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Myth, memory, and political settlements in the city: compounded disadvantage and a path for plausible futures

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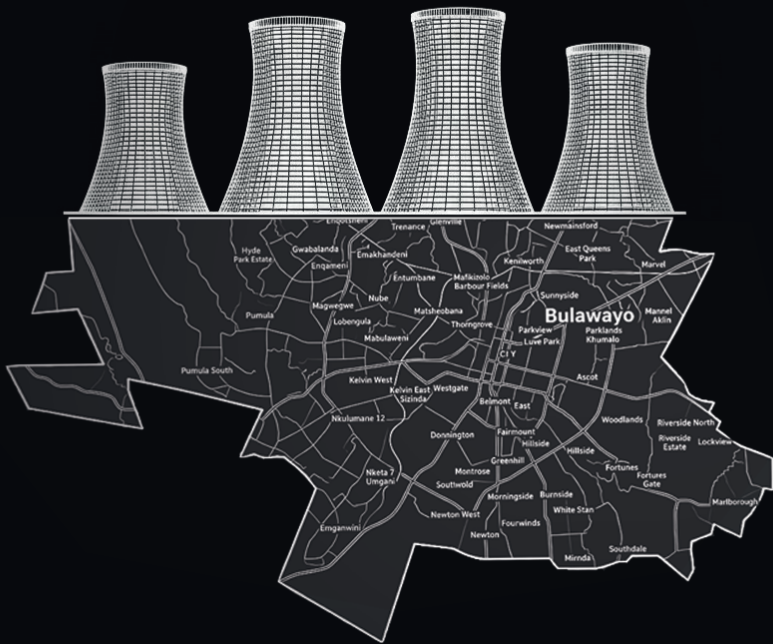
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MYTH, MEMORY &
POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS
IN THE CITY

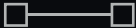
Compounded Disadvantage *and*
a Path *for* Plausible Futures



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M.B. NDLOVU

This thesis interrogates the structural, symbolic, and affective dimensions of urban disadvantage in Zimbabwe’s second city, Bulawayo. It positions disadvantage not as a static outcome but as a layered process produced through political settlements, spatial arrangements, historical trauma, and affective practices of survival and resistance. Drawing on political economy, memory studies, and futures thinking, the study examines how colonial legacies, post-independence political settlements, and the centralisation of political power, have entrenched Bulawayo’s disadvantage, while also illuminating pathways for reimagining inclusive urban futures.

Anchored in Mushtaq Khan’s political settlements framework, the analysis traces how elite bargaining, militarised governance, and patron-client networks have institutionalised disadvantage. These dynamics are compounded by ethno-political mythologies that cast Bulawayo as a “dissident city”. Findings foreground how residents navigate disadvantage, as seen through urban survival strategies, informal economies, political silences, and affective practices of accumulation, thus revealing both structural constraints and resilient agency. By centring citizen narratives alongside historical and statistical analysis, the study recognises disadvantage as simultaneously historical, contemporary, and prospective. Ultimately, Bulawayo is positioned not only as a site of disadvantage but also as a space of memory, myth, resilience, and possibility.



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