

SPATIAL PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN AFRICA

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Key words:

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the spatial planning, development and management of human settlement processes in Africa. The rationale and motivation for spatial planning processes in Africa arises from the fact the Africa's is experiencing deep depression compounded by an external debt crisis, a serious refugee problem, sky-rocketing population explosion and urbanisation problems. Africa is also peculiarly projected as the only region in the world where per capita income will continue to fall right up to the 21st Century. The rapid urbanisation in Africa over the past four decades has led to numerous negative consequences in terms of water supply, housing, urban Transpiration , environment and employment amongst others. Most regions areas in Africa have experienced rapid urban growth without corresponding growth and Development of the urban infrastructure facilities and services. Water infrastructure and resources have not kept pace just like housing and urban transportation networks. Inadequate and inefficient spatial management institutions have failed to provide vital services to the urban population. Inadequate solid waste management procedures have led to spatial environmental degradation: inadequate provision of housing to mushrooming of slums and squatter settlements and inadequate provision of portable water to deterioration of health of the urban residents. The instruments of spatial planning, like the planning personnel who use them have had foreign orientation and influence. The Institutional frameworks under which spatial planning takes place in Africa have tended to have excessive government influence. Consequently, political ideals rather than planning visions have tended to be propagated. Prospects however, exist for a re-orientation towards more sustainable spatial development and management: what with the clamour for democratization in Africa which commenced in the 1990s. Prospects for sustainable planning processes exist and will depend on the careful stimulation and revitalization of the urban centres in Africa. The resources for the stimulation of spatial areas just like the innovations required for the stimulation must come from Africa: if growth and development in the region have to be sustained or be sustainabl

INTRODUCTION

One of the ways in which the performance of the spatial planning processes in Africa may be evaluated is to assess the extent to which the processes have been able to achieve the objectives of spatial planning in a number of African countries. Spatial planning has largely been perceived as the exercise of ensuring an orderly arrangement of spatial land uses. The ultimate goal not only to create spatial harmony amongst the many different land

uses but also to satisfy the environmental, social, economic and physical requirement of the spatial residents on a short term and long term basis.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In general terms, some of the major long term challenges and problem of spatial planning in Africa include, inter area rapid population growth resulting in disproportionate rural-urban migration and consequently, to rural stagnation; rapid urbanisation leading to a strain on urban infrastructure and services and general urban poverty; over-concentration of services and administrative functions in the urban centres; adequate and/or defective national planning policies and instruments leading to general failure of planning goals and targets particularly in urban areas and lack of institutional and inter-sectoral coordination frameworks for development planing and national, regional and urban levels. Contemporary results from many African countries indicate that although some form of spatial planning processes adopted in Africa, many of the challenges and problems remains unresolved. Indeed, with time, the problems are becoming more and more insurmountable. Hence the need to re-appraise the spatial planning practices and experiences within the Africa region in order to evaluate the performance and prospect of spatial planning instruments.

AIMS

The aim of this article is not only to review the spatial planning practices in African countries. In order to do this, the experiences of five selected African countries are recounted and their successes and/or problems highlighted so as to provide the basis for assessing the effectiveness' of the spatial planning practices adopted by the respective countries. An assessment of the spatial planning practices is made in order to determine their conceptual legitimacy and /or empirical relevance to sustainable spatial development and management in Africa

ORGANIZATION

The article is organized into five sections. The First section introduces the major problems encountered in spatial planning in Africa and the motivations behind the need for a re-appraisal of the spatial planning practices. The Second section reviews the spatial growth and development in Africa. It discusses the origins of urbanisation in Africa and gives some background information on the urbanisation process in Africa in contemporary terms. The Third reviews the performance of the urban spatial planning practices adopted in Africa and provides highlights of some of the strengths, weaknesses and prospects of the main planning practices. The section also assesses the extent to which some of the general planning practices have been relevant in addressing key contextual spatial problems of Africa. Section Four discusses the future prospects for sustainable spatial planning in Africa. The section recapitulates the conditions for successful spatial planning in Africa, addresses issues of sustainability in spatial planning and critically discusses recent urban spatial planning approaches. Section Five provides a summary of the main conclusions of the discussion and postulates on future prospects.

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