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Risk, Resilience, and Sustainability: How Governance in Zimbabwe Countervails this Nexus

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Abstract

This paper concedes to the view that there is a strong correlation between risk, resilience, and sustainability and that governance has a bearing on the outcome of each of these processes. This suggests that, when the nexus is unstable, there is a greater chance that poor governance will be at play. To demonstrate this premise using Zimbabwe as a case study, the paper draws on the trajectory of crisis from independence till the present day highlighting how issues of governance have played a big role towards heightening situations of risk, decreasing the resilience of the people, subsequently stalling sustainability.

Keywords: risk, resilience, sustainability, governance, Zimbabwe

Author's Note:
Dorcas Shumba has just completed her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Development Studies at Massey University, New Zealand. Her professional background is in Environmental Management; hence she enjoys doing research on issues related to sustainable development, environmental change and vulnerability particularly as they relate to the African context.

Introduction

Since humans are by nature constrained to observable phenomena, they are limited in their ability to see far into the future. Thus, modern societies have resorted to the notion of risk in order to make sense of their uncertain world (Becker, 2014). In so doing, modern societies ascribe risk to anthropogenic influences alongside natural variability.[1] Essentially, risk is the probability of an undesirable outcome combined with the magnitude of the losses and gains that it will entail (Douglas, 1992, p. 40). Taking this definition into account, vulnerability, then, is the propensity to be harmed by undesirable outcomes, while resilience is the capacity to cope with and recover quickly from these undesirable outcomes. Simply put, resilience is a loose antonym for vulnerability (Adger, 2000). This perhaps explains why resilience is sometimes referred to as invulnerability in studies of psychology.

Nonetheless, from a sustainability perspective, risk is said to present a safety element which highlights the need to be protected from unsafe conditions, or to prevent hazardous practices which present unsafe conditions from being carried out (Becker, 2014). Being cognizant of the fact that sustainability denotes a system's capacity to endure, coupled with its potential for the long term maintenance of well-being, sustainability asserts the need to recognize present risk while learning from past risk, concurrently planning for future risk (ibid). Through integrating this range of temporal scales, sustainability is believed to create risk resilient communities. This is why, Becker (2014) states, we need to define risk in relation to some preferred expected outcome, as in this way, we endeavour to reduce such risk in order to safeguard our development objectives.

The crucial question, however, is how sustainable societies which are risk resilient can be created. This has been a question that has been explored by several academic scholars and human response agencies since the WCED conference on sustainable development in 1987 (see Becker, 2014; Cannon & Müller-Mahn, 2010; Paton & Johnston, 2001; Walker et al., 2004). Subsequently, insofar as it has existed as a development paradigm, the notion of sustainability has come under criticism for several shortfalls. First, it was criticized for failing to facilitate changes to the global political economic structure in order to engender the possibility of equality (Redclift, 2005). Second, the notion was criticized for being biased in its efforts to maintain only ecological resources and economic growth, veiling social equality under an 'intra and intergenerational' rhetoric (Deutz, 2012). In both instances,

[1] Rockstrom et al. (2009) make a distinction between the Holocene era (where natural variability was mostly responsible for environmental changes) and the Anthropocene era (where anthropogenic activities have taken over from natural variability in influencing environmental changes). The scholars also suggest that, humanity may have already transgressed its boundaries in terms of interference with Earth-system processes such as climate change, rate of biodiversity loss and interference with the nitrogen cycle.

sustainability overlooked the underlying patterns of everyday life by everyday people, as well as the possibility that some segments of society were benefiting more from development than others; social aspects received insufficient attention in the sustainability discourse. In turn, issues of risk and resilience were not fully incorporated into the paradigm. This changed with the rolling out of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. The SDGs encompass 17 aspirational goals and 169 targets which are comprehensive in their purpose to foster economic growth, promote environmental protection, end extreme poverty, and fight inequality and social injustice.

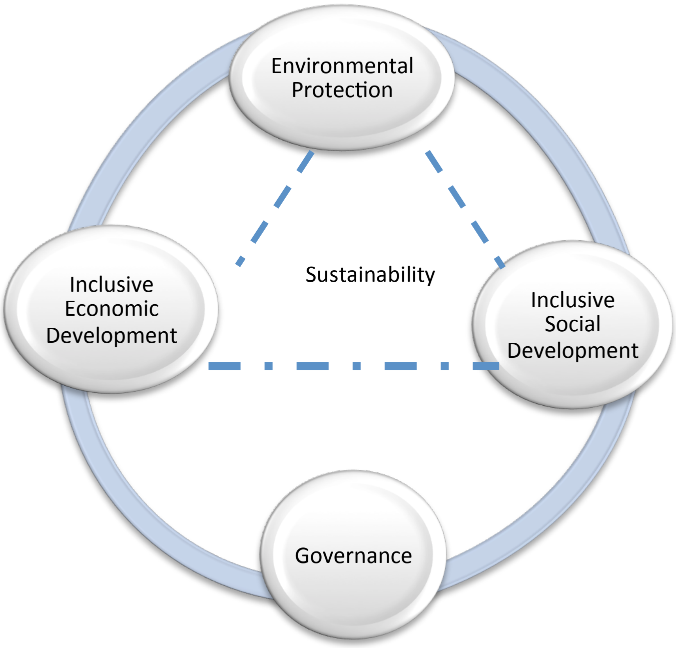
To enhance the implementationality of the SDGs, governance was appended to the economic, social, and ecological dimensions of sustainable development, but only in a functional sense. According to the UNDP (2014), over a decade's worth of experience with developmental progress and challenges showed that governance should play a stronger role in the post-2015 development agenda. In essence, there has been a call for a fundamental shift in which governance is taken as a core element in the achievement of SDGs, bearing in mind that good governance enables transformative change which is inclusive and people-centered, allowing for the achievement of a range of critical development objectives such as boosting community resilience and improving risk management. The call to bring governance to the fore had been passed as a resolution under the Rio+20 Declaration charter, 'The Future We Want' earlier on in 2012. Annex 10 of the charter affirms that member states:

> acknowledge that democracy, good governance and the rule of law …. are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger … [and] reaffirm that, to achieve our sustainable development goals, we need institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic.[2]

While the three dimensions of sustainable development remain firm, Figure 1 below encapsulates what the appendage of governance's functional role to the triptych pillars would look like.

[2] See: (UN, 2012a, 2012b)

Figure 1: Governance and Sustainability



Source: Author

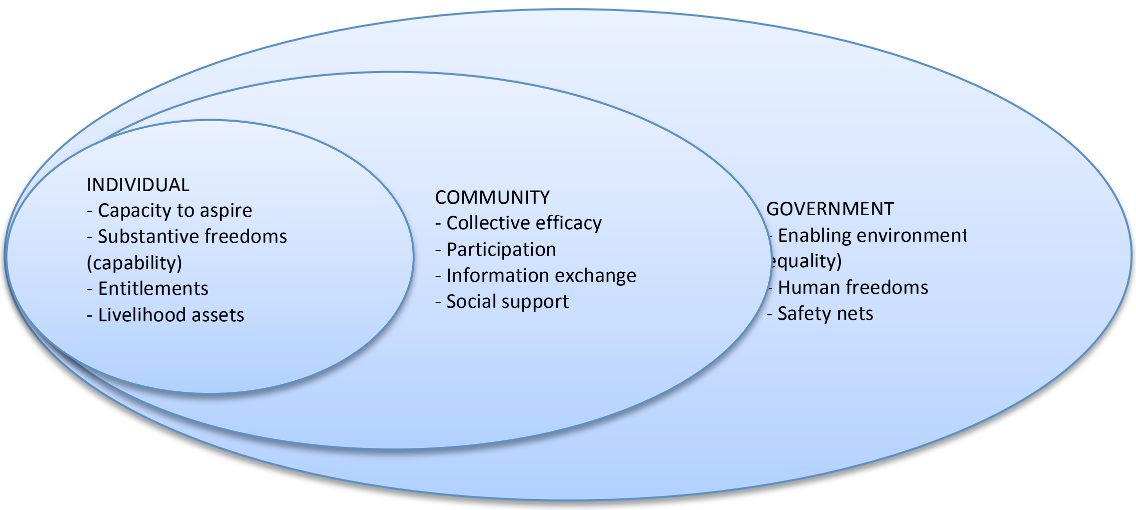
In regards to the four pillars cited above, the environmental pillar affirms that we do not just live within the environment but that the environment constitutes the conditions necessary for human existence. Hence we are part of the environment in as much as the environment is an integral part of our development. Predicated on the irreversible role of anthropogenic activities on the environment, the pillar stresses the need for humanity to preserve the environment to ensure the continuity of humankind. Equally, the economic pillar is focused on economic growth that meets human needs while preserving the environment for present and future generations. The social pillar further raises an awareness of intra- and intergenerational equity, thus encompassing the interests of all social groups at present and in the future. While governance has been discussed before now, it faces the risk of being conflated with good governance (accountability, transparency, and enhanced participation), overshadowing effective governance (rule of law, capacity building, foresight and long-term planning) and equitable governance (social justice and fairness) (Biermann et al., 2014). Similar to the MDGs, there is an added risk of placing disproportionate emphasis on global governance[3] and the problems of earth system governance under the banner of

[3] The notion of governance as it is conceived by the UN post-2015 development agenda encompasses more than local governance. The UN (2012b) report stresses that recent global trends in food, fuel, and financial crises including climate change, migration (and perhaps terrorism) have only proven that the world is very interconnected, yet there are global governance deficits to face these global challenges. The report thus called for stronger global governance and accountability at this level.

"planetary stewardship" and the notion that "we are in this together" vis-à-vis local governance and local problems (see Gray, 2015). These are some weakness of the SDGs.

A critical test for good governance is nonetheless how countries respond to risk in the form of extreme and unpredictable conditions of natural hazards. For the progress Australia has made in its drought policy, the WorldBank and IMF (2014) regard it as an example of a country with good governance (see p. 132). The Australian drought policy stresses risk management and preparedness rather than disaster response. It does so through focusing primarily on capacity building so as to minimize the need for government intervention (UN/ISDR, 2007, p. 18). Through forging proactive rather than reactive solutions to drought, risk such as that exemplified by food insecurity and famine is prevented, drought resilient societies are generated, and sustainability is ensured. The example of Australia ties in with the belief that when governance provides an enabling environment for sustainability, the end result should be a risk resilient society as demonstrated further by the risk model presented below.

Figure 2: Resilience Model



Adapted from: Paton and Johnston (2001)

Accordingly, from the perspective of Rugalema (2000), a risk resilient society should be able to deal successfully with risk. This implies that when communities encounter shocks, they should be able to 'rebound from the nadir of the disaster' (p. 538) after the hardship has elapsed, where the assets disposed of during hardship are recovered and food production is restored. Thus, the implication is that under conditions of bad governance, risk increases, resilience decreases, and sustainability stalls whereas under conditions of good governance, resilience increases, risk decreases, and sustainability becomes more achievable (see Figures 3, 4).

Figure 3: Bad Governance

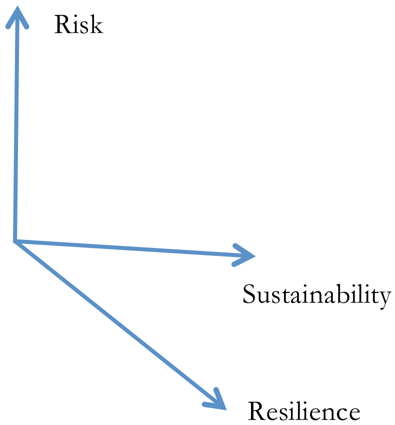
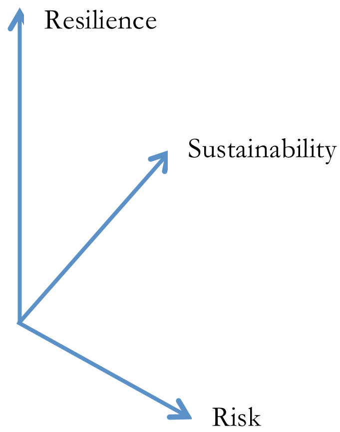


Figure 4: Good Governance



Source: Author

The fact that governance as a formal institution affects the performance of the economy is hardly controversial; nor is the fact that the performance of the economy over time reflects the institutional policies (North, 1990, p. 3). In fact, as North goes on to add, institutions reduce uncertainty by providing structures which foster stability. The problem with many governance structures however, as Motter (2015) asserts, is that institutional processes tend to be dominated by 'particular interests' – usually political, that overlook the common good, ultimately foiling the prospects of achieving inclusive growth and equitable social development. In addition, Motter submits that there is an inherent tendency for politicians to sacrifice the long-term perspective that sustainable development requires to the short-term pressure of the electoral cycle. Lastly, he also posits that in many countries the often thin divide between executive and legislative powers remains feeble, thus politicians often snub and or supplant the rule of law to preserve their own interests versus the common good.

The paper will now go on to relay governance issues in Zimbabwe, drawing particularly on effects on the poorer citizens, in terms of risk, resilience, and sustainability. The Zimbabwean situation is far too complex to be downgraded to a single plot. However for the role that governance plays, Cain (2016) highlights that under the rule of the incumbent government, "Zimbabweans have been subject to gross violations of property rights, including state-sponsored expropriation and vandalism, corrupt politicians, restrictive business regulations, and an abysmal monetary policy"(p. 1). As Cain points out, any one of these factors would have been detrimental to any economy, which explains why all of them combined have caused untold devastation for a country that once beamed as the bread basket of Africa. Cain concludes that poor governance is at the core of Zimbabwe's problems. Quoting the first inaugural address of the former American President Ronald Reagan, he thus writes, "Government is not the solution to the problem; government is the problem."

Journeying from Colonialism to Welfarism, Then on to Neoliberalism

According to Chikwanha-Dzenga et al. (2001, p. 3), Zimbabwe, formerly known as Rhodesia is in large part a prisoner of its history, and as Moore (2005, p. 1) concurs, a spectre haunts Zimbabwe - a spectre of its brutal colonial past. Despite the native government's rhetoric of redressing colonially inherited imbalances, the onset of independence from British colonial rule remained blemished by the control of 70% of the best farming land by the white minority who made up 1% of the population (Zamponi, 2005). The white minority had taken the bulk of the prime land and relegated the native majority onto marginal and agro-ecologically poor land under the provisions of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 (Kanyenze et al., 2011). The irony of this is that the rural areas with an estimated carrying capacity of 275,000 families had carried a number of about 700,000 families by independence in 1980 (Friis-Hansen, 1995). In contrast, at least 60% of the white farming areas lay idle or underutilized with each farm ranging between 500 and 2000 hectares (Harold-Barry, 2004). As part of its commitment to redressing the imbalances, the incumbent government pledged to resettle at least 162,000 rural families within the first five years of independence (Mlambo, 2014). In line with the Lancaster House Agreement, the British government under Thatcher would meet part of the cost for the market-based instrument of land reform allowing for land to be bought back from the white minority using the fair market value (FMV) principle of 'willing seller willing buyer' (Chung, 2006). But by 1984, only 34,000 families had been resettled (Jacobs, 1991), by 1989, 52,000 families had been resettled, and by 1990, 71,000 families had been resettled (Mlambo, 2014). There are claims that during this period, the government had misappropriated some of the land reclamation funds by securing land for the ruling elite as opposed to the landless rural people (Goebel, 2005). This is argued to be part of the reason why the British government under Blair later went on to cease funding for the resettlement program (Chung, 2006).

Coupled with the slow-paced land redistributions, the pitiful living conditions in the rural areas led to rural discontent in the 1980s (Mlambo, 2014). Mlambo reports that during this period there were various attempted farm invasions on white minority land. The response from the government was to forcibly evict the illegal settlers. The government criticized the occupiers as unruly elements bent on disrupting the country's economy (p. 225). Further, the government told the 'unruly elements' that it preferred to resettle people who waited patiently rather than those who preferred to be squatters (Chiviya, 1982, p. 165). It is no wonder then that the white minority praised the native government in the first decade of independence (Mlambo, 2014, p. 224). Against the pitiful living conditions of rural people, a white citizen was cited in Mandaza (1986) as saying, "We have a house, a swimming pool, a tennis court, three servants … We're not living in Rhodesia. We're living in Zimbabwe*"* (p. 58).

Taking into consideration their excessive affluence in comparison to the native poor, Mumbengegwi (1986) comments that the native government had, on top of a dual enclave society, also inherited a spoilt white bourgeoisie.[4] However, to address the colonially inherited imbalances, the Growth with Equity Strategy of 1981 paved the way for the improvement of several aspects of rural infrastructure (Kadhani, 1986). The government aimed for rural electrification, the construction of roads, schools, clinics, boreholes, sanitation, and the development of rural growth points as business centers (Mangiza & Helmsing, 1991). Paying particular attention to the latter, these settlements had been earmarked for development through the Integrated Rural Development Plan of 1978,[5] and would serve as the sphere of influence for rural areas (Wekwete, 1988). According to Manyanhaire et al. (2011), the set targets were too ambitious, because in the end, not all districts managed to get business centers. For those that did, the growth points soon became characterized by stagnation and decay. Chirisa et al. (2013) essentially classify most growth points as downward transition regions.

The government also initiated health and education reforms in both rural and urban areas, the benefits of which were mostly felt in the first decade of independence (Muzondidya, 2008). For example, at independence, rural health care was so bad that for every 1000 babies born in Mufakose (a high density suburb in Harare) 21 would die before they reached age 1, whereas, for every 1000 babies born in Binga (a District in rural Zimbabwe) 300 would die before they reached age 1 (Agere, 1986). Amidst the progress, the amended public health service sector could only cater to a small population, mostly in urban areas (Chimhowu, 2009), with only about 10% of the rural population covered by health care (Kanyenze et al., 2011). Most of the rural areas continued to receive health care and treatment from churches and missionaries (Chimhowu, 2009).[6] While positive pricing systems, credit and input supplies, and subsidies were also made available to the rural people, and further outcomes of development were promised (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2008), not much development progress ended up being achieved in the rural areas (Moyo, 2007). Muzondidya (2008) thus concludes that

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[4] The expression "dual enclave" refers to the coexistence of a 'sophisticated' urban economy and 'rustic' rural economy, including modern versus traditional farming institutions. In essence, the sophisticated economy operates as a narrow enclave in a largely traditional society (Mamdani, 1996).

[5] This is a development plan that had been initiated by the colonial government, but was later inherited by the native government.

[6] The situation did however improve due to the 'Health for all by 2000' Development Plan, but soon deteriorated again due to the ongoing economic crisis.

government policy did not efficiently renew rural economies or revive rural conditions of poverty.

Notwithstanding this, the first decade after independence was marked by other notable socioeconomic improvements. Real economic growth had been averaging 4.6% during the 1986-1990 period (Mazingi & Kamidza, 2011). Yet still, the growth had been highly disproportionate as the doors to economic growth had been open to only a few (Lopes, 1996) - the elites, who Muzondidya (2008) states comprised just 3% of the population made up of the white minority and a small black bourgeoisie.[7] On top of being highly disproportionate, the growth was been ephemeral in nature. After the boom period in the first decade after independence, Zimbabwe had succumbed to a bag of mixed fortune, ranging from the global economic recession in the 1980s, to weakening terms of trade, and high interest rates and oil prices (Mlambo, 2014; Muzondidya, 2008). The impacts of the State's welfarist policies were also starting to be felt. As Gordon (1984) points out, the policies gave rise to heavy investment in welfare expenditure, loss of control over fiscal spending, and a repeatedly overburdened budget. For instance, the education allocation budget between 1982 and 1983 was 22% of the national budget (Zvobvo, 1986). As a result, the Bretton Woods institutions with their preconditions and concomitants came to the rescue with a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), widely referred to in Zimbabwe as ESAP. SAPs are economic reform packages that comprise loans provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to Third World countries dealing with critical economic hardship (see Wamala, 2012).

In dire need of economic rescue, the government took to the Western neoliberal SAP. This was to lead to the accumulation of foreign debt and renewed lease of dependency on the West.[8] Moreover, the SAP saw inter alia, a 40% devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar; price controls, income controls, and labour relations controls; the removal of consumer subsidies, producer subsidies, educational subsidies (tuition support), healthcare subsidies, and transport subsidies; and investment controls, import restrictions, and a reduction in welfare spending (Kanyenze et al., 2011). Then Education Minister Fay Chung also pointed out that:

> Tens of thousands of black workers lost their jobs … fees were introduced for hospital and clinic services: as a result the poorer half of the population could no longer enjoy even the most rudimentary of medical services … In the education sector, I managed as minister to stop the introduction of primary school fees in rural areas where 70 per cent of the population lived,

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[7] As compared to 4,500 white commercial farmers, as few as 300 natives owned commercial farms at independence (Moyo, 1986).

[8] The Zimbabwean government had inherited little external debt from the colonial government but its debt started accumulating through money borrowed for welfare programs (see Goebel (2005).

> but they were introduced in the urban areas. (Chung, 2006, p. 266)

The outcomes of the SAP contradicted the initial government claims that the Zimbabwean SAP was tailored to suit native needs (see Maya, 1988). Quite the contrary: where the rich would readily respond to structural changes, the poor were constrained by a lack of assets and stable incomes and the loss of State welfare (Lopes, 1996). In addition to cutbacks in social services and a concomitant decline in general welfare, there was spiralling inflation (ibid). As such, ESAP was a washout that undermined the government's efforts of the first decade after independence. It heightened poverty and created further inequalities (Jauch, 2007). The impacts of the ESAP were felt deeply by the rural poor because it intensified existing poverty issues (Marquette, 1997): user fees for education and health among other welfare subsidies had been removed; many jobs had been lost due to workforce restructuring; and workers that survived retrenchment suffered a real minimum wage decline. The effects of ESAP thus increased the residual effects of the historical colonial imbalances while at the same time heightening another problem of that day and age - the major drought of 1992.[9] Overall, the early 1990s were dramatic years which I believe constitute a crucial chapter in the crafting and coalescence of crises in Zimbabwe. With two droughts (one astronomical), the early 1990s marked the spiralling of natural risk and risk that is socioeconomic and political in nature.

Abandoning Failed Welfarism and Neoliberalism for Nationalism

Having flirted with the welfarist policies of nominal socialism and the Structural Adjustment policies of neoliberal capitalism and failed, the government moved on to an authoritarian nationalist ideology leading to more spiralling of risk. In the early years of this ideological shift, the ex-liberation war heroes' coercive requests for war gratuities in 1997 were answered with financial disbursements amounting to ZWD$50,000 per genuine war veteran, and an added ZWD$5,000 lifetime gratuity paid monthly. The total cost of this would amount to about ZWD$4 billion of the national funds (Chitiyo, 2000). Though warranted to an extent, the expenditure was impromptu and unbudgeted. Despite this the Reserve Bank of the country printed money for the unbudgeted exercise. But before the end of the year, the country had plunged into an economic ditch. On November 14, 1997, for the first time in Zimbabwean history, the currency dropped 72% against the US Dollar. This day is remembered in Zimbabwean history as Black Friday. A related

[9] 1992 was a critical year in the history of Zimbabwe, where alongside the socioeconomic effects of the ESAP there was a serious drought. Another drought ensued in 1994/95.

defining moment in the history of Zimbabwe, is that of the despatchment of 3,000 Zimbabwean troops, later amounting to 11,000, sent to fight a SADC cause in the Democratic Republic of Congo war against Ugandan and Rwandan backed rebels in 1998 (Mbeki, 2009). This move was again unpremeditated, and in following the previous pattern, more bank notes were printed for the unbudgeted assignment, resulting in a furthered snowballing inflationary situation.

With a full-blown economic collapse looming over the horizon, 1999 saw the birth of a formidable opposition party - the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which was birthed out of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). The ZCTU had been established by the ruling party after independence in 1981 to represent the black majority workforce. By the late 1990s however, the union had become disillusioned by the ruling party's oppressive rule and unresponsive policies. Thus the MDC sought to restore the rule of law as well as to enact sound economic policies. The birth of the MDC marked the materialization of political tensions that had been escalating but held back by civic fear. This period was characterized by extensive civic protests that were met with active resistance from the armed forces. Surely everything in the country had become politicized, including the land reform operation. While the market-based instruments of land reform had been suspended a few years back, land grievances by rural farmers who were now supported by ex-liberation war fighters had re-emerged. Faced with the possibility of losing electoral votes to the opposition party, the government made the populist decision of revisiting the land question. However, because the British government had withdrawn the fund to carry out the 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' transactions, the only alternative to land redistribution was by forceful accumulation or primitive accumulation. The year 2000 was therefore characterized by a level of political violence not seen since the 1980s. The Third Chimurenga War[10] had started under the guise of land reform.

Aside from the targeted white farmers, the land invasions affected close to 350,000 native farm laborers (Richardson, 2005), who together with their families amounted to over a million people (PHR, 2009). This on its own resulted in one of the country's major internal population displacements (IDMC, 2008). The land invasions are said to have also dismantled the commercial farming sector, which had been a crucial sector, contributing 15-19% of the country's GDP and 60% of its foreign exchange revenue (UNECA, 2002). As Mbeki (2009) also points out, the commercial farming sector was the key driver in generating 60% of raw materials for secondary industries, export goods for foreign markets, and fertilizers, pesticides, and other agro-equipment for the local market, thus bringing in revenue. Therefore the collapse of the commercial farming sector

[10] The first Chimurenga and Second Chimurenga Wars were anti-colonial rule struggles. The Third Chimurenga War was a racialized post-colonial land struggle (see Mlambo, 2014).

contributed to food insecurity, mass unemployment, increased hyperinflation, political turbulence, and the general weakening of the economy.

Following the chaotic situation and apparent human rights violations, economic sanctions were imposed on Zimbabwe by the West, first by the EU in 2002 and then America in 2003. The Reserve Bank Governor at the time, Dr. Gideon Gono (2006) summed up some of the effects of the sanctions as: negative impacts on the financial sector; the decline in balance of payment support; sustained decline in offshore financing; sustained decline in long-term capital; socio-economic repercussions with grave development impacts on the health sector, agricultural and rural sector, education sector, as well as on investment and growth. Despite this very familiar list of consequences broadcasted endlessly by the government, the fact remains that the economic sanctions were largely targeted (Mlambo, 2014). The Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001, which is often the reference point for US sanctions, was merely an intervention policy set to pressure the government into restoring order in Zimbabwe. Section 4 of ZDERA states:

> Through economic mismanagement, undemocratic practices, and the costly deployment of troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Government of Zimbabwe has rendered itself ineligible to participate in International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and International Monetary Fund programs which would otherwise be providing substantial resources to assist in the recovery and modernization of Zimbabwe's economy.[11]

Although ZDERA directs the US representatives at major international financial institutions (IFIs) to oppose any new credits or debt relief for Zimbabwe, it has had no distinct impact in that regard. The IMF (2001) claims that prior to 2000, Zimbabwe had defaulted its debt payment plans and was already on those grounds ineligible for further funding. As already implied, the actual sanctions by the US (i.e. Executive Order 13288) were issued in 2003 and were targeted at specific individuals[12] (Leo & Moss, 2009). The EU had earlier issued its own sanctions in 2002. Similarly, these were smart sanctions aimed at specific government officials. Unlike the US, the EU included an arms embargo and a curb on certain trade items. Also unlike the US, the EU lifted its sanctions on Zimbabwe in 2014.

In all this, what is constantly discounted by pro-government commentators is that it is Zimbabwe's debt burden

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[11] Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 US Public Law 107-99, December 21, 2001.

[12] In this case, US-based assets of 137 members of Zimbabwe's ruling party were frozen, including 36 companies and 28 farms. Also under Executive Order 13288, US entities and persons are prohibited from conducting business transactions with these people, and travel sanctions against these people are also in place.

(in the range of $7 billion) and not the sanctions that is what presently hinders the country from accessing funds from IFIs to alleviate the economic strain. Zimbabwe, faced with utmost isolation in the 1960s-70s had ironically survived economic sanctions under the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) as Rhodesia. During this isolation period there had been an economic boom between 1965 and 1972 evidenced by an annual GDP growth of 6% (Sachikonye, 2011), leading to the conclusion that: "Rhodesia's survival, years later, was ipso facto proof, for popular opinion as well as for many scholars, that 'sanctions don't work.*"* (Minter & Schmidt, 1988, p. 207)

Embittered by the current sanctions however, the government perceived a Western conspiracy against Zimbabwe. Determined to challenge the West, the government continued with its firm rule, now even more determined to be anti-Western imperialist in every sense. However this did not help the economy that had already nose-dived into the abyss of doom. At the end of 2000, per capita incomes were lower than in 1960 (Ndlela, 2009), and by 2004, exports were a third of what they had been in 1977 (Mlambo, 2014).

By the end of 2005, the loss of the country's wealth from land seizures alone was estimated to be around ZWD$5.3billion. This amount is believed to be more than all the foreign aid Zimbabwe had received since independence (Richardson, 2013). Other studies also claim that the income Zimbabwe lost between 1999 and 2004 alone exceeds losses suffered by countries like Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone in their individual conflicts (Clemence & Moss, 2005). By now, it seemed that everything that could possibly go wrong in Zimbabwe had gone wrong, including the weather (Mbeki, 2009). Conditions of frequent drought spelled out uncertainty in a country where over half the population is rural, needing food aid to supplement its yield deficits (Richardson, 2013).

Due to the escalating interlocking crises, the inflation rate hit a record 231 million percent in 2008, making Zimbabwe the first country to hyper inflate in the 21st century.[13] Richardson (2013) states that by 2008, Zimbabwe was 36% poorer than it was in 1998. Although things had been progressively souring for Zimbabwe between 1996 and 1998, it had remained among some of the fastest growing African economies. The remarkable U-turn took place between 1999 and 2008 when it became one of the fastest shrinking African economies (Kaminski & Ng, 2013). Hence with empty shelves in the supermarkets, unprecedented fuel shortages, yet another drought, food insecurity, and a valueless currency, the year 2008 marked the peak of the Zimbabwean crises. The economic crisis also led to water shortages, waste accumulation, and sanitation problems. These in turn culminated into a countrywide cholera epidemic. The epidemic erupted in August 2008 and lasted until June 2009,

[13] Zimbabwe's inflation record comes second to Hungary in world history.

killing at least 4,000 people, with over 100,000 reported cases of illness (McSweeny, 2011). It was the worst cholera case in Africa in about 15 years (Mukandavire et al., 2011). An unforgettable headline from a 2008 newspaper article read: "Zimbabwe's Cholera Victims Ten Times more Likely to Die."[14]

The reasoning behind the headline was that the high fatalities were being compounded by other factors such as poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS, and a poor public health system. By November 2008, newspaper reports revealed that three out of Zimbabwe's four major public hospitals had shut down, along with the country's only medical school. The fourth major hospital was functioning only with two wards, no operating rooms, minimal medical staff, and a shortage of basic drugs (Hungwe, 2008). This information was corroborated by studies done by the Physicians for Human Rights, which identified two of the closed hospitals as Parirenyatwa and Harare Central Hospital. These are Harare's two largest hospitals, and both had shut their doors in November 2008. At that time it is said that Harare Central Hospital had not had running water since August 2008 (PHR, 2009). The timing for the closure of the health centers was untimely as this was about four months into the cholera epidemic and was the time when people needed health facilities the most (ibid). Some notable quotes in response to the health situation during this period include the following:

> Hospital wards in one of Zimbabwe's main hospitals bear a resemblance to deserted, poor rural classrooms and the country's empty supermarkets.[15]
> The neglect of the health sector by the government is genocide … To me nothing can explain this better, it's genocide, simple.[16]
> Right now I have no anti-hypertensives, no antiasthmatics, no analgesics, nothing for pain … I have a woman in labour, I have no way of monitoring blood pressure … and I have no suture material to do a repair if she tears.[17]
> I have no pain medication, I have some antibiotics, but no nurses … If I don't operate the child will die, but if I operate the child will also die.[18]

According to National Science Foundation's President Rita Colwell (2013) the cholera outbreak should never have gotten this far out of hand; Zimbabwe had been previously renowned for its fairly good health system and should have managed the outbreak well. But due to the economic crisis, what started off as a

[14] Berger and Thornycroft (2008).
[15] Doctor representing the Zimbabwe Junior Doctor Association cited in Hungwe (2008).
[16] *ibid.*
[17] Nurse in a Rural Clinic in Zimbabwe cited in PHR (2009).
[18] Pediatric Surgeon in a major hospital in Zimbabwe cited in Hungwe (2008).

sanitation problem spiralled into an alarming extermination of people by a manageable disease. Food insecurity during the peak economic crisis also increased the incidence of tuberculosis, which to some extent is linked to the HIV/AIDS virus (Burke et al., 2014). Improved TB management since the climax of the crises suggests that the TB epidemic at first mirrored the socioeconomic collapse and then the subsequent recovery of the country (ibid).

Given the above, in 2008, Zimbabwe had a record low life expectancy of 34 years for women. The life expectancy for men was 37, and for both sexes these figures were down from 62 years in 1990 (PHR, 2009). The economic situation also spiralled into a 'mass exodus,' which as one newspaper article noted: *A [South African] border official called it a human tsunami of people fleeing the nation.*[19]

Explaining the mass exodus, a government physician disclosed his monthly gross income in ZWD which at the time (November 2008) was worth USD $0.32 (PHR, 2009). Yet due to the inflationary situation, prices were said to be doubling every 24.7 hours (Richardson, 2013). Inevitably, the country suffered an enormous brain drain (Mbeki, 2009).

On December 4, 2008, the President declared a state of national emergency. But, this was only in response to the cholera situation. As far as all else was concerned, the country was considered to be running business as usual.

Reflections on Failed Nationalism

Fast forwarding to the present day, set within a context of a liquidity crunch, weak financial institutions, poor public sector delivery, closure of companies, a shrunken labor market, high unemployment rate, informalization of the economy, high decent work deficits, low industry productivity, and reduced foreign direct investments, Zimbabwe's economy remains compromised (IMF, 2014). Commendable economic progress has however taken place since 2008. For as Richardson (2013) states, "*…to be fair, the country is better off than it was…*" in 2008 (p. 2). To ameliorate the hyperinflation, an appointed Government of National Unity (GNU)[20] had discontinued the local currency in 2009, introducing a multicurrency system which is chiefly dollarized.[21]

Irrespective of the marked progress, the economy is still relatively fragile, as was demonstrated by a deceleration in real GDP growth from 10.6% in 2011 to an estimated 4.4% in 2012, (AEO, 2013) and 3.3% in 2013 (IMF, 2014), but with a predicted rise of 5.7% in 2014 (AEO, 2013). The growth was debated by Article IV of the IMF Consultation which showed that the 'economic rebound' experienced by Zimbabwe since 2009 was ephemeral (IMF, 2014). The debate was justified by a further

[19] theTrumpet (2007).
[20] Government of National Unity consisting of ruling party ZANU PF and opposition parties MDC T and MDC M. The GNU was dissolved after the 2013 Presidential elections.
[21] The US dollar is the official currency for government trade.

deceleration of real GDP growth to 1.5% in 2015 (UNECA, 2016). In support of the downward spiral in GDP growth, Richardson (2013) argued that the economic growth rates seen in Zimbabwe after 2009 did not reflect Zimbabwe's long-term economic prospects. Instead they drew attention away from the enduring economic problems such as the ones already mentioned.

Now nearly seven years since the temporary restoration of the economy in 2009, industrial capacity has decreased from 57% to 34% (Pilling & England, 2016). The capacity utilization levels in the manufacturing sector have dropped due to a slowdown in business activity. In addition, consumer prices have fallen by between 2-4% (ibid). This means that there is a shortage of money (the US dollar) in circulation which has impacted consumer spending. As a result, supply of goods is high, demand is low, and in turn, consumer prices are falling. In short, inflation has been replaced by deflation. Pilling and England (2016) note the significance of this, citing a Zimbabwean banker who stated: for the man on the street deflation looks good, but to an economist, the economy is going through stagnation and the country, deindustrialisation. Subsequently, as long as there is no production in the economy, it does not matter what currency is in use, or in local street language, 'it is impossible to rig the economy.'[22]

Zimbabwe's sick economy is also characterized by the high informalization of the economy. One study revealed that the informal sector functions as the second economy of the country and had escalated from 10% at independence in 1980 to 70% in 2008 (Makochekanwa, 2012). More recently, TheEconomist (2015) claimed that the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) disclosed that 94.5% of the 6.3 million people defined as employed were working in the informal economy. While some critics had questioned the broad definition used of informality, using a stricter definition of the term only reduced the number down to 86%. The loss of formal employment, informalization also leads to unemployment - another symptom of the sick economy. Actual figures for unemployment are disputed among major organizations such as ZIMSTAT, National Social Security Authority (NSSA) and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU), with the government parastatal ZIMSTAT giving the lowest figures of unemployment rate of 11%. The more realistic, albeit speculative, figures of unemployment in Zimbabwe range between 94% and 80% for the 2008 to 2014 period. Makochekanwa (2012), maintains that the unemployment rate went up from 70% in 2003 to 94% at the peak of the crises in 2008. A local newspaper however revealed an unemployment rate of 80% based on figures sourced from a ZCTU survey in 2014.[23]

Nonetheless, aside from already noted undulant real GDP, the GDP per capita has also dramatically shifted from 9.2% in 2011 to an estimated 3.1% in 2012, with a further 3% decline in

[22] Figure of speech used typically by disenfranchised citizens who mockingly say that while it may be possible for the government to rig electoral votes, it will be impossible for it to rig the failing economy.
[23] Mtomba (2014).

2014 (AEO, 2013). This suggests new forms of vulnerability which will be extensive, possibly exceeding the usual vulnerability that is considered as possessing either the face of a peasant or that of a woman. To highlight the policy environment presiding over the economic crises, the situation is said to be one of " … the persistence of macroeconomic instabilities combined with policy responses only aggravating rather than remedying economic problems" (Kaminski & Ng, 2013, p. 2). These two scholars reason that the economic crisis in Zimbabwe is a result of a combination of factors, a mixture of which defies economic logic. What is less baffling according to their argument is that the demise is entirely home-brewed. A vicious cycle of bad policies has played an instrumental role in the deterioration of the business environment, causing negative implications for industry growth, foreign direct investment, employment, and so forth. In further explaining the policies that lead to the crises, Munemo (2012) reasoned that in contexts where policy making is personalized rather than institutionalized, people perish at the whim of the personal ruler. And so to borrow from the usage of a Shakespearean expression by Mkandawire and Soludo (2003), the Zimbabwean situation, 'is not in its unlucky stars' but is a result of the many acts of omission and commission that have resulted in an interlocked crisis.

Conclusion: Weighing in the Countervailing Effect of Governance in Zimbabwe

In simple terms, to countervail is to offset something through countering it with equal force. Used in its denotative sense, the word countervailing thus entails the idea of 'counter forces.' In this paper, I presented three concepts within a nexus (risk, resilience, and sustainability) which I coupled with governance - a concept having equal force but an opposite effect. In essence, governance serves as the confounder[24] countervailing outcomes under each of the concepts within the nexus (risk, resilience, and sustainability). In the opening sections of the paper, I highlighted the impact that governance has toward increasing risk, decreasing resilience, and stalling sustainability. As I showed further, the significance of governance in propelling transformative change in the direction of inclusive and people-centered sustainable development is supported by reports from the UNDP (2014), UN (2012a) and UN (2012b). However, I also went on to highlight some of the challenges which threaten governance by citing Motter (2015) who asserted three main points:

[24] The term confounder used here is borrowed from Statistics where it is defined as a variable related to variables of interest that either obscures or accentuates the relation between them (see Meinert, 1986, p. 285). In this instance, bad governance is argued to be the variable that lessens resilience and sustainability, accentuating conditions of risk, while good governance is said to have the opposite (positive) effect.

(1) Political processes tend to be dominated by 'particular interests' – usually political, that overlook the common good ultimately foiling the prospects of achieving inclusive growth and equitable social development

(2) There is an inherent tendency for politicians to sacrifice the long-term perspective that sustainable development requires to the short-term pressure of the electoral cycle;

(3) In many countries the often thin divide between executive and legislative powers remains feeble, thus politicians often snub and or supplant the rule of law to preserve their own interests versus the common good.

The challenges put forward by Motter very much reflect the Zimbabwean situation. The retrospective analysis of the crisis situation in the country paints a clear picture of how governance issues countervail the risk, resilience, and sustainability nexus. Through the narrative of the crisis, we see the manifestation of Ribot's[25] claim that, 'vulnerability just does not fall from the sky.' Crucially, we directly see how political instability can lead to an economic crisis and how an economic crisis can in turn lead to implications on the health, education, and agriculture sectors and the welfare of an entire population found within the crisis region. In such a fragile environment, the cases of poverty feed into the perpetuation and escalation of natural risk, health risk, political risk, and economic risk – problems which overlap, impinging more directly on people's adaptive capacities. McGregor et al. (2011) confirm that more and more, the Zimbabwean people are finding themselves having to adapt to multiple stressors. In the desperate case of Zimbabwe, vulnerability to concurrent shocks has translated directly into poverty, sickness or death (Coltart, 2008). Upon consulting other sources to see how bad the governance problem looks in Zimbabwe, I came across the indicators and rankings seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Zimbabwe Governance and Sustainable Development Indicators and Ranking

Concept (attribute)	**Variables**	**Indicators of Variable**	**Zimbabwe Global Ranking**
Governance	Corruption	Corruption Perception Index as given by Transparency International 2013	150/168 countries
	Freedom	Human Freedom Index as given by the CATO	149/152 countries

[25] Ribot (2009).

		Institute 2015	
Inclusive economic development (sustainable development economic dimension)	Economic capacity of the State Economic output per person	GDP growth as given by Index Mundi 2014 GDP per capita (PPP) given by Index Mundi	156/228 countries 227/228 countries
Inclusive social development (sustainable development social dimension)	Standard of living	Human Development Index as given by UNDP 2015	155/188 countries
Environmental protection (sustainable development environment dimension)	Air quality	CO_2 emissions per capita as given by Index Mundi 2011	142/190 **ranking from highest to lowest, so Zimbabwe is a low emitter

Source: Author

Taking everything into account, all hopes of sustainability which in Zimbabwe is often conflated with environmental sustainability[26] seem to be futile at present. This picture presents a sharp contrast to the conditions in regions where good governance is practiced as seen through outcomes such as peaceful, stable, resilient societies which are sustainable. We must be mindful however of the fact that sustainability is more a journey than a destination (Esty, 2009, p. 179), and that sustainability asserts the need to recognise present risk, while learning from past risk, concurrently planning for future risk. The important thing as Esty says is to know where on the path of sustainability you are. Thus there is still hope for Zimbabwe if the government commits to improving the justice delivery system and rule of law; mechanisms for peace-building and for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict; accountability in the management of public resources and service delivery; and people's participation in democratic governance structures and processes.

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[26] Refer to the pillars of sustainability in Figure 1. The three pillars of sustainability suggest that for sustainability to be possible, the pillars must be given equal consideration; the three pillars being - social sustainability, environmental sustainability, and economic sustainability. In the case of Zimbabwe, the country boasts of being a low carbon emitter or a net carbon sink yet, the country trails behind in other environmental indicators, let alone social and economic ones.

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