

## ENVIRONMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE: THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

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### ABSTRACT

Over the years, discourses on sustainable development have caused intense debate and conflicts around issues to do with the environment and culture. The debates and conflicts have been chiefly a result that development which is environmentally and culturally friendly is practically difficult to achieve. This is because more often than not issues of development conflict with those to do with culture and the environment. This paper is based on the archaeological, environment and/or cultural impact assessment undertaken at Sviba heritage site, south central of Zimbabwe. The study reveals conflicting interests between traditional leadership and the 'development architectures'- a private company named Econet Wireless- within a cultural landscape which unfortunately is already under ownership dispute. The study reveals that progress of erecting a telecommunication booster by Econet Wireless has been hampered as a result of different conceptions of culture, environment and sustainable development by government institutions, traditional leadership and local communities concerned. This has been so in spite of indications that many people in the studied area are in dire need of mobile network connections. In the light of this situation, the present paper calls for the drafting of a comprehensive sustainable development road map that will enhance development that is friendly to the environmental, cultural, economic and political setting of communities involved.

**Keywords:** Sviba cultural landscape, Econet Wireless, sustainable development, stakeholders, NMMZ, conflicts

### INTRODUCTION

The world-over, discourses on sustainable development have caused intense debates and conflicts around issues to do with the environment and culture. The debates and conflicts have been chiefly a result that sustainable development or development which is environmentally and culturally friendly is practically difficult to achieve.

On a different note, the issues normally raised around sustainable development have led some schools of thought to criticise what they have termed the overuse of the term 'sustainable'. Temple (1992) argues that everything is now sustainable as one can now hear of sustainable development, sustainable growth, sustainable economies, sustainable societies, sustainable agriculture, sustainable conservation, and the list is endless. This obsession with the use of the term 'sustainable' seems to have been a result that worldwide, communities especially the developing countries' rural areas continue to lose invaluable cultural resources as myriad infrastructural developments such as dams, roads, telecommunication structures, power stations, hotels, schools etc are being undertaken. Most of these infrastructural

developments conflict with environment conservation and culture of the communities where the structures are constructed. As noted by Kiriyama et al (2010: 1), “as African countries endeavour to improve the standard of living for their people, they have sought to attract new investments and also embarked on accelerated development programmes meant to provide basic infrastructure for their citizens. The accelerated development programmes normally result in conflict with the communities where the programmes are implemented, while in general, development projects result in cultural properties that include natural, cultural, movable, immovable, tangible and intangible resources being destroyed in most cases. Cultural landscapes are some heritage properties that have not been spared in this wave of development that has cut across Africa, southern parts in particular. Otto Schluter (geographer from German) is credited with having formally used the term cultural landscape as an academic term in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that he defined as “a landscape that is created by human culture” (James, P.E and Martin, G 1981: 177) over time. In its Operational Guidelines, the World Heritage Committee (WHC) defines cultural landscapes as;

*Cultural properties that represent combined works of nature and of man...They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal, (WHC Operational Guidelines, 2008:86).*

The concept of cultural landscapes in heritage management was developed in Europe and as such Africa is still lagging behind as far as the management and preservation of these landscapes by western standards are concerned. The first cultural landscape to be listed on the prestigious World Heritage List is Tongariro National Park of New Zealand in 1993 and since then about forty other sites have been listed (Fowler 2003: 7). It is worrying that from this list, Africa has the least of sites regardless of her richness in both natural and cultural heritage sites that falls under this category. In Zimbabwe out of five sites on the World Heritage List only Matopos cultural landscape was nominated basing on the category. Coupled with other challenges, cultural landscapes continue to be threatened by development. Sustainable development has been suggested world wide as the solution to creating a better world for the present and future generation. However, its applicability when it comes to the management of cultural landscapes in Zimbabwe and beyond has remained a challenge to the developers, local communities, professionals and other stakeholders. Kiriyama et al (2010:4) argued that it is easy to talk of sustainable development with reference to natural heritage, for example, in the case of trees if certain trees or plants are affected other trees can be planted to replace them but this is not the case with cultural heritage – once destroyed it can never be replaced. As a result, sustainable development models are therefore a challenge to apply when it comes to cultural heritage as it is a non-renewable resource.

That said, this paper focuses on sustainable development on cultural landscapes. Using the case study of Sviba cultural landscape, located in south-central Zimbabwe about 7km from the famous Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site, this paper examines the challenges of sustainable development on cultural heritage sites so as to suggest possible ways of manoeuvring such problems. The study has been prompted by the Sviba cultural landscape that has been turned into a battle ground of contentions and conflicting interests between players namely local chiefs, the developer (Econet Wireless), Environmental Management Agency (EMA), National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) – organisation in charge of heritage management in the country and other governmental authorities. The main area of conflicts seems to be emanating from the critical issue of being “who is who” as far as sustainable development on cultural landscapes is concerned. The Archaeological and Cultural Impact Assessment (ACIA) (that forms the base of this study) conducted by the authors of this article proves beyond doubt that the area is indeed a cultural landscape that is

regarded as sacred by the local communities. However, ownership disputes between the two local traditional chiefs Murinye and Mugabe has made the situation more complicated.

This study has come up with lessons drawn from the folding events that have been taking place within Sviba cultural landscape since October 2011 when the development project by Econet Wireless in the area. Research, documentation and creation of cultural inventories in Zimbabwe have been suggested as some of the effective ways of avoiding mishaps such as those being experienced at Sviba cultural landscape.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Telecommunication development taking place in Zimbabwe can be regarded as central to the growth and development of the national economy: it is a catalyst for Zimbabwe's economic growth after a decade of economic turmoil. In Zimbabwe, there are currently three mobile telecommunication service providers namely, NetOne (government owned), Telecel and Econet Wireless. In a bid to increase their network coverage, the service providers are still setting up technical supporting structures mainly in form of base stations across the country. It is from such developmental projects that some cultural landscapes are being threatened.

In many cases, installation of base stations in Zimbabwe has been going on with little or no pre-development impact assessment and consultations of all stakeholders undertaken before installation. According to Environmental Management Agency (EMA) official, many of such projects such as wireless installations do not pose major threats to the environment. As such, Econet Wireless was given a green light to establish such projects without necessarily commissioning Environmental Impact Assessment. However, besides breaching of some Zimbabwean acts such as the Environmental Management Act Chapter 20:27 and National Museums and Monuments Act Chapter 25:11, the erection of wireless structures or boosters in non-urban areas has tended to favour highest mountains which in many cases are sacred and regarded as cultural landscapes by the local communities. In light of this observation, there has been serious outcry from traditional leaders across Zimbabwe pertaining to discretion of cultural landscapes during and before the installation of boosters. Cases in point include Nyazvizvi cultural landscape in Gutu District (Kuzipa, 2012: 4) and Sviba cultural landscape in south central Zimbabwe. The latter is the case study adopted in this paper. The civil works of these developments involve construction of the road that will be leading to the base stations which are usually situated at the apex of the mountains.

Due to poverty, lack of necessary infrastructures coupled with conflict of interests between players in cultural landscapes continues, many rural areas in Zimbabwe until recent times had no telecommunication services. Communication has been through writing of letters and sending of messengers which in many cases had proved ineffective in this age of technological advancement taking place across the globe. Besides, lack of modern day and effective communication services in the area under study is condensed with a number of hotels and other tourism players who rely heavily on effective communication systems in their day to day operations. In fact, it is around Sviba cultural landscapes where the following places of interest are found; Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site, Great Zimbabwe Hotel, Lodge at the Ancient City, Mutirikwi lakeshore chalets, Army chalets, Mayfair lodges, Noma Jeans Hotel and Great Zimbabwe University proposed site are all located. As such, one can realise that availability of mobile networks is imperative in such a locality.

Yet from a different perspective, the landscape is very culturally sensitive mainly due to the proximity to the historical Great Zimbabwe national monument. The monument, according to Huffman (1987:36) during the peak of its occupation

seems to have been inhabited by about 25 000 adults, thus becoming the largest settlement and cultural centre in sub-Saharan Africa during the time. In view of this reality, it is most likely that Great Zimbabwe's influence stretched beyond the present demarcation of 720 hectares (see Great Zimbabwe Management Plan First Draft 2012) covering areas such as Sviba.

Given this background, the major question that arises is: "How sustainable development in cultural landscapes such as Sviba can be implemented when developing telecommunication systems?" This question has caused a dilemma and serious challenges to other players in the Sviba case. On one hand, the base station project being executed by Econet Wireless has hit a deadlock as interested parties are locked in multifaceted disputes with regards to the development. On the other hand, business operators in the vicinity are eager to see the project being completed as it will enable smooth flow of their day to day transactions and boost their businesses. As reported by one hotel official (interview, 2012), many hotels lose 'high profiled' clients who shun them when they come across or hear of mobile network challenges that affects the region. Thus, it is crucial for Sviba cultural landscape's stakeholders to enter a 'sustainable dialogue' to facilitate the completion of the telecommunication base station in order to attain economic and social benefits to the area.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA**

Sviba cultural landscape is located approximately 33km south-east of Masvingo City. It is approximately 5km as the crow flies due east of Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site. The site, which is a hill with many tangible and intangible cultural heritages being the main geographical features of the landscape has UTM grid reference of TN 891582. Its geographical coordinates are  $30^{\circ}58'55''\text{E}$  and  $20^{\circ}15'57''\text{S}$ . Sviba and its neighbouring hills of Chivaichagwembe and Zvamapere are located in what used to be Oakland farm which is now under Mushandike East resettlement scheme village 33B, (Archaeological and Cultural Impact Assessment (ACIA) report 2011:2). Mavazhe and Boroma are in what was Le Rhone farm but fall under the same resettlement scheme as Sviba. Mushandike is one of the earliest resettlement schemes that were established in 1983, barely three years after independence, in 1980. In terms of traditional leadership structures, Sviba cultural landscape is under ownership and control dispute between Chiefs Murinye and Mugabe. However, the local chief who initially was engaged in a bitter conflict with the developer, Chief Murinye is the one who used to claim alone that the site was a shrine and burial place for his ancestors henceforth a sacred cultural landscape. This being the case, much consultation during the impact assessment was done with Chief Murinye alone leaving behind other surrounding chiefs namely Mugabe, Shumba and Charumbira (see ACIA report 2011).

The Geographical Positioning System (GPS) location of the proposed booster within Sviba cultural landscape is UTM 36K 0289134E and 7757936N and is set at an altitude of 1282m. This being the highest elevation in relation to the other neighbouring hills, one can appreciate the effect of Sviba Hill's vantage point in attracting Econet.

### **WHAT MAKES SVIBA HILL A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE?**

According to Otto Schluter cultural landscape refers to "a landscape that is created by human culture" (see James, P.E and Martin, G 1981: 177) over time. Such landscapes are bound in the Sviba area as shall be seen in the ensuing paragraphs, making it a cultural landscape.

In terms of physiographical description, Sviba cultural landscape is mainly characterised by a rocky granite hill with a very precipitous slope on the eastern side. One can hardly access the hill from that side with sparse vegetation growing on this escarpment which is made up of huge granite boulders and crevices. The granite boulders form numerous caves and overhangs. It is worth noting that these caves and overhangs are the very structures that were conveniently exploited

by the extant communities for their architectural needs and traditional mortuary interment. This adoption of and adaptation to the choices and constraints offered by the physical environment is evidence of ingenuity that is elaborately expressed at Great Zimbabwe and similar sites.

The top of Sviba forms a gentle plateau which dips gradually in the direction of the other cardinal points. Clusters of huge granite boulders and rock outcrops occur extensively on the plateau, creating (at their base and in between them) caves, overhangs, crevices and platforms (*ruware*). Once again, evidence of mortuary interment, living shelters, hut floors, grain bins, and *tsoro* are abounding in association with these granite boulders. As observed by Rigol (2004: 20), in all cultures man attribute supernatural meanings to the natural surroundings such as forests, mountains, caves etc and these elements give rise to myths, religious beliefs or practises that have been passed on orally and by tradition from one generation to another. Such testimonies of interaction between nature and culture or the physical surroundings and man within Sviba area qualifies the place to be viewed as a cultural landscape. They also explain why the installation of a telecommunication base station at Sviba has attracted many different people and institutions, with different interests, concerns and agendas.

The Sviba hill towers above its not so distant but similar neighbours of Chivai, Boroma and Zvmapere hills. It is separated from these other hills by adjacent valleys that almost surround it. Resettled villagers till the red clay soils of these adjacent valleys. Some of the villagers are beneficiaries of the nearby Mushandike irrigation scheme. The hill has a thick carpet of organic matter accumulating from dead vegetal matter. Villagers collect it as organic manure for their farming activities.

The hill has a plethora of plant species used for various purposes. The various vegetation species observed in Sviba cultural landscape during a field trip are shown in the table below:

**Table 1:** Some of the trees and other vegetation species identified in Sviba Hill

Scientific Name	Vernacular (Shona/Ndebele) Names	Possible Use and Contemporary Mythology
<i>Alvezia quanzensis</i>	Mukamba/Umkamba	Woodcarving and intermediary with the spirit world
<i>Brachystegia glaucescens</i>	Muunze/Umbuze	Firewood and ropes from its barks
<i>Brachystegia spiciformis</i>	Musasa/Igonde	Firewood, charcoal and ropes from barks
<i>Markhamia acuminata</i>	Mugopa/Umpetakwale	Firewood
<i>Euphorbia species</i>	Mukonde/Umhlonhlo	Medicinal
<i>Mimusops zeyheri</i>	Muchechete/Umbumbulu	Edible fruits and keeps wizards away from graves of the dead
<i>Piliostigma thonningii</i>	Musekesa/Ihabahaba	Edible fruit and medicine
<i>Sclerocarya caffra</i>	Mupfura/Umganu	Edible fruits and distilling intoxicating drink
<i>Burkea africana</i>	Mukarati/umnondo	Charcoal and curving
<i>Uapaca kirkiana</i>	Mushuku/umhobohobo	Edible fruits
<i>Parinari curatellifolia</i>	Muhacha/umkhuna	Edible fruits

Source: Field Notes 2011

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

This study employed various data collection methods that were targeted at understanding Sviba landscape with regards to the conflicts that had stopped development in the area, and in particular the installation of Econet booster. The methods included library research, ethnographic enquiries, informal discussions, unstructured interviews, archaeological field reconnaissance and/or surveys.

In terms of library research, a thorough investigation of the published and unpublished documents of the area surrounding Great Zimbabwe National Monument (GZNM) was conducted at the GZNM Conservation and Research Centre. It was noted that Sviba cultural landscape is not *terra incognita* archaeologically. Numerous research activities in the past identified invaluable archaeological sites. As previously highlighted that Sviba heritage site is under ownership dispute, previous studies erroneously identified the area as being under Chief Murinye's jurisdiction. Being aware of the chieftainship conflicts between Chiefs Murinye and Mugabe, our study was confined to the communities under both chiefs. Ethnographic techniques such as informal interviews and discussions were used to generate qualitative data. Chief Murinye, some of whose forefathers are buried within the cultural landscape, identified three key respondents namely Sekuru Mashingaidze, Simon Madenga and Phillip Magogo. The latter was replaced by Simba Gwembe after he could not be available due to family commitments. These informants were considered knowledgeable, old/experienced and wise. Archaeological field reconnaissance and/or surveys were used to gather historical data about the artefacts of the people lived in the area. Below is the table showing informants who participated in the discussions and interviews.

**Table 2: Showing details of informants participated in the study**

Occupation	Gender	
	Male	Female
Tourism Industry	3	5
Local people from Chief Murinye	7	3
Local people from Chief Mugabe	3	2
Heritage professionals	5	1
Environmentalists	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>

## RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM ETHNOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES

Results in this study are based on the research that was carried out in Sviba area between October 2011 and November 2012. Revelations and/or results from the study were as follow:

- Sviba hill is the royal interment shrine for Murinye traditional leaders some of whom resided at and reigned from the Great Zimbabwe capital in pre-colonial times. Sekuru Mashingaidze submitted from memory names of

some of the chiefs buried in Sviba as including Murinye (the forefather of the Murinye clan), Mabika, Munodawafa, Mudarikwa, Mutya and Pabva.

- The other traditional name for Sviba Hill is *Gomo raMabika*, deriving it from the name of one of the foremost traditional leaders of the Murinye clan interred in it.
- The elders from the local communities were aware of the cultural significance of Sviba cultural landscape when the Econet Wireless project started in October 2011 but opted to ‘wait and see’ since nobody consulted cultural issues at stake in the Hill except on whether people wanted Econet communication services in their area.
- The Hill remains very scared to date and the numerous breakdowns of machinery that the Econet contractors experienced during the construction of the service road were ‘statements of displeasure’ by the ancestors following desecration of their royal premises and interments.
- Sekuru Mashingaidze and other elders of the community uphold that Econet Wireless Company wronged the Murinye clan and should meet costs of appeasing the angry ancestors over the damages incurred in Sviba. According to herald (8/11//2012), Chiefs Murinye and Mugabe demand two thousand white beasts from Econet Wireless Company as compensation and to appease their angry ancestors.
- Costs for the appeasement ceremony that should be held at the Hill include two beasts (*mombe*), some traditionally brewed beer (*doro*) and soft drinks (for those who do not take alcohol). Of the two beasts, one should be slaughtered for meat on the day of the ceremony for ritual purposes while the other would be kept alive among the chief’s herd.
- Once this ceremony is conducted and the two thousand beasts are paid to the Chiefs, the traditional leadership asserted that Econet would be allowed to resume its work in Sviba notwithstanding the damages incurred in the Hill and that no further damages should be repeated anywhere.

## **EVALUATION OF RESULTS FROM ETHNOGRAPHIC ENQUIRIES**

- From the ethnographic results elaborated above, it is clear that Sviba Hill is of immense scientific and cultural significance bearing in mind the fact that one of the knowledge gaps about the Great Zimbabwe site concerns a dearth of information on its mortuary places and practices. This owes to the revelations that some of the chiefs who resided and/or reigned from Great Zimbabwe National Monument were buried in the Hill.
- The ethnographic enquiries provided a corpus of data that stimulate further research to validate and set the archaeological record straight in the light of claims made using scientific methods.
- The community and its leadership demonstrated readiness to embrace the network booster development once Econet Wireless fulfils appropriate procedures and corresponding reparation.

One of the co-authors of this paper who was by then both based the Great Zimbabwe Conservation and Research Centre as archaeologists and two members of the local community conducted a detailed archaeological survey of Sviba cultural landscape. The neighbouring Mavazhe Hill was also surveyed to confirm some detail deriving from library research and ethnographic researches. The survey came up with invaluable archaeological evidence in the categories of burial places,

cave shelters, grain bins, homesteads, dry stone walls and iron smelting sites. The table below summarises the archaeological findings-cultural material-realised during the survey.

**Table 3:** Summary of results from Sviba archaeological field reconnaissance

Type of Site and Frequency	Location	Conservation/Preservation Status	Description of Material Culture
At least burials	In caves and beneath boulder overhangs, open space	Those in deep caves and open spaces were found intact. Burials beneath boulders were mostly vandalised.	The burials had human skeletal remains, mortuary goods that included beads, knob kerries, complete and broken pots and gourds. One deep cave burial had an old model gun, two big pots one with more than a thousand beads of different colours, types and sizes (see photos)
Grain bins and platforms	Rock overhangs, overhangs and open granite platforms	Vandalised and/or disintegrated	Collapsed dhaka lumps with impressions of thin sticks or plant stocks usually on rock platforms. Some are in association with lower and upper grinding stones
Homesteads	In caves, open spaces,	Disintegrated structures	Hardened clay surfaces strewn with beads, grinding stones, potsherds, middens, bone remains and metal objects (e.g. hoe piece)
Dry stone walls and terraces	Along hill slopes and around caves entrances	Collapsed with some blocks removed	These are Rough (R) type of walling mostly blocking and spanning gaps between boulders and demarcating steep slopes accessible spaces
Iron smelting sites	Open ground both at the top and foot of hill	Disintegrated furnaces and <i>tuyere</i> pieces	Iron smelting slag and broken <i>tuyere</i> pieces. One bigger site is at the foot of the hill on the western side in a small farm near a homestead.

Mortuary material was probably the most abundant and intriguing type of archaeological evidence in Sviba Hill. The photos below show the various categories of discovered heritage resources some of which were adversely impacted by the booster project.



**Plate 1. Vandalised royal grave**



**Plate 2. Mortuary pot destroyed by bulldozer**



**Plate 3. Vandalised wall(s) along the road**



**Plate 4. Vandalised walls**



**Plate 5. Royal burial deep inside cave**



**Plate 6. Mortuary Pots with royal beads**



## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SVIBA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

The concept of sustainable development has attracted multiple definitions and theories as it has dominated various international, national and local forums. However, the most used definition of the concept is the one that was given by the then chairperson of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Gro Harlem Brundtland. He defined sustainable development as; “...*development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*”, (United Nations report 1987:42). One of the world’s renowned sustainability educators Michael Thomas Needham also came up with an almost similar definition on sustainable development. For Needham (2011), sustainable development is the ability to meet the needs of the present while contributing to the future generations needs. Due to numerous definitions that have been generated with regards to the meaning of the concept of sustainable development, this study will not indulge into what other schools of thought have in stock but instead adopts Needham’s definition. In the light of Needham’s definition, this study argues that it is the present generation that creates a better future (for the future generations), henceforth adoption of Needham’s definition of sustainable development is justified.

The concept of sustainable development has been in the past categorised into three constitutes namely; environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and socio-political sustainability, (United Nations report 1987: 43). However, breaking the concept into these three domains has attracted considerable criticism from other schools of thoughts. One of such critics is on treating the economy as the master category or as a domain that exist outside the socio-political and environmental issues, (see Needham 2011). On the same note, a critical examination of the ‘three domain model’ of economics, environment and socio-political, reveals that the three categories stated above are not adequate to reflect the complexity of the contemporary societies. As such, there has always been an argument that there should be four pillars of sustainable development, the fourth being cultural which encompass tangible and non-tangible heritages. In light of this understanding, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Executive Bureau led the proposal of the policy statement; “culture- forth pillar of sustainable development” passed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 in the framework of the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders, (the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress held in Mexico city, 2010). In view of this understanding, we argue that sustainability to be attained during developmental projects within cultural landscapes, cultural diversity should be regarded as a necessity for human kind as biodiversity is for nature. In the case of Sviba cultural landscape, not only the three pillars that exclude culture should be considered if real sustainable development is to take place.

In Zimbabwe as with many other African countries, the issue of sustainable development has seen creation of governmental, private and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to deal with the matter. The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) is the key governmental department that has been entrusted through the Environmental Management Act (Chapter 20:27) to enhance development that is sustainable to the environment. As such, any developmental project that mainly involves earth moving and prescribed in the act, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which will advise on the progress and mitigation measures to be taken. However, EIAs have always been alleged to be biased to the environmental issues at the expense of those that are cultural. In many cases, the component of archaeology and culture is not mentioned in a number of EIA reports which are usually undertaken by some consultants who always cut expenses by not engaging some professionals such as heritage managers and archaeologists during assessment phase. Musindo (2010:59) also concurred that in Zimbabwe, more often than not archaeology and other forms of cultural heritage are ignored in the EIA processes as some sites are not recorded and therefore unknown.

In Zimbabwe, though the issue of sustainable development has been so much talked about, there is evidence that it has not been understood even by some influential people in the government. A good case in point is when the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) chief executive, Mr Karikoga Kaseke scoffed at a question on the construction of a hotel on wetlands on public television late last year. He thus said, “. . . who cares whether the land is wet or not? These are Chinese we are talking about . . . they can build anything, anywhere on earth . . .” (Gogo 2012; 10). Mr Kaseke retorted while responding to a question on why the ZTA had granted a licence to a Chinese firm to construct a five-star hotel on wetlands next to the National Sports Stadium in Harare. Such a comment has attracted critics from environmental sciences and other interested parties who are argue and sceptically question: “if public leaders fail to understand the importance of the environment, how can they be trusted to lead our children, and the youth in preserving and managing the same?” (see The Herald 30 January 2012:10 ).

In addition, though installation of a booster within Sviba cultural landscape was known by the developer to involve a lot of civil works that have negative impact on the environment and cultural material, the project was commenced without any pre-development assessment of the area, especially on the cultural significance of the landscape. This is the main reason that fuelled conflicts between developers and local stakeholders with the latter arguing that the site was a cultural landscape rich in mortuary and archaeological heritage. Worse still, different interested parties started to emerge thereby affecting the completion of the project which can be regarded as necessary but wrongly executed as far as the concept of sustainable development is concerned. What happens at Sviba cultural landscape is similar to what Oloo and Namunaba (2010:13) noted when they observed that in Kenya most projects rarely conduct EIA, though cultural experts are normally brought on board only in the event where the developer stumbles on heritage resources.

#### **POLITICS AND CONFLICTS AROUND SVIBA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

At one level, conflicts at Sviba cultural heritage revolve around two local chiefs who are disagreeing on the ownership in terms of the jurisdiction of the area in question, NMMZ and Masvingo Rural District Council (MRDC) who also claim control of the area. With regard to the conflicts between Chiefs Murinye and Mugabe, this has caused division and enmity between their subjects thereby creating unpleasant social environment. Fighting and quarrelling have become the order of the day among the people from these traditional leaders (see The Masvingo Mirror, 2011: 4).

At another level, the conflicts exist between traditional leadership and the Econet Wireless Company (EWC) who wants to erect a wireless booster. The traditional leaders, in this case, Chiefs Murinye and Mugabe, are lobbying the same case against EWC citing that the latter erred when it erected a booster before consultations with local leadership on the cultural heritage in the area. The duo stopped the project to allow an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) to be undertaken then the latter gives the developer permission to proceed with no prescribed conditions. Besides, they have since directed the case to the courts of law demanding two thousand white beasts from EWC as reparation and compensation for their ancestors’ destroyed graves, a case that EWC are contesting. As Fontein (2011: 707) noted, Sviba landscape is notable because it has always been at the centre of localised contests over authority and belonging between two neighbouring Duma chiefs and their clans (Murinye and Mugabe). He further argues that the area in question is embroiled in a continuing boundary dispute between the aforementioned chiefs with the involvement of a complicating myriad of state institutions (council, district and provincial administrators, ministries/departments of lands, natural resources, agriculture, water etc) (see Fontein, 2011). In the light of these apparent conflicts, this study argues that it is difficult to attain sustainable development on cultural landscapes when there is no coordination of and sustainable dialogue between relevant authorities as is the case at Sviba landscape. Due to lack of mutual dialogue and coordination,

completion of Econet Wireless booster project has remained a dream to come true as stakeholders continue to come up with fresh areas of disputes, a situation that is financially crippling the developer. The cost to the developer is now becoming a burden and evidenced by the letter dated 18 November 2011 from Mr P Duke (Econet Wireless - Site Acquisition Specialist) which he wrote to NMMZ. In the letter Mr. Duke had this to say:

*.....Please note that all the recommendations are taken care of. We kindly ask to proceed with civil works soonest whilst we pursue recommendation 1. Please note that time and cost overruns for the project are becoming so astronomical that the organisation can no longer withstand, Letter from P. Duke (Econet - Site Acquisition Specialist (dated 18 Nov 2011).*

As a result of these conflicts at the two levels highlighted above, tourism players around Sviba and the ordinary local people continue to be affected by lack of mobile connection within the area. The most affected are of course the local hoteliers who have expressed disappointment on the failure of the developer, government institutions and local leaders to reach consensus on the way forward. According to Sakala (2012 pers.com) – manager of the nearest Lodge at the Ancient City, the delays in the installation of the base station continue to be the main reason of losing clients who then prefer to occupy hotels located in Masvingo city (Zimbabwe's oldest city) where mobile network connection is not a problem. This loss is not only felt by hotel players but also local communities who usually sell their curios to visitors who come to these local hotels. Thus, conflicts among stakeholders with regard to the booster project at Sviba are affecting the socio-economic development of the area.

As has been demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs, the politics and conflicts around Sviba cultural landscape are tearing apart the same institutions and traditional leaders that should be working hand in hand towards promoting sustainable development in the area. NMMZ and MRDC are government departments whose mandates should be complimenting and supplementing each other but the way they are differing with regards to the development project at Sviba cultural landscape leaves a lot to be desired. The situation has made the two institutions becoming more like enemies which in itself are not sustainable to the natural and cultural resources within the district.

#### **BEYOND SVIBA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE CONFLICTS: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS**

As has been revealed in the preceding discussion, the EWC development project in Sviba cultural landscape has generated problems that need collective concerns from the multi- faceted stakeholders involved. Material cultures of the site have been destroyed and genius loci affected. Some of the damages are irreparable. This is aptly noted by Mupira (2002) who argues that most of heritage resources are non-renewable and any unsustainable development leads to their irreparable loss and damage. In line with Mupira, Sinamai et al (2010:77) have argued that the concern of heritage managers should primarily be on how to conserve non-renewable heritage resources while ensuring that these resources and the populace benefit from the improvements and advancements that the development can offer. This entails that appropriate management is required to ensure that this inheritance from our ancestors is not needlessly destroyed. Yet more often than not, relations among relevant authorities and communities that should be working together in enhancing sustainable development have been negatively affected as in the case of Sviba. The two local chiefs (Murinye and Mugabe), for example, have instead of entering into a sustainable dialogue with Econet Wireless (developer) taken the latter to court for allegedly defiling a traditional shrine by exhuming human remains and destroying relics while installing a base station at Sviba hill (Chikova 2012: 4). Chief Murinye (Ephias Munodawafa) and acting chief Mugabe (Matubede Mudavanhu), want construction of the base station stopped forthwith, arguing that Sviba hill was and still is a burial site and a place of ancestral worship for the Duma people to which both belong (see The Herald, 15 October

2012:4). They further argue that the traditional customary rights preserved at Sviba hills had become exposed to desecration as a result of econet's construction activities.

While the situation around the development of a base station at Sviba cultural landscape is worsening, there are however lessons that can be learnt to avoid such problems in future developments. It can be learnt that heritage institutions in Zimbabwe should embark on a continuous research and documentation of cultural heritage sites. To this effect, the information gathered during research should not only be filed but published and made available to developers and the public alike. On the same note, inventories should be created and made accessible to developers such that they are aware of the cultural landscapes and other resources within the proposed development areas. This will serve to avoid problems such as those around Sviba cultural landscape, with cultural issues that only became topical after the damages had already been incurred. The archaeology survey unit of NMMZ based in Harare is less known by people outside the organisation and is also no longer viable, henceforth this study calls for rigorous archaeological surveys and recordings as a tool towards attainment of sustainable development on cultural landscapes and avoidance of possible conflicts between developers and cultural landscape stakeholders.

Also, heritage organisations and traditional leaders should take it as their responsibility to educate developers and local people respectively on the values attached to heritage properties. In view of this recommendation, Kiriyama (2010: 3) has argued that it is the duty of cultural heritage managers to inform those involved in development of the importance of cultural heritage to local communities, ethnic groups as well as nations. Heritage should not remain a vulgar word to developers as was the case with Sviba where the contracted Chinese company did not see any value attached to the cultural landscape's heritage, henceforth instructed the labourers to remove stones from graves for construction purposes (Gwembe, 2012 pers.com). With education comes respect and understanding that avoid instances such as occurred at Sviba landscape. It therefore lies with civic society, local communities and heritage organisations to lobby for the recognition and safeguarding of cultural values in the landscape in all development process (see also Kiriyama et al 2010:4).

Besides, the government should advise developers to exhaust all channels and measures necessary before real development is commenced. For instance, had it been that all pre-development measures were followed by the developer, problems that are currently being experienced at Sviba cultural landscape could have been avoided. The development commenced before an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) had been undertaken, albeit EIAs are prerequisite for the implementation of development projects in Zimbabwe. In addition, proper consultation with traditional leadership was not done before the installation was started. This on the other hand, shows that the Zimbabwean policies and legal instruments on environment and cultural issues are still fraught and ineffective. This is confirmed by Nyambira (2012 pers.com), EIA specialist from Environmental Management Agency, who reveals that even if the project is not prescribed in their act no matter the damage to the environment it may cause, they always find it difficult to exercise their mandates due to poor law enforcement in Zimbabwe. Therefore, there is need not only to come up with deterring laws that will ensure that all preliminary procedures are being adhered to during developmental projects, but fully enforced by law enforcement agents.

Last but not least, there should be 'generative dialogue' between parties involved in the development and management of cultural landscapes. By generative dialogue we mean a democratic and sustainable dialogue among the Sviba cultural landscape stakeholders with various knowledge forms, (Verran, 2011; Mawere et al 2012). EMA and NMMZ which are the two state departments in charge of the management of environment and heritage respectively should facilitate an

inter-stakeholders dialogue. The aim of the dialogical interaction should be targeted at breaking firstly the deadlock and also to promote sustainable development on cultural landscapes in the province. This means that EMA and NMMZ should work hand in hand in environment impact assessment since their operations complement each other. The interview with Nyambira reveals that EMA has got its requirements and operational guidelines such that NMMZ is expected to enforce carrying out of Archaeological and Cultural Impact Assessments during development. This lack of coordination between the two government departments is taken advantage by the developers who then decide to commission either EIA at the expense of ACIA or vice versa. However, in principle all EIAs should include the archaeological impact assessment in order to achieve sustainable development on cultural landscapes. This study appeals to the government of Zimbabwe and other related institutions to consider impact assessments as effective tool of managing both the environment and cultural resources. As such, there is need to invest and promote the same throughout the nation.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has revealed that change and development are two inevitable facets of human societies. However, safeguarding of natural and cultural resources should be prioritised in this age of rapid developmental activities being experienced across the globe. In this paper, development on cultural landscape has been shown to be problematic especially in the case when preliminary developmental measures are ignored by default or otherwise. The unfolding events linked to the installation of a base station within Sviba cultural landscape have generated lessons on sustainable development on cultural landscape. One of the lessons learnt is the importance of impact assessments as an effective tool of sustainable management of the environment and heritage properties.

More importantly, the case study adopted in this study has revealed a number of loopholes in the management of heritage and environment in Zimbabwe, henceforth the need for drafting a new road map for the sustainable management of the same remains imperative. State departments in charge of promoting sustainable development are poorly resourced and the existing legal instruments are fraught and ineffective in curbing negative impacts on cultural landscapes. There is need for the EMA, NMMZ and other relevant departments to lobby for amendments of their acts so as to be more effective in the current prevailing situations and challenges the departments are facing in executing their mandates.

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