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African Entrepreneurship in urban colonial Zimbabwe: The case of Highfield, 1953–1965

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Abstract: This paper examines the importance of Highfield to the African entrepreneurship history of colonial Zimbabwe, then known as Southern Rhodesia. The Southern Rhodesia colonial state established the township of Highfield in its capital city, Salisbury (now Harare), in 1936 as part of its spatial and racial segregation policy. The policy made Africans temporary residents in the urban areas. However, the post-Second World War industrial growth forced the colonial state to revisit its stance on African urbanisation. Seen as critical for the expanding manufacturing sector, African labour now had to be accommodated in the urban areas, which triggered the colonial state to expand the township of Highfield in 1956. That very year, enterprising Africans responded by taking up the expanded township's entrepreneurial opportunities. This response and the subsequent evolution of African entrepreneurship in Highfield township are the focus of this paper. The paper provides a historical kaleidoscope of Highfield as a place of African entrepreneurship, which thus far has been occluded and separated from the dominant literature on the township's role in the rise of African nationalism and anti-colonial struggles. Highfield emerged as a cultural milieu hosting an African Renaissance in food, fashion and lifestyle inspired by a mix of modernity and indigenous ethos. Thus, the paper argues that Highfield was the entrepreneurial centre of various businesses and startups. These colourful stories of African entrepreneurship are gleaned from handwritten business stand applications by African traders, archival documents, and newspapers in piecing together an urban history of African entrepreneurship in the township of Highfield in colonial Zimbabwe.

Keywords: African entrepreneurship, colonial Zimbabwe, Highfield, African agency, urbanisation

Introduction

The colonial state established the township of Highfield in Salisbury, the capital of Southern Rhodesia, in 1936 as part of efforts to racially segregate Southern Rhodesia's urban population. In this scheme of things, Africans were temporary residents in the urban areas. However, the colonial state revised its position on African urban-

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isation during the immediate post-Second World War period.¹ Rising African nationalism and the expansion of secondary industry, among others, forced the colonial state in 1956 to expand the township of Highfield by adding a «New Highfield» to accommodate the growing African workforce and emergent African middle class.² Highfield is one of the oldest African townships in Zimbabwe. The colonial state established the township to augment Salisbury's inadequate housing for African workers. The conditions that existed then in African townships encouraged cheap male migrant labour for the benefit of mining and agricultural interests. However, this changed after the Second World War. The growth in the manufacturing sector created a demand for a permanent, although cheap, urban labour force. Commenting on cheap African labour during the 50s, Ian Phimister and Rory Pilosof argue that «[s]ettler political economy was predicated on cheap, unskilled, and temporary labour, both in urban and rural settings.»³

On two separate occasions, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Godfrey Huggins, highlighted the inevitability of permanent African labour in cities. In 1943, Huggins remarked in reference to Bulawayo, the colony's second largest city, that «if whites in Bulawayo wanted black labour, then they must accept a permanent black working class and African families living in these [urban] townships».⁴ At another event, addressing the Bulawayo Native Welfare Society in 1946, Huggins also said:

we are rapidly reaching the stage where the national economy will no longer permit or support a mode of life for the natives based solely on agriculture and the raising of livestock. Every native would have to realise soon that he could not expect to be a farmer in a native area and at the same time supplement his income by labour in industry. He will have to concentrate on one of these two avenues of life.⁵

In addition, Africans also demanded permanency in the urban areas through the 1945 railway strike and the 1948 General Strike.⁶ This position had also been rein-

1 Victor M. Gwande, *Manufacturing in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890–1979: Interest Group Politics, Protectionism and the State*, Suffolk 2022, 68–72; Michael O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898–1965*, Indiana 2002, 108.

2 West, *Rise of African Middle Class* (cf. n. 1), 112.

3 Ian Phimister/Rory Pilosof, *Wage Labor in Historical Perspective: A study of the De-proletarianization of the African Working Class in Zimbabwe, 1960–2010*, in: *Labor History* 2 (2017), 218.

4 As cited in Terence O. Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning: The Social History of a Southern African City, 1893–1960*, London 2010, 117.

5 Lewis Gann/Michael Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia: The man and his country*, London 1964, 172–179.

6 See Ian Phimister/Brian Raftopoulos, «Kana Sora Ratswa Ngaritswe»: *African Nationalists and Black Workers – The 1948 General Strike in Colonial Zimbabwe*, in: *Journal of Historical Sociology* 3 (2000), 289–324.

forced by the findings of the 1944 Howman Committee and later in the 1958 Urban African Affairs Commission which urged local authorities to improve the living conditions of African urbanites.⁷ The need for stable urban labour underpinned the Native Land Husbandry Act 1951, which had the corollary of consolidating African urban permanency.⁸ As will become apparent shortly, this African urbanisation was important to the growth of African entrepreneurship.

The stabilisation of the African labour force through purposeful urbanisation created opportunities for entrepreneurial Africans to establish businesses in the township of Highfield in Salisbury. Africans repurposed the urban landscape to their advantage through burial societies, illicit beer brewing, religious groupings, participation in advisory bodies, joining labour unions and, as the paper advances, competing for space to establish entrepreneurial ventures.⁹ Highfield township became a hive of African entrepreneurship. Establishing the township, the government imagined that the locality would «be both urban territorial and economic segregation» which would «consign African artisans and budding entrepreneurs who competed with Europeans.»¹⁰ In addition to the uptake of the government-built housing in New Highfield, about 26 Africans applied for trading sites.¹¹ The businesses applied for were diverse in nature such as general dealerships, butchereries, eating houses, auctions, barbershops, laundry, hairdressing shops and petrol service stations.¹² The range of businesses demonstrates that although the state was intent on domiciling Africans in African townships, Africans were determined to create more than a home for themselves by establishing entrepreneurial ventures that not only replicated those in European areas but also catered to the specific material needs of Africans. Because of these remarkable opportunities and the entrepreneurial centre that Highfield became, it warrants academic inquiry to cast more light on its place in the history of African entrepreneurship in colonial

7 Percy Ibbotson, *Urbanisation in Southern Rhodesia*, in: *Journal of the International African Institute* 2 (1946), 73–82; Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Urban African Affairs Commission* [Chairman: R P Plewman], Salisbury 1958.

8 Ian Phimister, *Rethinking the reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act reviewed*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 2 (1993), 225–239.

9 Richard Parry, *The «Durban System» and the Limits of Colonial Power in Salisbury 1890–1935*, in: Charles H. Ambler/J. Crush (eds.), *Liquor and Labour in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg 1992, 115–138; Boris W. Gussman, *African Life in an Urban Area: A Study of the African Population of Bulawayo*, Bulawayo 1953.

10 West, *Rise of African Middle Class* (cf. n. 1), 108.

11 Letter from the Superintendent to the Chief Land Officer, New Highfield African Township, Applications for Business Stands, 28.8.1956, in: National Archives of Zimbabwe [hereafter NAZ], S3615/8/1/5/2.

12 Business Stands Highfields, 1956–1961, in: NAZ, S3615/8/5/49/6.

Zimbabwe. It must also be highlighted that the emergence of these entrepreneurs was an unintended consequence of the colonial state's post-Second World War re-configuration of the urban space.

This is a history of the emergence of African entrepreneurship in a colonial setting, showing the strictures that impeded against the flourishing of black businesses in urban areas. Against this backdrop, we demonstrate how several Africans negotiated and manoeuvred the bureaucratic hurdles of the colonial government. In doing so, we further show the agency of Africans in exploiting the opportunities that subtle reforms of settler colonialism offered through the expansion of African townships. We contend that the growth and expansion of Highfield demonstrates this African agency as it became a hive of black businesses.

While African entrepreneurs fought for their space, they still operated within the confines of colonial laws and were restricted to distinct enterprises. Notably, they were barred from participating in the vastly expanding manufacturing sector. According to Roger Riddell,

black entrepreneurs were in practice barred from establishing manufacturing enterprises outside the informal sector, and because of both racial residential discrimination and harsh laws restricting the movement of blacks in urban areas, the small-scale, informal manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe has been far less developed than in many other African countries.¹³

The manufacturing industry was largely owned, managed and operated by white settlers and foreign capital.¹⁴ Against this background, Africans did not establish big businesses, particularly not in the manufacturing sector, whose capital outlay was huge and beyond their reach anyway. Financial and banking institutions could not extend credit lines to them because they were considered high-risk, and in any case, they lacked collateral. As a result, Africans specialised in specific enterprises, such as those discussed in this paper, located in the African reserves and townships. This explains why Black entrepreneurs were non-existent in the manufacturing sector at the dawn of majority rule.

¹³ Roger Riddell, *Industrialisation in sub-Saharan Africa: Country Case Study—Zimbabwe*, Working Paper 25, Overseas Development Institute 1990, 7.

¹⁴ See Ian Phimister/Victor M. Gwande, *Secondary Industry and Settler Colonialism: Southern Rhodesia before and after UDI*, in: *African Economic History* 2 (2017), 85–112.

The historiography of African entrepreneurship

Historians of Zimbabwe's urban history have unravelled the multiple ways that African townships shaped the country's political, economic and social spheres. Most of this scholarship concerned itself with Africans' urban experiences, the complex socio-economic and everyday interactions among themselves and the growing racist white settler community that was bent on subjugating and subordinating African labour for its colonial capitalist enterprise needs.¹⁵ It is on the basis of these experiences that other scholars accounted for ways African townships nurtured the growth of African trade unionism and nationalism during the post-Second World War period. Brian Raftopoulos and Tsuneo Yoshikuni's collection of essays in «Sites of Struggle» unpacks how African townships shaped African politics and worker unionism in colonial Zimbabwe.¹⁶ Tim Scarnecchia shows how Highfield together with Harari (now Mbare) was central in the political fabric of the colony as a hotbed of African nationalism in the 60s.¹⁷

In other broader histories of the African experiences in the city, Lawrence Vambe and Michael West refer to how some Africans managed, in the restricted and regulated urban space, to claim a stake in the business world, which paved the way for their «elite» or middle-class status.¹⁸ The anthropologist Volker Wild amplified this presence and expansion of African entrepreneurship in the country. His work traces the history of African business history from the pre-colonial years to 1980 and the vicissitudes faced by Africans in establishing their enterprises in a highly bifurcated and racialised country.¹⁹ In another publication, Wild emphasises how cultural traditions and forces as well as business illiteracy were an impediment to

15 Tsuneo Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences in Colonial Zimbabwe: A Social History of Harare before 1925*, Harare 2007; Kudakwashe Chitofiri, *Law and Order must Take Precedence in Everything that has to do with the Native: The African «Location,» Control, and the Creation of Urban Protest in Salisbury, Colonial Zimbabwe, 1908–1930*, in: *The Historian* 2 (2019), 213–234.

16 See Brian Raftopoulos, *Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury, 1953–1963*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 2 (1995), 79–93; Brian Raftopoulos/Tsuneo Yoshikuni (eds.), *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe's Urban History*, Harare 1999; Jon Lunn, *The Mapping of Respectability and the Transformation of Residential Space*, in: Raftopoulos/Yoshikuni (eds.), *Sites of Struggle*, 163–182.

17 Timothy Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy and Political Violence in Zimbabwe: Harare and Highfield, 1940–1964*, Rochester 2008.

18 West, *Rise of African Middle Class* (cf. n. 1); Lawrence Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, London 1976, 202 ff.

19 Volker Wild, *An Outline of African Business History in Colonial Zimbabwe*, in: *Zambezia* 1 (1992), 19–46; Volker Wild, *Black Competition or White Resentment? African Retailers in Salisbury 1935–1953*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 2 (1991), 177–190.

the growth and success of African businesses.²⁰ One of the conclusions reached by Wild that «it is unlikely that, without the new economic opportunities afforded to Africans through colonialism, without the growth of new markets and the introduction of money, and without the diffusion of institutions of knowledge and norms of modern business, a nucleus of indigenous modern business would have emerged», is celebratory of settler colonialism and undermines African agency.²¹ Furthermore, it also exonerated the culpability of the colonial state in inhibiting African success. Economic historians Tawanda Chambwe and Sean Maliehe have challenged these perspectives by demonstrating the colonial state's inhibitions and Africans' resilience, thus, agency in establishing successful enterprises despite the chokehold of colonialism.²²

The history of African businesses has also interested scholars elsewhere across the continent, where indigenous experiences have been made apparent.²³ Some of these studies centred on the development of African entrepreneurship within the context of colonialism in specific localities. Martin Shanguhya, for example, demonstrates how retail businesses developed in colonial Turkana, north-western Kenya, between 1920 and 1950, while Chambi Chachage historises the activities of the entrepreneurial elite of Dar es Salaam from the beginning of the mid-19th century to the present.²⁴ Mike Odugbo Odey traces the growth of «micro-entrepreneurship in the Igede Area of Central Nigeria.»²⁵ This paper uses these studies as

20 Volker Wild, *Profit not for Profit's Sake: History and Business Culture of African Entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe*, Harare 1997.

21 Wild, *Business History in Colonial Zimbabwe* (cf. n. 19), 45.

22 See Tawanda Valentine Chambwe, *A History of African Entrepreneurship In Southern Rhodesia, 1944–1979*, PhD thesis, University of the Free State 2020; id., *Activism In Tight Corners: Decolonisation And The African Business Association Movement In Colonial Zimbabwe, 1953–1979*, in: *Southern Journal for Contemporary History* 1 (2023), 7–30; id., *A Half-baked and Sickly Commercially-Minded Native: African Entrepreneurship and Cooperative Societies in Southern Rhodesia, c. 1940s*, in: *Historia* 1 (2023), 1–25; Sean Maliehe, *The Rise and Fall of African Indigenous Entrepreneurs' Economic Solidarity in Lesotho, 1966–1975*, in: *African Economic History* 1 (2017), 110–137; id., *Commerce as politics: The Two Centuries of Struggle for Basotho Economic Independence*, New York 2021.

23 Moses E. Ochonu (ed.), *Entrepreneurship in Africa: A Historical Approach*, Bloomington 2018; Chambi Seithy Chachage, *A Capitalizing City: Dar Es Salaam and the Emergence of An African Entrepreneurial Elite (c. 1862–2015)*, PhD thesis, Harvard University 2018; Grietje Verhoef, *The History of Business in Africa: Complex Discontinuity to Emerging Markets*, Johannesburg 2017; Akinyinka Akinyoade et al. (eds.), *Entrepreneurship in Africa*, Leiden 2017.

24 Martin S. Shanguhya, *Ethnicity, Colonial Expediency, and the Development of Retail Business in Colonial Turkana, Northwestern Kenya, 1920–1950*, in: Ochonu (ed.), *Entrepreneurship in Africa* (cf. n. 23), 296–319; Chachage, *Capitalizing City* (cf. n. 23).

25 Mike Odugbo Odey, *The Socioeconomic Bases of the Growth of Microentrepreneurship in the Igede Area of Central Nigeria in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, in: Ochonu (ed.), *Entrepreneurship in Africa* (cf. n. 23), 273–295.

a scaffold to highlight the importance of Highfield as a place for the development of African entrepreneurship in colonial Zimbabwe. In «Objects of Life in Central Africa», Robert Ross, Marja Hinfelaar and Iva Pesa show how Africans' consumption patterns and evolving material culture in Central Africa helped establish African enterprises during colonial times. In urban Zambia, for example, Karen Tranberg Hansen shows how African traders took advantage of growing consumption and materiality among African urbanites to establish enterprises built around the sewing machine.²⁶ While consumption created market opportunities for enterprises in Highfield, the paper demonstrates that the restrictive colonial environment also enabled African entrepreneurs to think of cashing in on the shortage of accommodation in townships such as Highfield, as the application for hotel licenses suggests.

This paper also draws on literature on African entrepreneurship in South Africa during the period of Apartheid. While serving the role of racial segregation, the Bantustans also helped, in a limited way, to nurture the growth of indigenous enterprises.²⁷ Roger Southall notes that «an alliance between the white ruling class and a subordinate African petty bourgeois» emerged in the Bantustans to steer the formation of African enterprises.²⁸ As the paper shows, similar partnerships also emerged in Highfield. Important as these kaleidoscopic studies were, they were broader and national in character and, thus, did not pay closer attention to specific spatial spaces that were veritable hives of African entrepreneurship, such as Highfield. This article is thus devoted to Highfield's place in the growth and expansion of African businesses during the colonial years. It argues that the township economy that emerged was a representation of African agency in the face of the colonial state's surveillance apparatus through pieces of legislation such as the Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act of 1946 as well as the Subversive Activities Act of 1950. The purpose of these pieces of legislation was to control African urban lives.²⁹ The success of black entrepreneurship in the post-colonial state owes its existence to the stunted and winding efforts of pioneer African

26 Karen Tranberg Hansen, *Fabricating Dreams: Sewing Machines, Tailors, and Urban Entrepreneurship in Zambia*, in: Robert Ross et al., *The objects of life in Central Africa: The history of consumption and social change, 1840–1980*, Leiden 2013, 167–185.

27 Roger Southall, *African Capitalism in Contemporary South Africa*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1 (1980), 38–70, here 40.

28 *Ibid.*, 41.

29 See Alois Mlambo, *From the Second World War to UDI, 1940–1965*, in: Brian Raftopoulos/Alois Mlambo (eds.), *Becoming Zimbabwe. A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008: A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008*, Harare 2009, 75–114, here 98; Scarnecchia, *Urban Roots of Democracy* (cf. n. 17), 89.

businesses such as those which emerged in Highfield. Those antecedent endeavours form the core of what follows, written in four sections.

It is important that we qualify and define what «entrepreneur» or «entrepreneurship» is and how our paper employs these terms. At the same time, we also address how the paper's focus relates to entrepreneurship theory. Defining entrepreneur or entrepreneurship has received several contending views. There is the so-called Cantillon definition and the Schumpeterian definition. As expressed by William J. Baumol, the Cantillon definition explains an entrepreneur as one «who creates and then, perhaps, organizes and operates a new business firm, whether or not there is anything innovative in those acts.»³⁰ The Schumpeterian definition describes «entrepreneur» as «the one who transforms inventions and ideas into economically viable entities, whether or not, in the course of doing so, they create or operate a firm.»³¹ Joseph Schumpeter further pointed out that entrepreneurs innovate not just by figuring out how to use inventions but also by introducing new means of production, new products and new forms of organisation.³² Additionally, Schumpeter identified another dimension of entrepreneurship, namely «the discovery and exploitation of a new market. The term discovery does not necessarily apply to a new geographical market or an unknown market but rather a market that an industry has not explored before.»³³ The Schumpeterian analysis has become the dominant understanding of entrepreneurship.³⁴

Akinyinka Akinyoade, Ton Dietz and Chibuike Uche have, however, given an explanation of entrepreneurship that encompasses both the Cantillon and Schumpeterian definitions. For them, entrepreneurship «is a process through which individuals identify opportunities, allocate resources, and create value. This creation of value is often through the identification of unmet needs or [...] of opportunities for change.»³⁵ They further explain that entrepreneurial success is thus «simply a function of the ability of an entrepreneur to see these opportunities in the marketplace, initiate change (or take advantage of change) and create value

30 William J. Baumol, *Formal Entrepreneurship Theory in Economics: Existence and Bounds*, in: *Journal of Business Venturing* 3 (1993), 197–210, here 198.

31 Baumol, *Formal Entrepreneurship Theory* (cf. n. 30); Joseph Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development: An Enquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle*, Cambridge 1936; id., *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York 1942.

32 David R. Henderson, *Joseph Alois Schumpeter; 1833–1950*, in: *Econlib Encyclopedia*, <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/bios/Schumpeter.html> [last access 21.7.2024].

33 As cited in Maria Elizabeth Kruger, *Creativity in the entrepreneurship domain*, PhD thesis, University of Pretoria 2004.

34 Moses E. Ochonu, *Introduction: Toward African Entrepreneurship and Business History*, in: id. (ed.), *Entrepreneurship in Africa* (cf. n. 23), 1–29, here 11.

35 Akinyoade et al., *Introduction*, in: id. (eds.), *Entrepreneurship in Africa* (cf. n. 23), 1–22, here 1.

through solutions.»³⁶ Meanwhile, Baumol categorises the Cantillon entrepreneur «as the firm-organizing entrepreneur», and the Schumpeterian one «as the innovating entrepreneur».³⁷ This paper adopts the Cantillon definition because, as Moses Ochonu has rightly remarked, «not only were Schumpeter's theoretical observations set in a Western economic milieu and grounded in a decidedly Western capitalist reality, their empirical premises and assumptions fail to consider the socioeconomic realities, experiences, and productive endeavours of African and other non-Western peoples.»³⁸ Using Baumol's analogy, «[t]he person who opens a new grocery or a new fast-food restaurant is simply repeating, in essence, what has been done a thousand times before; yet that individual's act is entrepreneurial [...]»³⁹ This example aptly captures the entrepreneurs we discuss in this paper, which would not have been accepted as such in the Schumpeterian definition.

Because of our operating definition, the paper's focus falls short of being analysed using entrepreneurship theory. Entrepreneurship theory entails a systematic analysis of the modus operandi, traits, characteristics and strategies of entrepreneurs in establishing and managing businesses.⁴⁰ We do not examine Highfield African entrepreneurs' behaviour in managing their businesses, nor do we investigate their operations, be it growth or profitability or otherwise. For this reason, applying entrepreneurship theory will not yield a sufficient understanding of the theory, and in the extreme, the data we have on the Highfield entrepreneurs is too thin to be of significance to use this theory.

The expansion of Highfield

During the 50s, African townships such as Highfield hosted a middle-class populace with an urbanite taste.⁴¹ Writing on the South African experiences of African people in the urban areas, Grietjie Verhoef notes that «[t]he new African «elite» could read, write, count and communicate in the language of the authorities and were therefore more eligible for employment. This elite engaged in trade and com-

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Baumol, *Formal Entrepreneurship Theory* (cf. n. 30), 198.

³⁸ Ochonu, *Introduction* (cf. n. 34), 12.

³⁹ Baumol, *Formal Entrepreneurship Theory* (cf. n. 30), 199.

⁴⁰ Claudia S. L. Dias et. al, *Agricultural Entrepreneurship: Going Back to the Basics*, in: *Journal of Rural Studies* (2019), 125–138; Ivan Bull/Gary E. Willard, *Towards a theory of entrepreneurship*, in: *Journal of Business Venturing* 3 (1993), 183–195.

⁴¹ See West, *Rise of African Middle Class* (cf. n. 30).

merce, which made them a stable and self-perpetuating core of African people in the urban areas.»⁴² This created a market that African traders exploited through novel business ideas. Yet, the story of African entrepreneurship in colonial Zimbabwe in scholarship and popular culture is dominated by the image of the general dealer store. There were other flourishing enterprises such as petrol stations, cinemas, photo studios, hotels and dry-cleaning establishments. For example, African traders such as A. T. Mwamuka, Goliath Tendayi and P. M. Mushonga applied for the three petrol service station sites on offer in New Highfield. Mwamuka and Mushonga's applications had the backing of Caltex and Mosenthals Rhodesia Ltd which were established fuel companies.⁴³ Other applicants, like the African journalists Lawrence Vambe and Stanlake Samkange, competed for the right to hold cinema shows in the African township.⁴⁴ This was in response to the changing urbanite needs of the Africans in Highfield who had begun acquiring cars and spending their leisure time at the cinema. Writing to *The African Daily News*, F. G. Rusike commended an African entrepreneur for coming up with the «grand idea» of applying for a business stand to set up a dry-cleaning plant. Rusike hoped that «with the establishment of the business [...], many more Africans will begin to think along new lines in business and thus have a wide variety of African business and finally get to the stage when the Africans will be able to do everything in the line of business on their own.»⁴⁵ Indeed, a perusal of the business stand applications submitted to the Highfield Town Manager shows that African traders had embraced Rusike's vision of African entrepreneurship.

The application letters for business stands revealed information about applicants' backgrounds and sources of income. Most of the applicants were leading Africans in the political and social African urban space in colonial Zimbabwe. In addition, they were also homeowners in New Highfield under the 99-year lease scheme.⁴⁶ Reflecting the working-class nature of the African residents, most applicants were working professional men. For example, in his application for «a Butchery, Grocery and Eating House», Albert Chaza Gahadzikwa stated that he had served in the British South Africa Police (BSAP), a government/state institution, for 20 years

42 Verhoef, *The history of business in Africa* (cf. n. 23), 71.

43 Letter from S. F. Finnis, Townships Officer, Native Lands and Townships, to the Superintendent, New Highfield, Caltex Petrol Kiosk for stands 352 and 353: A. T. Mwamuka, 23.4.1957, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

44 Letter from Stanlake J. T. Samkange, 391 New Highfields, to the Superintendent, 7.6.1957, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

45 *Dry Cleaning Plan is a Grand Idea*, in: *The African Daily News*, 4.1.1961

46 West, *Rise of African Middle Class* (cf. n. 1), 113.

and had a starting capital of 1,000 Rhodesia pound from his savings and pension.⁴⁷ With the aforementioned application from Vambe for a cinema license dating back to 1953, the Vambe brothers stated that they had «invested some money in [their] venture a long time ago and [had] a 16.m projector and a slide machine».⁴⁸ Vambe became the editor-in-chief of the African Newspapers Group in 1953 with a monthly salary of ten Southern Rhodesia pound – «probably the highest paid to any African in the Federation at the time».⁴⁹ Another applicant for a business stand to establish a hotel informed Finnis, the Chief Lands Officer for Highfield, that he had «£500 set aside for putting up the building only and can still afford if it can go higher than that, as I want the best building.»⁵⁰

The profiles of the applicants demonstrate that African traders and prospective ones came from a class of educated and informed Africans. This debunks the stereotype of the African trader as illiterate, superstitious and lacking in capital dominant in colonial representations and some historical takes on African entrepreneurship.⁵¹ Furthermore, revealing their profiles and capital was meant to show their means, sense of responsibility, accountability and respectability, thus, subtly encouraging the township management to look at their applications favourably. But at the same time, the process for allocation of a stand went through a vetting process. For instance, the Chief Lands Officer in the Native Affairs Department instructed all applicants to avail themselves for an interview and to bring evidence of the assets they had for the purposes of erecting premises and conducting their business, such as bank statements and evidence of previous experience in the line of business they were proposing, e. g. tradesmen reference books.⁵² Although presented as due diligence, the screening was akin to surveillance through which certain applicants were disadvantaged.

There were also clashes and competition over certain types of businesses. For instance, the right to show films in Highfield pitted two prominent Africans in Southern Rhodesia against each other. Writing about film watching among Africans

47 Letter from Albert Chaza Gahadzikwa to the Superintendent, New Highfield African Township, application for a business stand: butchery, grocery-eating house, 6.8.1956, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

48 Letter from T. J. and L. C. Vambe to the Secretary, Native Land Board, 6.4.1955, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

49 Terry Barnes/Everjoyce Win, *To live a better life: An oral history of women in the city of Harare, 1930–1970*, Harare 1992, 24.

50 Letter from Harry Gava to the Chief Lands Officer, 17.1.1961, in: NAZ, S3615/8/5/49/6, Business Stands Highfields.

51 Wild, *Profit* (cf. n. 20).

52 Letter by Chief Lands Officer to the Superintendent, 13.11.1956, in: NAZ, S3615/8/5/49/6, Business Stands Highfields.

of the Copperbelt in colonial Zambia during the 40s and 50s, Charles Ambler notes that Africans «crowded into enclosed open-air cinemas each week to watch film programs that mixed entertainment and current events; and many young town dwellers were avid bioscope fans, valuing films above all other forms of entertainment.»⁵³ This was the case, too, for the African Township of Highfield. As such, some astute Africans quickly saw the entrepreneurial opportunity a cinema business presented. The Native Land Board offered the Vambe brothers Lawrence and T. J. the license to run a cinema business in 1953. However, they were unable to start screenings because there was no hall, and the Native Land Board was not open to their proposal to «erect our own premises for these cinema shows».⁵⁴ Instead, «the superintendent informed us that a hall would be built by the Government and advised us to wait for the completion of this hall».⁵⁵ When the said hall, named Cyril Jennings Hall, opened to the public in 1957, the Vambes were disappointed to learn that «similar applications have been made and that one of them is from a group of people in Highfield, one or two of them being members of the committee which control the use of this hall.»⁵⁶

While their protest to the Native Land Board does not reveal the identity of the mysterious «members of the committee», who were also interested in the cinema show business, in 1957 Stanlake Samkange, a journalist and writer, was also interested in profiteering from the African urban interest in Western films.⁵⁷ In his application, he wanted an assurance from the Township Superintended that no other application for a cinema at Highfield would be approved for a foreseeable future should his be granted. Both the Vambes and Samkange's applications never succeeded. Two probable explanations account for the failure of their applications. First was the interest already shown by some members of the committee that had oversight of the hall. Second was the paranoia of the colonial state that controlled and censored the media over what could be shown or circulated to Africans.⁵⁸

53 Charles Ambler, *Popular Films and Colonial Audiences: The Movies in Northern Rhodesia*, in: *The American Historical Review* 1 (2001), 82.

54 Letter from T. J. and L. C. Vambe to the Secretary, Native Land Board, 6.4.1955, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Letter from Stanlake J. T. Samkange, 391 New Highfields, to the Superintendent, 7.6.1957, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

58 J. M. Burns, *Flickering Shadows: cinema and identity in colonial Zimbabwe*, Athens 2002; Sylvester Dombro, *Private Print Media, the State and Politics in Colonial and Post-Colonial Zimbabwe*, Cham 2018; Fred I. A. Omu, *The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa: The West African Example*, in: *Journal of African History* 2 (1968), 279–298; Richard Saunders, *Dancing out of Tune: A History of the Media in Zimbabwe*, Harare 1999.

However, these contestations demonstrate that African entrepreneurs sought to exploit the emerging urban trends among Africans in Southern Rhodesia's townships, such as movie watching.

Colonial officials in charge of administering and town planning of Highfield bickered amongst themselves over the trading sites' purpose and value. They argued about whether African traders could afford trading sites and the exact locations to place certain types of businesses. Correspondence between the Secretary for Justice, Internal Affairs and Housing, and the Chief Valuation Officer showed that government officials disagreed on what value to give the business stands. While the Secretary for Justice, Internal Affairs and Housing, wanted the sites to be sold on a leasehold basis of 99 years, his minister pitched the rates between 600 Rhodesia pound and 1,000 Rhodesia pound for the bank sites.⁵⁹ The Chief Evaluation Officer queried the ability of African traders to raise the suggested amount. Instead, he proposed that the stands should be leased for ten years with the option of renewal. Under the lease terms, the rates for rental would be «£5 per month for the average stands, £10 per month for the large stands 3, 4, 6 and 7, £20 per month for the bank stands 22 and 23 and £50 for the large bank stand No. 1».⁶⁰ Scholars have noted that colonial bureaucracy was conflicted in how it governed African affairs.⁶¹ This was especially true with regard to the Native Affairs Department. Conflict over the Highfield business stands also shows that other government departments were not spared from these internal conflicts. In any case, it was typical in the governmental system that there were inter-departmental contestations and contradictions as revealed by Terrence Ranger in his history of Bulawayo.⁶²

Business stands, the politics of partnership and township leisure

Between 1953 and 1963, Britain conjured up a federation of its three dependencies in Central Africa in what became known as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland

⁵⁹ Letter from the Secretary for Justice, Internal Affairs and Housing, to the Valuation Officer, 5.3.1957, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

⁶⁰ Letter from J. L. Woodhouse, Chief Valuation Officer, the Government Valuation Department, Division of Local Government and Housing, to the Secretary for Justice, Internal Affairs and Housing, 7.4.1956, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

⁶¹ See William R. Duggan, *The Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 and the Rural African Middle Class of Southern Rhodesia*, in: African Affairs 315 (1980), 227–239; D. J. Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia*, London 1970, 160 f., 218 ff.

⁶² Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning* (cf. n. 4), especially chapter 3.

or the Central African Federation (present-day Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi).⁶³ Among other objectives, the Federation was meant to promote racial partnership and accelerate economic development in British Central Africa. The federal period's political environment and a growing African market created unique business partnerships between Africans and Europeans. Offered mostly by Europeans, these partnerships reflected a need by small white firms to break into the African market that was restricted by legal handicaps built around the Land Apportionment Act (LAA) of 1930. Under the act, African townships or locations (and reserves) were exclusively a preserve for blacks. To circumvent these legal hurdles, big firms and other small white enterprises used African traders as agents under the so-called partnership. For powerful business associations, such as the Association of Chambers of Commerce of Rhodesia (ACCOR), inviting African members into their fold served to aesthetically present themselves as compliant with the United Federal Party's rhetoric of partnership.

Taking advantage of an amendment to the LAA that allowed Europeans to run businesses in African areas if Africans owned 51 per cent of the company's shares, European businessmen such as Clifford Pocket, a former Dominion Party member with conservative views on Africans, formed various ventures with African entrepreneurs.⁶⁴ Additionally, he invited Africans to the board of his bakery, the Pockets Bakery.⁶⁵ Others, such as ACCOR, invited top African traders of the time, such as Isaac Samuriwo, to become members. Samuriwo was from a chiefly family, owned a transport and general store, was a builder and a «politically and socially ambitious individual, a Member of the Federal Parliament and first resident of Marimba Park (the first low-density suburb for Blacks in Salisbury, set up in 1960 to accommodate the new African middle class).»⁶⁶ In Highfields, African traders such as Mwamuka and P. Mushonga partnered with Caltex and Mosenthals Rhodesia Ltd, respectively, to establish petrol service stations in Highfield. Caltex and Mosenthals Rhodesia Ltd would install pumps and supply the petroleum as part of the agreement.⁶⁷ Both Mwamuka and Mushonga and their European partners in the oil industry saw the

⁶³ See Andrew Cohen, *The Politics and Economics of Decolonization in Africa: The Failed Experiment of the Central African Federation*, London 2017; Colin Leys/Cranford Pratt (eds.), *A New Deal in Central Africa*, London 1960.

⁶⁴ *Property Owning Company: Equal Partnership offered to Africans*, in: *The African Businessman*, 15.7.1961.

⁶⁵ *Editorial: Congratulations Mr. Chiweshe*, in: *The African Businessman*, 13.7.1963.

⁶⁶ Wild, *African Business History* (cf. n. 19), 38.

⁶⁷ Letter from S. F. Finnis, Townships Officer, Native Lands and Townships, to the Superintendent, New Highfield, 23.4.1957, in: NAZ, S3615/5/49/6, Highfield Business Stands.

opportunities in an African community that was increasingly using the motor car to travel.⁶⁸

Business partnerships between Europeans and Africans such as these grew considerably drawing the attention of the Native Affairs Department (NAD). The NAD and other African traders sometimes accused successful African entrepreneurs of acting as fronts for European traders and wholesalers. Known as «dummying», Africans also employed this practice to their advantage to raise the much-needed capital for starting their businesses. In other instances, Africans could also get into partnership with Europeans as a way of trading in European areas, as the annual report of the District Native Administrator (DNA) for 1956 suggests.⁶⁹ Reporting on the activities of three companies jointly owned by Europeans and Africans, the DNA stated that they had «commenced business activities from shops and offices situated in the European area of the City».⁷⁰ Describing the arrangement as «obscure», the Salisbury authorities promised to investigate the matter. What is clear, however, is that by the turn of the decade, some European and African traders adopted the strategy to break into the African market.

In the expanding Highfield township, established white capital, such as banks, was also interested in getting a foothold in the burgeoning African township. In the business areas of Highfield, the local authorities set aside business stands for banks. Banking amongst Africans had grown steadily during the post-Second World War period and white capital-owned banks such as Barclays and Central African Banking Services (CABS) were keen to take advantage of this African market.⁷¹ Of the business and commercial stands available in Highfield in 1957, two were set aside for «banks and similar institutions».⁷² By 1961, banks such as Barclays, CABS and Grindleys had obtained the available business stands set aside for the banks.⁷³

68 See Jan-Bart Gewald et al. (eds.), *The Speed of Change Motor Vehicles and People in Africa, 1890–2000*, Leiden 2009.

69 Annual Report of the Salisbury District Native Administrator, 1.7.1955 to 30.6.1956, in: NAZ, S/SA/6175.

70 Ibid.

71 See Tapiwa Madimu/Enocent Msindo, *Towards Banking Inclusion? The Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) in Southern Rhodesia, 1905–1945*, in: African Economic History 1 (2019), 54–91.

72 Letter from the Secretary for Justice, Internal Affairs and Housing, to the Valuation Officer: Sale of business and commercial stands at New Highfield, 5.3.1957, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

73 Letter from the Town Manager, Highfield, to the Assistant Secretary, Department of African Housing and Administration, 10.8.1960, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

Despite the presence of these business stands for banks, Africans were continually denied the right to establish an African bank despite many attempts.⁷⁴

The expansion of African urbanisation and market fostered by the Federation created opportunities for enterprising African traders who sought to cater to the emerging tastes of black urbanites. One such area was leisure. Although the colonial state attempted to provide avenues for leisure to Africans in the urban areas as part of social control through beer halls, community halls and sports stadia, this was hardly enough.⁷⁵ However, studies on pastimes during the colonial period show that African urban dwellers had developed alternative forms of recreation enjoying themselves through tea parties, for example.⁷⁶ In addition, Zoe Groves and Anusa Daimon demonstrate in a study of colonial Harare that some Nyasa migrants expressed their leisure by joining secret societies such as the «Nyau» or «Gule Wamukulu».⁷⁷ With the rise of the need for leisure in Highfield, African entrepreneurs aimed to profit from this gap. One application, «consisting of European and African Directors», asked the Native Land Board for a «lease of twenty acres of land at Highfield for the purpose of sports stadium exclusively for African sport and recreation».⁷⁸ As highlighted earlier, others like Vambe and Samkange aimed to bring the cinema to the colonial township.

African traders also sought to establish hotels. Although the colonial state had allocated the only business stand for a hotel in Highfield to the prominent African entrepreneur Isaac Samuriwo, this did not deter other African traders from applying for hotelier rights in the African township.⁷⁹ Notable applications were from Chipunza, Harry Gava, a Harari entrepreneur and boxing promoter, and Silas Newman, a Highfield Township Advisory Board member and a politician. In separate applications, the traders were adamant about the need for additional hotels,

74 Chambwe, *Activism in Tight Corners* (cf. n. 22), 27.

75 Teresa A. Barnes, *The Fight for Control of African Women's Mobility in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900–1939*, in: *Signs* 3 (1992), 586–608.

76 Perseverence Madhuku et al., *Reciprocity and the Moral Economy of Exchange in African «Tea-less» Tea Parties in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, c. 1945–1950s*, in: *South African Historical Journal* 4 (2021), 818–835.

77 Zoe Groves, *Urban Migrants and Religious Networks: Malawians in Colonial Salisbury, 1920 to 1970*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 3 (2012), 491–511; Anusa Daimon, *Migrant Chewa identities and their construction through Gule Wamukulu dances in Zimbabwe*, in: Bahru Zwede (ed.), *Society, State & Identity in African History*, Addis Ababa 2008, 299–310.

78 Letter from H. A. K. Simpkins, the Secretary of Native Affairs, to the Chief Land Officer, Native Area Administration, 16.5.1955, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

79 Letter from S. F. Finnis, Assistant Secretary, Department of African Housing and Administration, to the Town Manager, Highfield Village Settlement, 1.2.1961, in: NAZ, S3615/5/49/6, Highfield Business Stands.

with Chipunza's application denied by E. J. Osborne, the Chief Valuation Officer.⁸⁰ Despite the high demand for hotels from African traders, the Town Superintendent for Highfield doubted «whether a second hotel is warranted [...] [in any case] no other hotel sites are available in the present commercial centre».⁸¹ But Gava persistently pressed the need for accommodation among Africans in the Federation:

The most difficult thing is accommodation for visitors as there is no place where outsiders can sleep even for one day, and this has become an acute problem to us all. There is a very big demand in Salisbury for visitors [...] bedding rooms and sitting rooms, where people who come to town for, shopping, examinations, to see doctors and other personal difficulties who have no friends in town can sleep.⁸²

After the Town Superintendent denied his request for a business site to build a hotel, Newman, also the Secretary of the Highfield Businessmen Association and a member of the United Rhodesia Party – the ruling party at the time, wrote a letter to A. E. Abrahamson, the Minister of Labour, Social Welfare and Housing, asking for his intervention in his application for a business stand to establish a hotel. The point to note is how eager African entrepreneurs were to establish businesses for themselves, and the colonial state's induced demand for accommodation in the urban areas was seen as an opportunity. Although the colonial state had expanded the Highfield township, many Africans remained without respectable accommodation.⁸³ Additionally, African traders such as Newman displayed agency by attempting to use their connections in the Rhodesian United Party and with liberal government officials to obtain trading sites in Highfield.

80 Letter from E. J. Osborne, Chief Valuation Officer – Government Valuation Department, Division of Local Government and Housing, to the Townships Officer, Native Lands and Townships, 13.12.1957, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

81 Letter from S. F. Finnis, Assistant Secretary, Department of African Housing and Administration, to the Town Manager, Highfield Village Settlement, 1.2.1961, in: NAZ, S3615/5/49/6, Highfield Business Stand.

82 Letter from Harry Gava, Harare African Township, to S. F. Finnis, Assistant Secretary, Department of African Housing and Administration, Feb 1961, in: NAZ, S3615/5/49/6, Highfield Business Stands.

83 See Timothy Scarnecchia, *The Mapping of Respectability and the Transformation of African Residential Space*, in: Raftopoulos/Yoshikuni, *Sites of Struggle* (cf. n. 16), 151–162, here 151.

Opportunities and obstacles to business ownership

Despite some colonial technocrats insisting that «on a 40' stand, not more than two separate commercial enterprises should be permitted to take place»,⁸⁴ some Highfield traders were still able to successfully apply for multiple business operations on a single business stand. Through his lawyers, P. H. J. Chanetsa applied for an expansion of his photo studio to include a general dealer store in 1955.⁸⁵ This was after the running of his photo studio proved unprofitable because of the unavailability of water and electricity.⁸⁶ The Native Land Board approved his application to run a grocery store adjacent to his photo studio on the condition that «his building is supplied with electricity [lest] he will not be allowed to continue the sale of groceries next year. If it is not supplied this year, he may apply to the Board for the renewal of the permission next year.»⁸⁷ The use of lawyers to apply for business stands also showed a degree of agency among African entrepreneurs.

Notable pioneer African entrepreneurs like Mwamuka and Machipisa grew their businesses and expanded them during this period. Records from the Native Affairs Administration show that African entrepreneurs who held business stands in Old Highfield were successful in applying for new trading sites in New Highfield in 1957. Consequently, these enterprising traders ended up with multiple trading sites, thereby consolidating their position as the prominent African traders of the colonial period. For example, although A. Z. Mwamuka operated a successful business in Old Highfield on stand number 4058, he was also «promised» business stands in New Highfield on stand numbers 4115 and 968.⁸⁸ Other African traders also held multiple trading sites in the township. These included the African trader and nationalist Samkange, as well as the successful African entrepreneur Machipisa, who controlled the business stands 978 and 973, while Samuriwos controlled

84 Letter from G. Graham, Section Engineer, Southern Rhodesia Department of Engineering and Construction, to S. F. Finnis, Assistant Secretary, Department of African Housing and Administration, 30.12.1960, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

85 Letter from Brown, Hoffman and Diamondis to the Chief Land Officer, Native Area Administration, 6.5.1955, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

86 Letter from P. H. J. Chanetsa, Rhodesian Studio, to the Superintendent, African Township, Highfields, 16.2.1955, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

87 Letter from Reid, Chief Land Officer, Native Area Administration, to the Superintendent, 2.3.1955, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

88 Letter from the Town Manager, Highfield, to the Assistant Secretary, Department of African Housing and Administration, Allocation of Vacant Business Stands, 10.8.1960, in: NAZ, S3615/5/49/6, Highfield Business Stands.

business stands 4219 and 4220.⁸⁹ These entrepreneurs were also part of the social and political milieu of the African township. Samkange, for example, was involved in the African nationalist movement of the 60s, while Machipisa and Mwamuka went on to become some of the most successful entrepreneurs of the colonial and post-colonial period in Zimbabwe. The allocation of business stands thus favoured those already established to the exclusion of the newcomers.

Some government officials were concerned with the aesthetics of the African township and sought to create «order» in Highfield's business areas. Officials such as G. Graham, the Section Engineer in the Department of Engineering and Construction, protested «multiple store development».⁹⁰ Graham refused to endorse Jangire and Mushebe's applications to expand their business enterprises, noting that «the proposals of Mr. Jangire on stand 4064 are for five separate shops, which is not considered satisfactory. The proposal of Mr. Mushebe on stand 4113, who already has two enterprises on his stand, now proposes to erect a further two, possibly three, making a total of possibly five enterprises.»⁹¹ Although African entrepreneurs in Highfield thought of novel ways of expanding their business and taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the small business sites, their efforts were often disrupted by government technocrats who manipulated «the lack of any regulations or by-laws affecting this development, lay down some guiding principles and rules».⁹² This probably explains why most African traders during this period resorted to the safe haven of the general dealer store, whose approval was likely to face little resistance from colonial officials.

The experiences of African traders in their attempts to acquire freehold titles reflect the ambiguity of colonial policy on African entrepreneurship. This ambiguity also showed the fractured nature of colonial society as Alan Cousins noted:

There were, of course, variations in European opinion and changes over the years. Thus, one can distinguish differences between the following groups: the Native Affairs Department (NAD), the UFP backbenchers, UFP government ministers, the DP members of parliament, editorial writers and sub-editors in the press.⁹³

89 Letter from the Town Manager, Highfield, to the Assistant Secretary, Department of African Housing and Administration, Allocation of Vacant Business Stands, 10.8.1960, in: NAZ, S3615/5/49/6, Highfield Business Stands.

90 Letter from G. Graham, Section Engineer, Southern Rhodesia Department of Engineering and Construction, to S. F. Finnis, Assistant Secretary, Department of African Housing and Administration, 30.12.1960, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/5/2, Church and Business Stands, Highfield.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Alan Cousins, *State, Ideology, and Power in Rhodesia, 1958–1972*, in: *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 1 (1991), 47.

The above interest groups held different expectations for dealing with urban Africans. There was pressure on the Southern Rhodesian State to give concessions to African urban elites under the banner of racial partnership. The 1958 Plewman Commission's Report on Urban Affairs' recommendations on the «status of Africans as residents in segregated towns and cities» criticised the LAA.⁹⁴ Although Prime Minister Edgar Whitehead agreed with the Plewman Commission, he faced resistance from the white parliamentary bench.⁹⁵ Legislators from both the Dominion Party and the United Federal Party (UFP) were adamant about maintaining the LAA and its paternalism, claiming that the law protected African traders from European competition. In 1960, the legislator for Hatfield and a member of the Dominion Party, Stewart Edward Aitken-Cade was pessimistic about the prospects for African traders without the legal protection, describing the LAA as «proactive», and that the African trader would be «jeopardised» if exposed to «the full force of the economic competition of the non-African».⁹⁶ At the same time, the local authorities were in the process of removing African traders in the European business areas to the African townships. For Salisbury, the evictions were part of a process of enforcing the LAA that had begun in the 40s. The Director for Native Administration (DNA) for the Salisbury City Council (SCC) reported in 1952 that more than 40 businesses had agreed to relocate to «alternative trading premises in the native urban areas».⁹⁷ By 1955, the SCC had managed to move the remaining traders in the European areas to premises in the Highfield Village Settlement and the Community Centre in Harari Township.⁹⁸

Other parliamentarians felt that the government's efforts to open trading areas to Africans were insufficient. Contributing to the debate, the legislator for Highlands, Harry Pichanick, urged the colonial state to allow Africans to trade in the central business district as opposed to the industrial areas. «I would have thought,» Pichanick argued, «that the business area had a much greater need for opening up, particularly in the areas where Africans do their purchasing and trading.»⁹⁹ African traders were not happy with these half-measures by the government. An editorial of *The African Businessman* captured this mood, reporting that African traders in Harari and Highfield «had hoped that the Land Apportionment Act would be amended in such a way as to enable African Traders to trade in the centre of

94 Scarnecchia, *Urban Roots of Democracy* (cf. n. 15), 89.

95 *Ibid.*, 91.

96 Southern Rhodesia Parliament, *The Land Apportionment Bill*, Nov 1960, Column 2982–2984.

97 Annual Report of the Director of Native Administration, 1952, in: NAZ, S/SA 6175.

98 Annual Report of the Director of Native Administration, 1.7.1955 to 30.6.1956, in: NAZ, S/SA 6175.

99 Southern Rhodesia Parliament, *Second Reading: Land Apportionment Bill*, 15 June 1961, Column 5768.

town or buy property in parts of the residential and business areas of towns.»¹⁰⁰ C. M. Chiweshe, a Harari African trader, criticised the government's concessions to African entrepreneurs. He said although he was in support of the amendment of the LAA, this should «not necessarily mean that Europeans can run businesses in African townships because the African townships are just like suburbs.»¹⁰¹ N. Mhlanga, another of Harari's entrepreneurs, felt that opening the city's business areas without the concomitant improvement in credit facilities available for Africans would bring harm to African traders.¹⁰² The African response to the government shows a consciousness on the part of the African traders on the structural problems facing them.

Added to the colonial state's vacillation was the continually shifting position of the local authorities. While the colonial state, through its legislature, debated amending the LAA, it was the onus of the municipalities to implement these reforms. The cities of Salisbury and Bulawayo were reluctant participants in the UFP's programme of racial partnership. Consequently, African townships in the two cities became theatres of contestations between African traders and council officials, and thus reflected conflict between national and local governments.¹⁰³

Apart from the UFP's vacillation, some officials of the NAD did not share the state's liberal policies. In his annual report of 1962, S. E. Morris, the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC), defended the LAA role in protecting «the African businessman in both the rural and urban areas, taking their first steps into the business economy».¹⁰⁴ As Morris saw it, Africans could not possibly «hold their own in a multi-racial economy if the LAA was repealed immediately, but by experience, they have acquired derives from the protection of their probationary period under the LAA.»¹⁰⁵ Several African traders from Harari and Highfield did not share Morris's defence of the LAA. They described Morris's views as old-fashioned, and Christopher Chinhamora pointed out that African traders wanted «all the towns to be open to all trading purposes as to purchase property. Only the townships or suburbs should be left to the inhabitants to carry on business.»¹⁰⁶ A Highfield hotelier agreed with Chinhamora, pointing out that the CNC was out of touch with the needs of African entrepreneurs. He explained that «what we need is equal opportunity and the right to raise money in

100 Editorial: *The Land Amendment Bill and Business*, in: *The African Businessman*, 17.6.1961.

101 *Businessmen's Forum*, in: *The African Businessman*, 9.9.1961.

102 Ibid.

103 See Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning* (cf. n. 4), especially chapter 3.

104 *Traders Take C.N.C. to Task*, in: *The African Businessman*, 4.8.1962.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

the same way the Europeans do.»¹⁰⁷ The editorial of *The African Businessman* was equally critical of the CNC's report.¹⁰⁸ Amidst the state's ambivalence, African entrepreneurs pressed for their interests resulting in their ability to set up enterprises defying the colonial constraints.

Applications for business stands inundated the DNA of Highfield between the mid-50s and the early 60s.¹⁰⁹ For example, in 1961, the DNA received 166 applications for just eleven business stands in Highfield. To accommodate African traders' demands for titles, the DNA for Salisbury shifted from its policy of building and then leasing shops to Africans. Instead, Africans now had the option of building their shops on a 99-year lease basis.¹¹⁰ Explaining how this would work, S. F. Finnis, Assistant Secretary for the DNA, pointed out:

This law requires that when an African businessman wants to erect a building, either for business or residential purposes, he shall apply to the government for an Agreement of Purchase of a stand. This agreement will contain two things – namely, that he shall erect a building whose minimum value will be stated, and secondly, that the building will be erected within a limited period, generally not less than one year.¹¹¹

According to *The African Businessman*, the Director of Native Affairs appointed a committee of three: Henwood, the township manager, I. H. Samuriwo and Aiden Mwamuka to look at applications for both business and residential stands. Both entrepreneurs commanded respect in business circles while, as alluded to earlier, Samuriwo was a federal member of parliament.¹¹² In addition, West has described Samuriwo as «easily the most prominent African capitalist of the post-war era», running a large transport enterprise together with other business ventures.¹¹³ Yet, the report of the sub-committee appointed to deal with applications for vacant business stands recorded the members of the sub-committee as Mukarati, a representative of the Highfield Management Board; Mashingaidze, an African trader; Sithole who was a representative of the Highfield Traders Association, Mwayera an African trader and Henwood, the township manager.¹¹⁴ The committee received applications from prospective entrepreneurs. The successful applicants reflect how

107 Ibid.

108 *Editorial: The CNCs Report and African Businessmen*, in: *The African Businessman*, 4.8.1962.

109 Applications for business stands, in: NAZ, S3615/8/1/2, Church and Business Stands; NAZ, S3615/5/49/6 Highfield Business Stands.

110 *Africans May Build Business Premises in Townships*, in: *The African Businessman*, 14.4.1961.

111 *Africans Given Full Title of Business, Residential Stands*, in: *The African Businessman*, 21.4.1961.

112 *Committee to Give Stands*, in: *The African Businessman*, 21.4.1961.

113 West, *Rise of African Middle Class* (cf. n. 1), 288.

114 Report of the Sub-Committee Appointed to Deal with Applications for Vacant Business Stands, 1960, in: NAZ, S3615/5/49/6, Highfield Business Stands.

Highfield entrepreneurs were keen to establish diverse business enterprises in the township. The section committee noted, «in considering the allocation of stands in the old portion of Highfield, members of the sub-committee felt that preference should be given to the establishment of businesses not already catered for in Highfield.»¹¹⁵ The following table 1 shows the African traders who were allocated the business stands and the type of businesses as well as their home addresses in New Highfield.¹¹⁶

Table 1: African traders who were allocated business stands, including their address in New Highfield and the type of business, 1960

Name	Address	Type of business
Richard Agrippa Muronda	762 Highfield	photography, saloon and barber
Willard Chaluwa	053 Highfield	upholstery business
Name not clear	2721 Highfield	laundry
James Mtumanji	B3 Highfield	funeral undertaker
Kenneth Dodzo	AA.2 Highfield	bicycle shop
Clever Matosi	T.67 Highfield	tea room
Chanakira	430 Highfield	furniture and radio
Reuben K. Nkomo	258 Highfield	fruit shop
Name not clear	889 Highfield	welding and spraying

Conclusion

The post-Second World War political and economic reconfigurations greatly shaped the trajectory and face of the urban space in colonial Zimbabwe. With the manufacturing sector expanding and the introduction of CAF and its multiracialism, the colonial settler state found the wisdom in allowing Africans as permanent urban residents. The restructuring forced the state to expand new residential spaces for Africans. The expansion of Highfield came about on the backdrop of these developments. The township became a hive of African entrepreneurship, as demonstrated in the discussion. African entrepreneurs took advantage of the expanding township and the opportunities it afforded. Old established and new aspiring traders applied for operating spaces to establish diverse businesses. From the conventional notion that Africans were only interested in general dealers' business, a tapestry of

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

enterprises emerged to include hotels, cinemas, petrol stations and laundromats, among others. This reflected the market opportunities exploited by Africans. More importantly, the widening interests and the ever-increasing African entrepreneurship took place against the backdrop of restrictive colonial policies that sought to discriminate against them. Africans established thriving enterprises under these circumstances, which points to their resilience and agency.

The African entrepreneur that emerged in Highfield was not a typical one who innovated or created value for a product, as defined by Schumpeter. Rather, the Highfield entrepreneur was a Cantillon one who saw an unexplored opportunity in an existing market. These entrepreneurs realised the growing consumption patterns and urban tastes of Africans needed to be catered for, and big business was not exploiting that niche market. As a result, African entrepreneurship that grew in Highfield was typically that of entrepreneurs who realised and exploited a «new market» (the expansion of Highfield township), which previously had not been explored. These entrepreneurs were not establishing any novel enterprises, but their ability to observe a vacuum in the Highfield township market and to service its needs and wants through a tapestry of businesses they established qualified them as entrepreneurs. To this extent, this paper aligns with the version of African entrepreneurship as discussed in the scholarship of Ochonu and Akinyaode et al. Lastly, entrepreneurship in Highfield specialised in what were service industries because many of them lacked the huge capital outlay needed to venture into the manufacturing industry. The manufacturing sector remained a preserve for white and foreign capital. Consequently, black entrepreneurs were non-existent in the manufacturing industry and no factories were set up in African townships such as Highfield.