles of residents in Southlea Park should not be taken in isolation; they are likely to be echoed across peri-urban settings in Zimbabwe, particularly as the economic situation continues to decline. Our results, thus, are significant in understanding issues of accessible transportation and social exclusion of peripheral communities, and provides a useful starting point in any policy for peri-urban localities.

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