

## **Chapter 5: Borrowing from Ancient Cities of Great Zimbabwe and Old Bulawayo to Enhance Modern and Post-Modern Zimbabwean Cities**

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Sense of community in ancient cities was determined by a set of norms, values, normative ethos and beliefs that drove various designs and settlement patterns. On the other hand, settlement patterns in the current communities are driven by the urge for one to amass profits brought about by colonialist as evidenced in chapter 4. Chapter 5 intends to conclude the study beginning by a summary of the findings in chapter 4 and giving a conclusion of the study. The chapter then moves towards giving recommendations for the improvement of current design practices to enhance sense of community.

The study intended to look at sense of community in urban design with an intention to borrow from ancient cities of Great Zimbabwe and Old Bulawayo. The study focused on aspects that had an influence on sense of community and settlement patterns in the Great Zimbabwe and Ndebele settlements. The findings highlighted the political, social and religious factors that affected sense of community in Shona and Ndebele settlements.

Politics was the major determinant of settlement patterns in both the Great Zimbabwe and the Ndebele Settlements. In the Great Zimbabwe settlements, political power and influence determined one's location. The politically versatile were found within the dry stone-walls while the commoners settled outside the stone walls. This was also seen in the Ndebele communities where the politically astute were located closer to the king. As such politics determined how people settled and how they were aligned. Furthermore, in relation to sense of community, the king was the most powerful and was believed to be the father. Every person therefore was in support of the king and through politics for the king a sense of community was created.

The social fabric in the two ancient communities were strong. The Ndebele's social position also determined settlement. This could also be seen within the Great Zimbabwe community where societal values and norms drove a sense of cohesion. The Great Zimbabwe community was a Shona community that had relations based on totems. These relationships bound the communities and led to

some degree of social cohesion. The Ndebele had a cattle society and through societal ownership of cattle, the king was in control and a family spirit was maintained.

The economy also played a huge part in maintaining sense of cohesion. The Ndebele people were a cattle community as such they designed every aspect of their community around cattle ownership. Having a kraal at a house therefore was a norm in the Ndebele community that affected the way in which the Ndebele people operated. In the Great Zimbabwe State, the economy also played a role in shaping relations. While everyone had some degree of subsistence farming, they had to trade to get equipment like pots axes, speers, knobkerries among others. Through trade, they fostered interdependence, and it enhanced social capital that improved the sense of community and cohesion.

From the actors that affected settlements and sense of community in ancient communities, the chapter went on to look at attributes that are determining development of current cities. The study identified that politics, planning ordinances and policies affected the design and orientation of current cities in Zimbabwe.

Politics and political influence have been influencing the layout, location and settlement patterns in current Zimbabwean urban design. The political bigwigs have been seen to subdivide pieces of land that are meant for recreation and those that foster interaction in the name of infills. This has created communities that do not have social facilities as such undermining social cohesion. Furthermore, politics has fostered an element of land developers that only focus on making profits. As such these people develop plans that only respond to their money needs and overlook the importance of society. In such cases, issues like subdivision of vital open spaces for residential stands come into play.

The other issue raised is that current urban planning ordinances do not fully facilitate social cohesion. The planning legislation provide for spaces for interaction but does not fully specify the kind of uses that are to be placed on the open spaces and streets. As such, planners have a tendency of leaving all spaces that are expensive to develop as the open spaces. This creates open spaces that do not foster social cohesion but that satisfy the current planning ordinances. The other one is of street designing, legislation does not provide for the need to

develop streets as areas that foster social interaction but only permits for the planning of roads.

Another issue that was raised in chapter 4 was the focus on perusing government policies without having to check on their impacts on social interaction and effects on the end users. The study identifies that planning in government is all about pursuing what the government mantras emphasise on. This ignores sense of community and other aspects that place people in urban design as the major recipients of the design products. For instance, the government policy of developing many houses for many people led to the development of circular 70 of 2004 that was about making low cost housing developments even cheap. While the standards were increasing cheap housing supply, essential aspects of human settlements began to be pushed away as the emphasis was on developing many housing units. Street quality was further decreased to even less pedestrian friendly dust roads as the minimum standard.

Having discussed the findings and how the ancient cities were cohesive and factors that influenced it, the study went on to give an analysis of how ancient cities and current cities differ. It was highlighted that ancient cities developed with an orientation towards the user (people). As such everything was to scale. People could walk all distances. The cities were designed with a focus on the centre but with high-density settlements. This permitted people to interact and communicate as such develop a sense of place and oneness. It also identified that beliefs like that of circularity of the universe made people to believe that they had to settle like the universe mimicking the earth's structure. This affected sense of community.

The study also did an analysis of current planning and its focus. It was identified that current urban planning is driven by political needs, prevailing government policies and the need to maximise profits. With that, sense of community is a consideration that is peripheral in the process. Planning standards though they have a basic appreciation of sense of community, they do not foster it but they assume it is a given. This can be reflected by the absence of emphasised street design with existence of basic road designs.

The Great Zimbabwe and Ndebele community neighbourhoods were what most cities in present day wish to attain, self-sufficiency. This can be seen through the homestead feature; neighbourhood feature up to the whole settlement feature. It could be noted that the two settlements were developed with a spirit of survival.

If a settlement was not strong or well established enough, it could not survive against the issues of food security, weather and many adversities of that time.

To conclude, the study was guided by the need to identify and examine aspects of Zimbabwean “sense of community” from the ancient Zimbabwean cities that can be integrated into current design. This was done through an examination of two ancient cities, the Great Zimbabwe and the Ndebele communities. The study identified that the population densities of the two areas in relationship to the definition of cities currently make the cities. It identified that aspects like norms and values were the major drivers to the development of sense of place within the Great Zimbabwe and Ndebele communities. It identifies that from these norms, beliefs and values, the Great Zimbabwe and Ndebele settlements were developed. The way in which the settlements were developed made them sustainable and more than current cities. These current cities are developed following sets of standards and policies that are also driven by politics and money-based motives. As such, it presents a need that will be discussed and options proffered in the recommendations section.

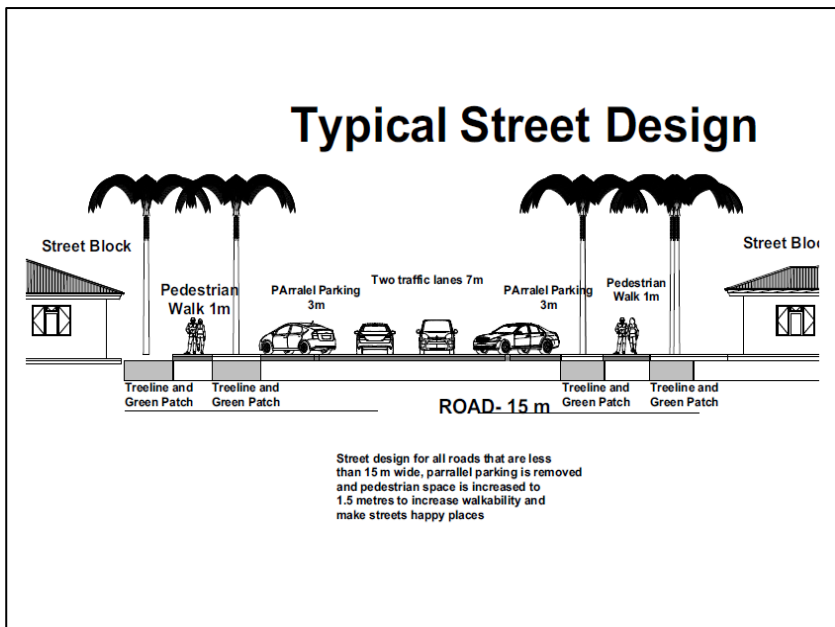
Sense of community is a feeling that is determined by many aspects discussed in the previous four chapters. This feeling as discussed needs to be fostered by various aspects in the field of urban design. From a context of learning from the Zimbabwean forerunners, there are many aspects that foster sense of community that were identified in the Great Zimbabwe and the Ndebele State that can be borrowed and fused into current urban design. The following aspects can be used as the tools to enhance sense of community in Zimbabwean cities’ design,

*Intensive land use-* The Great Zimbabwe and Ndebele communities were settlements comprised of small round pole and *dhaka* huts that were densely populated. This level of densification permitted more interaction time. As such in current urban design, there is need for increased land use densification. Design of neighbourhoods should be comprised of more high-density dwellings like attached dwelling units on 70m(10x7m) stands, semi-detached dwelling units, high rise flats and high cost high-density units. Low density units should largely be designed as small agricultural plots ranging between 2000-4000m. This will create cohesion and foster self-sufficiency.

*Mixed Use Developments-* An easement of the Great Zimbabwe and the Ndebele State proves that the two settlements were designed with high levels of combination of land uses. At every homestead one could find almost all land uses that an average person could need. This is an aspect that is missing in

Zimbabwean urban planning. With a focus on provision of housing, most layout designs are yellow (residential) yet they are supposed to be a clutter of colours. As such there is need to intensify the combination of land use zoning, moving away from the basic British Euclidean zoning to more compact mixed-use zones. Or even look into removing zoning regulations. This will mean people will have more time at one point as such increasing their time to interact and create social networks. The more the social networks the more a person gets a feeling of place and as such sense of community is created.

*Street design*- While the Ndebele and the Great Zimbabwe communities did not actually design their streets, literature suggests that in the modern age to achieve sense of community, communities need to be provided with well-designed streets. It reflects that roads that are normally designed are not sufficient. This presents the need for statute driven street designing. Figure 5.1 is a model of typical street design.



**Figure 5. 1:** *Street Design* (Author, 2019)

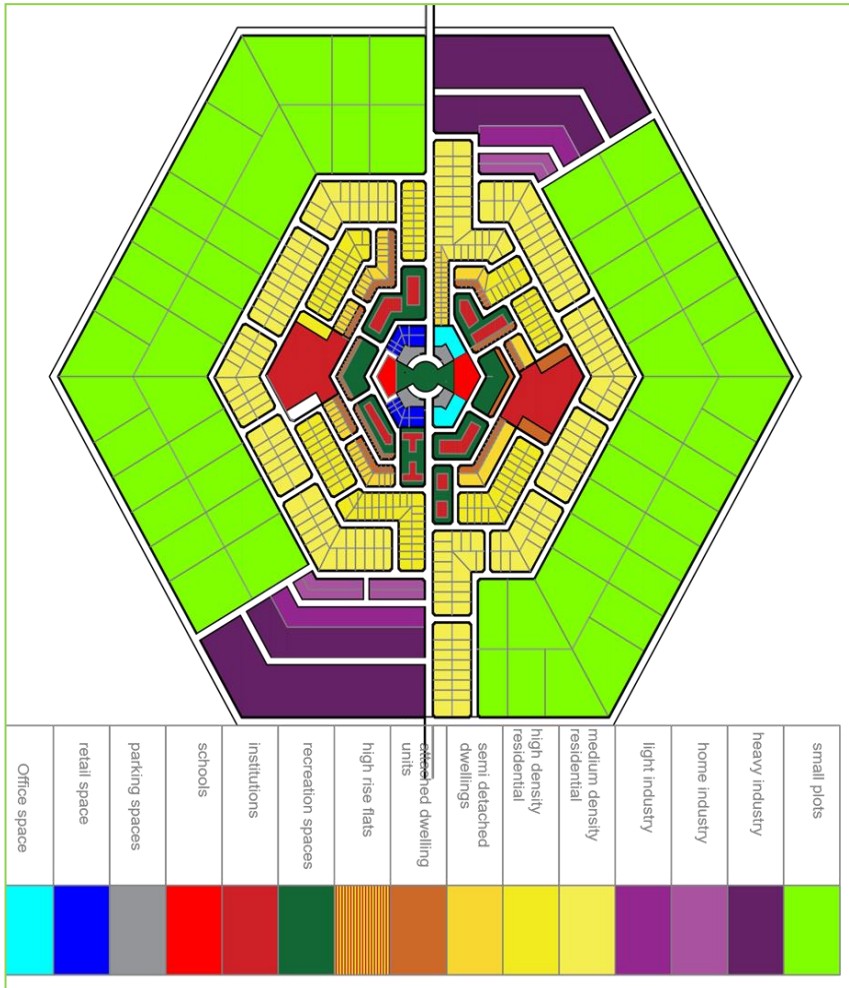
**Fluid Neighbourhoods-** Fluidity is the ability to change easily, in town planning language it can be referred to as robustness. The Ndebele communities at one point changed settlement patterns to linear following a change in economic focus (cattle focus to including subsistence cultivation). This is a survival feature of cities development that needs to be part of urban planning and design in Zimbabwe. To enhance fluidity, there is need to remove permanent land tenure (title deeds) and introduce lease holds to all land. Since a person requires land for a life time, there is need for life time leases and land reverts to local authorities. This permits the local authorities to regenerate and develop perpetual cities. These cities in turn respond to the needs of the current communities and become fashionable. This increases the sense of place as the neighbourhoods will be responding to the needs of the people

**Self-Sustainable Neighbourhoods-**Self sustainability is an essential element in city design. Great Zimbabwe and Ndebele homes and communities were self-content. This characteristic needs to be borrowed into current layout design. Content and self-sufficient neighbourhoods entail some degree of interdependency from the community dwellers as identified in the Great Zimbabwe and Ndebele trade. As people interact for benefits, they become acquainted to one another and as such foster a strong sense of cohesion.

**People centred Developments-** Development of ancient Zimbabwean cities was driven by the need to satisfy the needs of the people and this led to the development of people centred communities. This focus needs to be developed in the design of current urban centres. Settlements that respond to the needs of people will cover every recommendation discussed above. It is from this person orientation aspect that one becomes part of a community.

Informed by the study, the researcher developed a prototype of a city that depicts sustainable sense of community. This prototype can be used to inform current urban design and come up with cities that encompass all the recommended feature. Figure 5.1 is a 2-dimensional layout plan of the prototype developed of a community depicting sustainable sense of community.

**Prototype 1:** *Community depicting sustainable sense of community* (Author, 2019)



The proposed neighbourhood that depicts a sustainable sense of community rests on a (800mx1.2km) 0.960 sq. kilometres piece of land. The general hexagonal shape taken by the prototype was informed by the circularity principle that was central in precolonial designs. The hexagon came in as circles could both be related as neighbourhoods as such hexagons could create the intersections that the neighbourhoods needed. The area has 60 +/- 1 acre stands that would be used for residential agriculture. These small plots will be used as sources food and low

income housing units. The same plots will develop a neighbourhood buffer thereby containing sprawl and marking boundaries. Furthermore, having all the people contained within an area will foster relationships as they will depend on each other for services. The 1-acre stands will also act as the boundary walls adopted from the idea of the great walls at Great Zimbabwe and the wooden fence at Ndebele State. All in all, the stand has 490 detached stands, 106 semidetached 60 attached unit stands and 11 high rise flats stands. With a general population density of 4 people per family, the area has potential to house +/- 3000 people in detached units and +/- 2000 in flats and attached units. This provides the area a potential population density of +/- 5000 dwellers within 0.96 sq. km. This level of densification can be related to the Great Zimbabwe densities. With that level of densification, interaction and cohesion will be promoted.

The general design of the prototype indicates that most services are central. The services have been located at a distance of 800m from the furthest resident. This makes the area walkable. Having services within walkable distances will promote walking thereby permitting the residence time to walk and talk. The services within walking distances have also been complemented by a mix of uses within the neighbourhood. The design has agricultural land (food), residential land (sleep), Commercial land (buy), Industrial and office land (work), public parks (leisure) and institutional (education, administration) among other uses. This mean that the neighbourhood can support its population and can allow one to be born and to grow up within the same community without having to outsource services, this nature promotes a sense of cohesion.

The other significant aspect is the mobility within the design. The most prominent aspect is the park at the centre that ends the major road and leads it into a car park. This design will reduce the negative impact of having a central highway that has potential to divide the neighbourhood into two parts. The park has been placed as a symbol to show that the place was designed with a people orientation. This idea of people-oriented designs was borrowed from the Great Zimbabwe and the Ndebele communities.

The major road in the area is a 15m road. This road will have two lanes, parallel parking lanes, treelines and pedestrian walks (see figure 5.1). While this is a major distributor, the design promotes walking either across or along the road as there will be two traffic lanes. The next road sizes are 12 metre roads. These will have two pedestrian walks on either side, two tree lines on either sides and two traffic lanes. The same will apply for all other road widths. This idea of enhancing walkability and confining traffic within its own lanes was borrowed from the



confined narrow passages of Great Zimbabwe state that evidenced some level of pedestrian orientation.

The public parks have been designed in a different manner compared to conventional park designs. The parks have been placed between buildings to promote surveillance. The central park is located between commercial spaces implying the area is defensible. The other public spaces are between residential flats and are located as quads giving them enough defensibility. Having such level of surveillance at the open spaces will give a sense of security to users making the spaces vibrant. This has been borrowed from the Great Zimbabwe and Ndebele concept of developing defensible spaces.

Having concluded the study, the research was not exhaustive of all the aspects that could be discussed in regards to urban design and ancient cities. As such there is a need to look at architecture as a field and how it can be influenced by ancient architecture to develop unique Zimbabwean city images. Furthermore, there is need to inquire into how vernacular building material adoption can assist in the development of sustainable urban cities in the face of adversities like climate change.