Transforming southern African cities in a changing climate

Learning lab 2

12 March 2020

Harare Municipality, Town House, Harare

Workshop report by Alice McClure (alice@csag.uct.ac.za), Chipo Mubaya (mubayacp@yahoo.com), Mzime Murisa (mmurisa@start.org) and Rudo Mamombe (mamomberudo92@gmail.com)

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Background

The *Transforming southern African cities in a changing climate* project, led by the Climate System Analysis Group (CSAG) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) is part of [Leading Integrated Research in Africa (LIRA) 2030;](#) a 5-year programme that seeks to increase the production of high quality, transdisciplinary, solutions-oriented research on global sustainability by early career scientists in Africa. The knowledge will be used to address complex sustainability challenges in the region.

The main objective of the project is to better understand the extent to which Transformative climate Adaptation (TA) has been envisioned or implemented in southern African cities, explore interventions that have transformative characteristics, as well as unpack how these might be more transformative in the future to promote equality, inclusiveness and justice. Using Durban (South Africa) and Harare (Zimbabwe) as cases, the project aims to contribute to understanding how theoretical ideas related to TA play out in reality (if they do) in southern African cities. Considering both cities are faced with the challenge of managing water under changing climate conditions, water resilience interventions were selected as case studies.

At the first learning lab (July 2019), stakeholders in Harare considered what makes people living in and around their city vulnerable to climate change and how these vulnerabilities might be addressed through TA interventions. Participants also co-defined important characteristics of transformative interventions in the context of Harare, building on the work done in the first learning lab in Durban (see text box below). Two interventions were selected at this first event, as case studies of potentially transformative approaches to water resilience in Harare; the Harare Wetlands Advocacy Project and the Urban Resilience Project. Since this engagement, the LIRA team interviewed stakeholders who are integrally involved in these interventions and analysed their transformative extent using the characteristics of TA that were co-defined in the first meeting to guide interviews.

Characteristics of TA

- Holistic/systems thinking: connecting problems, including climate through holistic perspectives and tackling these through collaborations
- Thinking about and doing things in a fundamentally different way; challenging the status quo in terms of development, disrupting the norm
  - ➢ Developing capacity for this type of change
  - ➢ Making sure this type of change is sustainable
- Flexibility to learn from mistakes and respond to contextual needs
- Working towards true inclusivity and involving many stakeholders
- Challenging power asymmetries: Making sure vulnerable groups reap benefits and are empowered

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- Demonstrating benefits for many stakeholders across spatial scales (preferably sustainable/ongoing).

The aim of the second (and last) learning lab in Harare was to share findings from interviews and to explore several questions with participants related to how transformative interventions have developed in Harare, as well as ways in which interventions are contributing to transformation or could do so in the future. The participants also brainstormed useful outputs from the research that can be shared more widely.See Annex A for the meeting agenda and Annex B for a list of stakeholders who attended the meeting.

Slides from the meeting are attached separately.

Introductions

The learning lab started off with introductions by Chipo Mubaya from Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT). She explained that in the past, CUT has worked with the City of Harare (CoH) to contribute to climate resilience objectives for Harare, for example through the ongoing Future Resilience for African Cities and Lands (FRACTAL) project and the Improved Municipal Planning in African Cities (IMPACT) projects. She highlighted the importance of continuous engagements on issues such as climate change.

Chipo introduced Lulu Van Rooyen and Patrick Martel from the Durban LIRA2030 team who had traveled from Durban to join the learning lab. She explained that previously, the Harare team (including a representative from the CoH) had visited Durban to take part in a Durban-focused LIRA2030 learning lab.

Alice McClure then showed a video on the LIRA2030 programme and facilitated introductions through an exercise, during which participants were requested to have a chat with someone in the room with whom they had never interacted. Participants then introduced their discussion partners to the group. See Annex B for a list of participants.

Newsflash: Update on the climate change desk

Mr. Lisben Chipfunde from the CoH gave an overview of the newly established Environmental Management Unit in the CoH. He highlighted that the unit was put in place in January 2020. It is housed in the Town Clerk's office to ensure that there is monitoring of environmental issues at the highest level. The unit coordinates environmental issues in the city across the six departments, working closely with the Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry. This unit will support the coordination of climate adaptation and mitigation responses (along with other environmental issues), which indicates an improvement from the fragmented

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way environmental aspects have been handled in the past. CoH will be supported by the unit to comply with legal requirements; in the past, the city has been penalized for not complying with environmental legislation/standards. The unit will also ensure that issues like urban agriculture within the city are well managed. The CoH aspires to be among those cities that are doing well in terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation; the unit will therefore set up a specific climate change mitigation and adaptation office. Mr Chipfunde also highlighted that the city is currently working on the accreditation of wetlands.

Overview of cases and river of life exercise

Rudo from CUT provided an overview of the potentially transformative case studies that were selected by participants during the first lab in Harare; the Harare Wetlands Advocacy project and the Urban Resilience project.

The Harare Wetlands Advocacy project is convened by the Harare Wetlands Trust (HWT). HWT is a coalition of environmental organisations, civil society organisations and residents' associations (i.e. Bird-Life Zimbabwe, Community Water Alliance and the Combined Harare Residents Association). The project aims to conserve/preserve[1] the wetlands around Harare given the role that these ecosystems play in increasing water resilience for the city. Through the project, an 'informed citizenry' is growing that can hold duty bearers to account. Nine Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have been established through the project and have been vocal in advocating for wetlands protection and challenging decisions that have allowed urban development in wetlands. These communities have petitioned parliament about decisions relating to development in wetlands and raised awareness within their areas on the need to protect wetlands.

The Urban Resilience project is being implemented by the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing in partnership with UNDP and UNICEF. The programme was initiated to embed and institutionalize the concept of 'resilience' in urban areas. In Zimbabwe, climate change adaptation and resilience interventions have previously been focused in rural areas. Recent events, such as cyclone *Idai*, which affected towns such as Chimanimani, strengthened the case to build resilience in urban areas. This is in line with the growing global acknowledgement that urban areas are extremely important when considering resilience issues as they are hotspots of emissions/environmental degradation but also offer many, diverse opportunities for building resilience. The main objective of the project is to consider vulnerabilities from a broader, more holistic perspective and build urban resilience through social

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[1] There is a growing tension within the team related to conservation vs. preservation. Some people aim to preserve the wetlands while others aim for conservation (i.e. caring for wetlands while allowing activities within or near these areas)

and technical mechanisms (e.g. improving provision of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene- WASH services for the poor and vulnerable urban populations). The Urban Resilience Project builds on the Small Towns WASH programme, which culminated in the realization that urban resilience cannot be built using 'hard infrastructure' alone. The project was piloted in (Budiriro and Glenview), Gwanda and Chipinge in November 2018.

After the presentation, participants who are involved in the Harare Wetlands Advocacy Project and Urban Resilience projects were provided an opportunity to provide feedback. Ms Adganova (UNDP) shared information on a study that has been conducted within the Urban Resilience project, looking at different settlements and focusing on energy and water systems, as well as vulnerability of these. A representative from the CoH emphasized the importance of involving local authorities in such studies so that they can take forward some of the outcomes from the studies.

Chipo Mubaya then facilitated a 'river of life' exercise relevant to the two projects. She described how the metaphor of a river is applied in the exercise to 'map out' the interventions from their source (their beginning) through to sea (current day). The objective of the exercise was to highlight the journey of the project including the origin, actors, opportunities, challenges and notable changes (i.e. changing course) along the way. After the exercise, one of the members from each group gave feedback from the river of life exercise, which is shared below.

Harare Wetlands Advocacy Project River of life

The Harare Wetlands Advocacy project was started because people noticed degradation of wetlands surrounding Harare, which play an important role in water quality and quantity (e.g. as water purifiers and flood attenuators). These people noticed that drivers of wetland degradation include *inter alia* discharge of raw sewer water in rivers, land invasions, people renting out land illegally on wetlands, an outdated Master Plan that doesn't consider the role of environmental ecosystems (operational since 1994), and lack of a gazette wetland map. Strategies employed by the intervention to remedy some of these drivers included research to inform policy, awareness raising, litigation for law enforcement and community stewardship. Petitions supported through the project have led to consultative processes and parliament produced a report to sensitize cabinet on wetlands issues.

The project has managed to raise citizens' voices and the CoH is now in the process of producing a local environment plan, together with the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) Act. There has been noticeable reduction in wetlands invasion in Dzivarasekwa, for example, and The Ministry of Tourism and Environment has joined a collaboration to deal with wetland issues. Several gaps and challenges that were noted included *inter alia* loose coalitions, several key actors missing (e.g. the Ministry of Local Government), misaligned positions on wetlands (i.e.

preservation vs conservation), as well as poor coordination among government departments on wetland issues. Participants of the labs mentioned that the city has applied for the Ramsar accreditation of the wetlands surrounding the city.
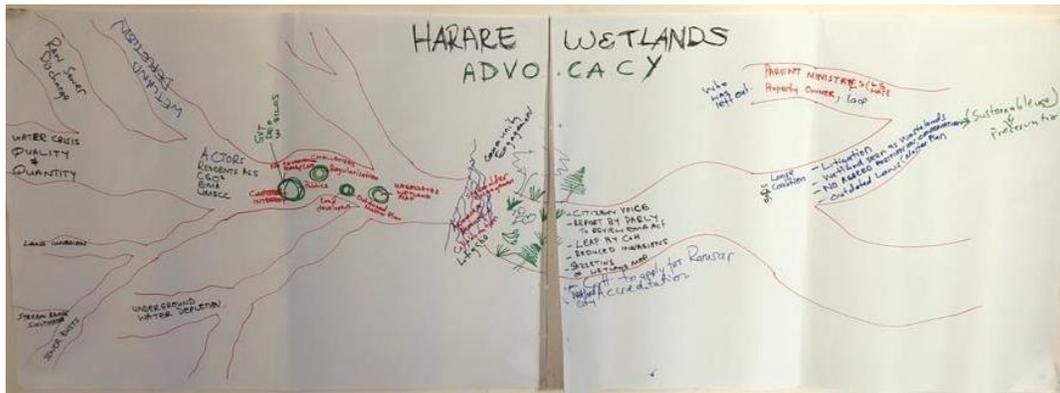

Figure 1. Harare Wetlands Advocacy Project River of Life

Urban Resilience Project River of life

Data from the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC) vulnerability assessment in urban areas indicated large gaps in terms of understanding urban resilience in Zimbabwe, as well as implementing interventions towards this objective. Issues that were being experienced in Harare, such as outbreaks of diseases like cholera, sparked interest in developing resilience of cities and its residents. The project builds on existing work with UNICEF; the small towns WASH program. A series of studies have been undertaken to better understand aspects of vulnerability in urban areas, take stock of interventions that have been implemented through the small towns WASH programme and consider gaps. Data on urban resilience is not easily accessible and the team implementing the project has experienced slow buy-in to the term 'resilience' from people working in the city. Urban resilience is still a new concept and the team acknowledges that urban spaces are complex, which requires iterative, ongoing engagement. The private sector has not been fully involved, which is a current pitfall in the project.
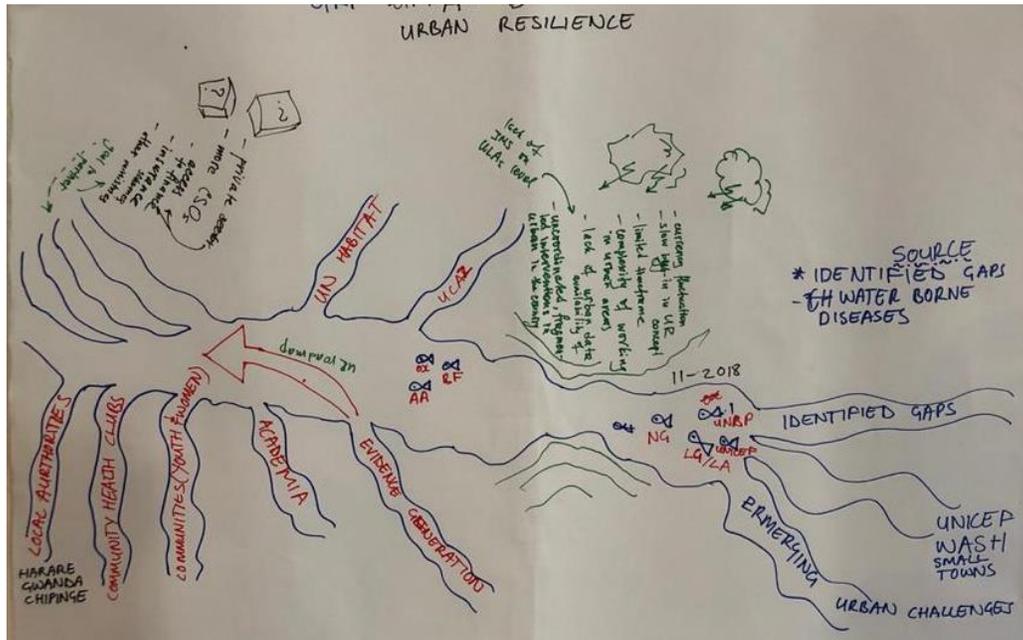
Figure 2. Urban Resilience Project River of Life

Feedback from the analysis of case studies according to transformative characteristics

Alice McClure shared findings from the analysis of case studies of potentially transformative interventions in Harare. These interventions were defined as being potentially transformative according to the characteristics of TA, based on engagement at the first lab (see insert 1 on page 3). Alice explained that these characteristics provided a consistent framework within which the different cases in both Durban and Harare could be deeply explored and better understood. She explained that qualitative data had been generated with people involved in these interventions and that these data were analysed to answer several overarching questions:

- How transformative is the project, how it is fostering transformative adaptation?
- What are the enabling factors/conditions? (are these transferable?)
- What are the constraining factors?

Findings relevant to the first question on the transformative extent of the project, and ways in which the interventions are fostering TA, are summarized in the table below.

Characteristic	HWA project	URP
Holistic/systems thinking	The project focuses quite strongly on wetlands but there is a growing	By virtue of 'resilience thinking, the project adopts a holistic systems perspective to looking at problems and

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Characteristic	HWA project	URP
	recognition that this connects to other problems.	ways of managing these problems. Socio-economic and political issues have been explicitly linked to WASH.
Fundamentally different ways of thinking and doing (disruptive) ● Capacity for this thinking and doing in fundamentally different ways ● Sustainable	If you look beyond Zimbabwe, the methods that are being employed are not fundamentally new (i.e. activating citizens and helping them find a voice). However, in the context of Zimbabwe, these methods are quite novel because residents and citizens have not generally been empowered as stewards and change-makers in the past. Several resident groups seem to be displaying changes in thinking in terms of appreciation for wetlands and developers have started asking for comments on development, which has not occurred in the past. The programme is also challenging people to look beyond the siloed/sectoral perspective and recognize the importance of the environment.	Resilience thinking is new in the context of Zimbabwe and capacity is being developed so that individuals and organizations can continue to respond to shocks and move forward. It is too early in the project to understand if actions will be fundamentally different; the first phase has focused on developing sound policy and infrastructure. It is, however, essential for business to 'come to the party' for the work to be sustainable.
Flexible (respond to context and challenges)	The project is flexible and the fact that it is inclusive supports this flexibility (see below); the many stakeholders involved in the project provide opportunities to grow the project in different directions. The actions are rooted in the context and are emergent depending on contextual needs. There are also spaces for reflections and learning.	Flexibility is important in the project programming and design (e.g. to respond to Cyclone Idai) but remaining true to this flexibility is challenging because of the structures of international funders and government (e.g. logistical frameworks of funders and protocols of government).
Inclusive	Many different groups of stakeholders come together, which contributes to inclusivity of the project. However, decision-making power seems to be held within one group of people; those who manage the funds.	Many different stakeholders are involved in the project but the input of these stakeholders is fairly 'business-as-usual' (e.g. platforms for "community beneficiaries" to share insights). There are few, if any, ongoing/institutionalized platforms for stakeholders on the ground to influence decisions

Characteristic	HWA project	URP
Challenge power asymmetries	HWAP performs well in terms of challenging power asymmetries; the power of the local residents is enhanced, which contributes to 'disruption' of 'business as usual'. According to interviewees, more women, disabled or youth could be involved.	Insufficient evidence to understand whether this project provides opportunities to challenge power asymmetries. See feedback from whether the project is 'inclusive'.
Demonstrable (benefits)	There is evidence of shifts in mindsets of several community groups, as well as changes to some development processes. Citizens finding a voice and winning a court case against the government provided evidence of the benefits of the intervention. These benefits are not in line with the original objectives of the intervention, which are associated with improved water quality. Whether these changes are permanent is yet to be seen.	It is too early to tell if the intervention has resulted in demonstrable benefits, though the partial uptake of the concept of resilience is some evidence of change.

After discussing the transformative extent of the two interventions, Alice presented the enabling and constraining factors for more transformative approaches in the context of Harare, which are listed below.

Factors that enable transformative approaches

- The law provides a structure for empowerment in some cases (e.g. legislation that allows citizens to take developers to court)
- Building on lessons from previous projects (e.g. small towns WASH programme)
- Incentives & wins create momentum (demonstrability)
- Sustained engagements create more buy-in from communities
- Evidence & scientific knowledge (e.g. about wetlands) is a powerful tool (potential for more community knowledge?)
- Spaces for learning (e.g. about legislation or resilience) are appreciated
- Having a transparent project management committee/governance structure
- Business seeing benefits of being part of the initiative (e.g. coca-cola & chicken inn)
- Spaces and activities that bring different types of people together (communities, academics, activists, technocrats etc.) in an 'apolitical' sense.

- Effort into building good relationships
- Politics can be an enabler (e.g. working with councilor or "if you put wetlands on your manifesto, we can put votes on you")

Factors that constrain transformative approaches

- Environmental issues are generally not a priority ("additional" to people/development, which emphasizes the importance of seeing 'the bigger picture' and connections).
- Not enough accountability and transparency, as well as poor governance, e.g. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process not independent
- Limited enforcement of planning policy/legislation (e.g. development starts before approval of the EIA)
- Executive decisions by Minister overrule other processes or decisions in some cases
- Struggles to shift practices that have occurred over time (e.g. farming on a wetland that has occurred for two or three generations)
- Those most affected by environmental issues do not have the authority to solve them
- Lack of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in programmes, which means little or no opportunity for learning (this is independent in some instances and effectively shared with the teams)
- Project governance is not always transparent, which is frustrating for other team members
- General lack of governance frameworks for dealing with holistic, complex problems.
- Political instability & turnover (loss of continuity)
- The limited convening role of the city authority. Agendas are driven by NGOs, funders or national government.
- Missing key actors: e.g. business/industry not yet willing and part of the projects, police, Zim Lawyers for Human Rights, engineers, housing coops
- Funding is always an issue for sustainability

Alice then brought attention to the relationships between characteristics of TA; some need to be traded off with others (i.e. it is almost impossible to achieve both) and other characteristics are synergistic. For example, it is difficult to achieve 'demonstrable benefits' in the short-term if trying to apply a 'holistic, complex perspective' of the issue at hand while involving lots of stakeholders (i.e. 'inclusive'). This is because it generally takes time to build an understanding of an issue using a holistic, complex perspective as one explores drivers, relationships and feedbacks of the 'system' (e.g. part of the urban system) with a variety of different stakeholders from their perspectives. It also takes time to build trust amongst a large, diverse group of stakeholders. Generally, the more stakeholders involved and the more holistic a perspective adopted, the slower the process of understanding the issues, thinking about solutions that are relevant to everyone and the longer it takes to see benefits 'on-the-ground'. 'Flexibility' is also

difficult to achieve within the rigid Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) frameworks that currently exist, which begs the question: perhaps we need new frameworks to understand success?

Several characteristics are, on the other hand, more synergistic (i.e. achieving one characteristic supports achievement of another); this is noticed with the characteristics of 'flexibility' and 'inclusivity'; if a programme is more inclusive, involving a diversity of stakeholders, more perspectives are usually brought to bear on problems and solutions, increasing the number the options for moving for taking action at any point in time.

Such relationships between objectives have been noticed and documented in literature on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A study implemented by Pradhan et al. (2017)[2] presented synergistic and traded off relationships between various SDGs; the top 10 synergy and trade-off pairs are presented in Figure 3.

The discussion points that emerged from the presentation of findings are summarized below.

Figure 3. Top 10 synergy and trade-off pairs of SDGs according to Pradhan et al. 2017

- Transformative projects tend to sometimes bring change in areas that are not aligned with original project objectives.
- The Harare Wetlands Advocacy Project did not have a baseline on water quality before the project started but they can request results of ambient water points from the city.
- We need to fundamentally change governance and learnings structures in order to achieve SDGs.
- We need to think about our framing of development.
- The importance of inclusivity; the more people you bring into the conversation, the more opportunities for ideas and action.
- There is conflict linked to the master plan; people are already building houses on wetlands as the master plan does not specify the space as wetlands
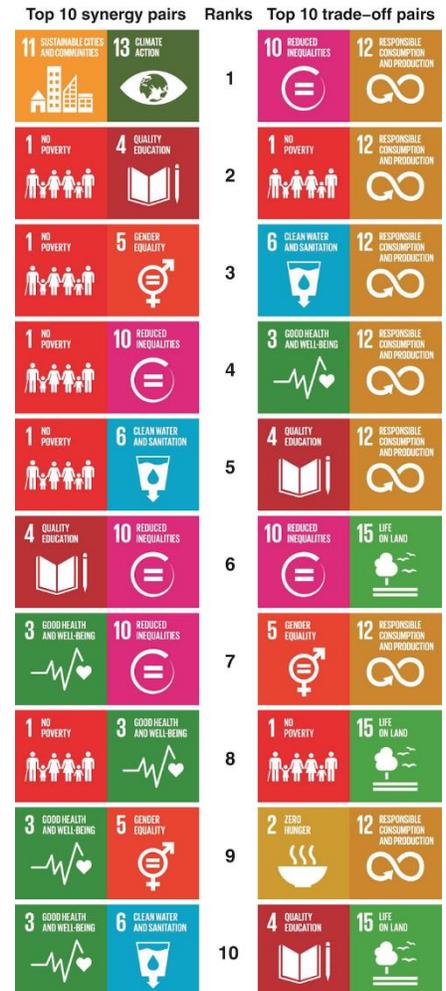
[2] Pradhan, P., Costa, L., Rybski, D., Lucht, W. and Kropp. 2017. A Systematic Study of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Interactions. Earth's Future (5):11. Pp 1067-1179.

- The river of life exercises and feedback from the analysis has helped participants stop and reflect on their projects critically because of the way in which the issues have been unpacked.

First time screening: 'Changing course'

Lulu Van Rooyen and Patrick Martel showcased a documentary that has been made alongside the 'transforming southern African cities in a changing climate' project in Durban. The film touched on the benefits of transdisciplinary research, as well as Durban case studies of TA: the Sihlanzimvelo project, Aller River Rehabilitation Project, Palmiet Catchment Rehabilitation Project and the Wize Wayz Water Care project. The screening sparked discussions about the video; participants were inspired by the case studies in Durban and one of the officials from the city was keen to find out how funding can be accessed in order to design and implement similar projects in Harare. The need to start small, even without external funding was emphasised. In the case of Sihlanzimvelo, eThekwini Municipality was already providing some budget for activities associated with maintaining rivers, which provided opportunities for accessing further funding from the C40 Finance Facility. The need for innovation was also emphasized; e.g. through generation of income from waste, which is being explored in durban. Other highlights from the discussions included:

- The importance of community-based research and making people part of the solution.
- The need to involve people from the design of the project, implementation and dissemination of outputs.
- The need for innovation, experimentation and learning-by-doing in cities. This approach does, however, require adequate processes for learning and reflection.
- Developing climate change champions in communities through time and effort.
- Bringing in the private sector as some of the companies are responsible for the pollution for example the disposable nappy manufacturing industry.
- Having a flexible approach.
- Sometimes the private sector only funds projects that provide an incentive.
- External funding is more accessible if there is some level of commitment on the ground at city level (e.g. the municipality is already spending money on activities).
- The climate change department at the Ministry of Environment is likely the best way to find out more about climate finance.
- Need for political buy-in in order to foster climate change initiatives for example councillors e.g. in Durban; there is buy-in from the Mayor.
- Need to link climate change initiatives with job creation, poverty alleviation among other issues.

Co-design of outputs

The last session of the learning lab was facilitated by Chipo Mubaya, during which the participants brainstormed outputs that might be useful to them, based on knowledge co-produced through LIRA research. The outputs are listed below.

- Practice guidance notes on what it means to operationalise transformative adaptation within a southern African city context
- Video with infographics which shows the interconnectedness of systems
- Policy brief linking to strategic areas of environmental policy
- Public consultations and public lectures

Mr Chipfunde highlighted that the city is expected to develop environmental policy covering issues of Local Environmental Action Plans (LEAP), water issues (a framework for these), land degradation, cost reduction. He highlighted that the outputs should speak to these strategic priorities.

The LIRA2030 team explained that they will take these suggestions and consider how to produce an output that is most useful for societal stakeholders working in Harare.

Reflection session and closing

Alice closed the day by thanking everyone for taking part and for their contributions. Participants were provided an opportunity to write down reflections on the process and hand these over to the project team. The following reflections were shared.

- I enjoyed the experience of taking part in the river of life exercise, I got to understand the two projects at a deeper level
- Being a researcher in social studies, understanding the importance of engagement with the community is wholly crucial in realising a project's success
- Improve on engaging even the Ministry of Environment and other national lay ministries
- The video was informative and helpful in putting the issues into perspective. The interactive nature of the learning lab made it possible for everyone to share
- Involve a multisectoral approach which includes everyone and enables them to participate
- I enjoyed the river of life because it is interactive
- The holistic approach on climate change and action
- River of life methodology is an interesting way to analyse a project
- This will inform my PhD work starting from September
- Time management and the venue arrangement could be improved
- Thanks for a very reflective and thought provoking session. The river of life exercise was great; visualisation is very helpful to see gaps and overall processes

- The video part of the learning lab was very interesting and also the production of the river of life in groups. I was excited as it was a new concept to me and I think I will apply the river of life concept. It is easy to apply when unpacking complex things.

Annex A: Meeting agenda

Time	Session	Facilitator
08h30-09h00	Registration, tea & coffee	N/A
09h00-09h30	Welcome, introduction to LIRA2030 and progress	Alice McClure
09h30-10h00	Newsflash: update on climate change desk	Lisben Chipfunde
10h00-10h30	Overview of cases & "river of life" exercise	Rudo Mamombe & Chipo Mubaya
10h30-11h00	Tea	N/A
11h00-11h30	Feedback from "river of life" exercise	Chipo Mubaya
11h30-12h30	Feedback from analysis	Alice McClure
12h30-13h30	Lunch	N/A
13h30-14h00	First time screening of "Changing course" video and Q&A with Durban participants	Lulu van Rooyen & Patrick Martel
14h00-15h00	Looking forward to a transformed landscape	Alice McClure
15h00-15h30	Tea	N/A
15h30-16h0	Co-design of useful outputs (what can we take out from this work that we'd like to share?) & closing	Chipo Mubaya

Annex B: Workshop attendee list

Name	Organisation	Email	Phone Number
Alfred Muriya	City of Harare	alfredmuriya@gmail.com	0773852958
Lisben Chipfunde	City of Harare	lisben2@gmail.com	0772513218
Charles Mabika	City of Harare	charlemabika@gmail.com	0773640703
Kelvin Kachidza	City of Harare	kachidzaKelvin@gmail.com	0774185526
Batsirai Munetsi	City of Harare	gbmunetsi@gmail.com	0772386736
Chipo Mutongi	City of Harare	mutongic@gmail.com	0712529824
Marewo Margaret.E	Development Governance Institute	margaretmarewo@gmail.com	0776418741
Hazel Musvovi	Development Governance Institute	hazemusvovi@gmail.com	0776418741
Francis Mukora	Community Alliance for Human Settlements	fmukora@gmail.com	0773011445
John Manyara	City of Harare	johnmanyara@gmail.com	0772429162
Cosmas Dongo	City of Harare	cosmasdongo49@gmail.com	0771649098
Kamilla Adgamova	UNDP	kamilla.adgamova@undp.org	0771973926
Anesu Gore	City of Harare	wishesanesugore@gmail.com	0773751853
Zexie Marembo	City of Harare	zkmarembo@gmail.com	0773726875

Thabani Nsingo	City of Harare	nsingote@gmail.com	0719598073
Tendai Mudombi	City of Harare	tpmudombi@gmail.com	0715969702
Gladys Manyembere	City of Harare	gmanyembere@gmail.com	0782242742
Akali Reuben	Combined Harare Residents Association	akalireuben5@gmail.com	0774731 770
Tafadzwa Mandizvidza	City of Harare	mandizvidza94@gmail.com	0776402854
Alice McClure	University of Cape Town	alice@csag.uct.ac.za	+27 719998982
Rudo Mamombe	Chinhoyi University of Technology	mamomberudo92@gmail.com	0718171613
Lulu Van Rooyen	University of Kwazulu Natal	pretorius.lulu@gmail.com	+27 795066702
Patrick Martel	University of Kwazulu Natal	pmartel26@gmail.com	
Mzime Ndebele-Murisa	START International	murisa.mzime@gmail.com	0772516365
Chipo Mubaya	Chinhoyi University of Technology	mubayacp@yahoo.com	0771067521
Hardlife Mudzingwa	Community Water Alliance	goodlifemudzingwa@gmail.com	O775255458
Ndorowa Clever	City of Harare	ndorowaclever2@gmail.com	0783574381

| Elmond Bandauko | Development Governance Institute | bandauko.elmond@gmail.com | 0779447261 |