

A REVIEW OF PLANNING AND POLITICS INTERRELATIONSHIP IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the interrelationship between planning and politics in the context of Africa. Generic, systemic and process view of planning and politics were reviewed with a view to advancing the understanding of their operations as processes with almost the same inputs which emanate from man's needs, environmental issues and challenges but differs in output. Tracking the history of planning politics in Africa, it revealed that it is an aged long phenomenon and instrument being used by the government for physical development. Considering the indicators of planning politics such as meeting people's demand, decision-making process, overriding interest, public interest and implementation of plans revealed that planning and politics cannot be divorced.

Key Words: Planning; Politics; Interrelationship; Power; Africa

1. INTRODUCTION

Planning and politics interrelationship is an aged long phenomenon which is becoming more profound in our contemporary as a result of the interplaying forces of civilization, modernization and urbanization in the cities of African countries. According to Bayezit (2013), "power and politics are deeply embedded in planning. The idea of controlling cities and nations via planning is as old as city-states". In African countries, it is not possible to completely divorce the planning process from political influences, whether involving elected politicians or others. In a democratic society, the responsibilities of elected representatives among others are to reconcile the conflicting demands of stakeholders and to protect the public interest which invariably means securing outcomes that are in the long-term interest of the community. Therefore, the role of politicians is parallels to the role of the planners in the sense that they determine planning and development controls, and development applications.

McHarg (2017) opined that "as politics has, in recent decades, become more inclusive, representative and democratic, so has planned, especially at the local level". The symbiotic relationship between planner and politician has brought about a drastic change in the planning profession, channelling direction to new and varied forms of planning designed to respond to structural adjustments in the political scene. The setting of physical development and controls in some part of African countries is subject to a variety of political influences depending on the scale involved. For example, any urban centre proposed for renewal requires the consideration of a broad range of issues and stakeholders. The issue might be infrastructure requirements, building for demolition, and preservation of monumental structures, flooding, economic goals, and characteristics of the locality while the stakeholders may include the clients/developer (local, state and federal government); designers/planners; political and ideological organizations; and local communities. A good grasp of the issues and the players involved will inform the planning process on time reduction, risk management and improved planning outcomes.

In the 1970s, "planning responded to the new political priorities resulting from environmental concerns with an 'ecological system approach' that compares a location's carrying capacity to the potential impacts from various types of development" (McHarg, 2017). This is very important because planning provides the skill-based for the attainment of government policies towards controlling the developmental forces. According to Solola (1981), "government has not been insensitive to the problems posed by physical development within the environment and has therefore adopted the decision to have physical plans in Nigeria". This is reflected in the promulgation of planning policies such as: town and country planning, ordinances;

establishment of planning education department in higher institutions of learning to provide the necessary skilled manpower in the act of planning; policies on physical planning in National Development plans with the aim of achieving even physical development through spatial planning. The inter-wings of politics in the efficacy of planning policies, planners' performances and operations formed the bases for this paper.

2. Theoretical View of Planning and Politics

Theories of generic, systemic and process provided the anchor for the review of planning and politics with a view to realizing the interrelationships and advances the understanding of their operations in African countries.

Generic View of Planning and Politics- according to Solola (1981), "planning is fundamentally the process of preparing a set of design-oriented decisions for action in the future which is directed at achieving goals by the most desirable means". Adeleke (1991) opined that "planning is a multi-disciplinary, systematic and scientific mechanism for providing the right site for the right use, at the right time, in the right place for the right people". McLoughlin (1969) exclaimed that "planning is directed at the action which will rationally shape the future land use according to societal desires". The array of different views of scholars such as Solola (1981), Adeleke (1991) and McLoughlin (1969) on planning revealed that planning involves decision making by individuals, group of individuals, stakeholders, professionals and government for collective interest. Planning involves a process by which a group of people makes decisions which is synonymous to politics. In other word, the manifestation of slum proliferation, ghetto, devastation, deterioration, informal settlement, climate change, urban crime and violence, urban disasters and insecurity in some major cities of African countries can only be addressed by the interwoven factors of planning and politics to foster physical development.

Merriam-Webster Visual Dictionary (2014) defined "politics is the art and science concerned with guiding or influencing the nations and politics of a government or getting and keeping power in a government". Easton (1965) expressed that a "political system can be designed as those interactions through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society". Solola (1981) viewed politics "as the mechanism for the resolution of the conflict between public feedback mechanisms put output back into the system as input, thus completing a cyclical operation or process". According to Moor (2014), one of the clearest indicators that politics around the world is becoming more inclusive and democratic is the changing approach to the planning function. In African countries, within a few years, planning went from a purely physical approach to one that places equal importance on economic, social and environmental issues. This reflects a shift towards political equity that leaves politicians to face the classic problem of trade-offs among these three domains, each of which can become an ideological world view with its own staunch advocates. Decision-making at the local level does not become easier with democratization. Thus, one of the most useful functions of planning in any city of Africa is the intelligent function-providing assessments of social, economic and environmental trends and providing advice on what choice to make in order to achieve multiple, and sometimes conflicting goals. Conversely, politics is a collective effort to achieve the desired goal. Generic view of planning and politics revealed that both involve decision making in achieving collective interest in African countries.

Systemic View of Planning and Politics- according to Solola (1981), "the continuous nature of planning and its complex variables make it convenient for planners to see planning activities as a system". The idea of a system originated from biological science, the early development of its thought is associated with Biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy. McLoughlin (1969) defined system approach as "the attempt to improve understanding by conceptualizing the real world or some part of it as a system". Hall (1956) defined system as a "set of objects together with relationships between the objects and their attributes". A system consists of a set of interrelated

elements with each element being studied in terms of the part that it plays in the system as a whole. The characteristics of a system can be broadly divided into three, the input to the system, the system itself and the outputs. The coherence and continuity in a system formed bases for its application in planning analysis. In the early 1900s, Chadwick and Chapin advocated for the adoption of system theory in planning. The approach in planning is characterized by its view of the planners' activities as systems and subsystems of man's activities, with their physical manifestations and interrelationships, the consequent on which design oriented decisions are proposed. The implementation of these decisions becomes an input to the next stage of the system. System view approach has been adopted in African politics.

This approach views politics as a system of related and interdependent elements. Easton (1965) defined political system as "that system of interactions in any society through which binding or authoritative allocation is made". The authoritative allocation may be roughly translated as policymaking. Solola (1981) opined that "there are inputs and outputs in the political system". Inputs are the demands and support from the various environments and these are converted into outputs i.e. authoritative decision. Solola (1981) further expressed that "feedback mechanism put outputs back into the system as inputs, thus completing a cyclical operation or process". Therefore, in African setting, the political system is a process which rationally organizes and conceptualizes information into the authoritative decision in that the criteria of the system are essentially being set externally.

Moreover, African political system can be viewed from four different perspectives such as idealist model, realist model, ethological model and cybernetic model. Plato and Aristotle who were inspired by the teaching of Socrates were of the school of thought on idealist model. They said polis or polity is fundamentally an economic association; characterized by a specialization of roles and division of labour, equality important, interdependence with respect to the satisfaction of our various needs and wants. In other word, an organized polity or state produces mutually beneficial economic synergy that is synonymous to collective survival enterprise. Plato went on to argue that polity or state should also strive to attain good life in both material and moral sense for human existence. The paradigm which is termed idealist has been viewed in different ways by different scholars; Wolin (1960) says polity or state "is activities related to or affecting the community as a whole". Deutch (1966) calls politics "the dependable coordination of human efforts and expectations for the attainment of the goals of the society". Easton (1965) defined politics as "the process through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society. The idealist view of politics by Wolin (1960), Deutch (1966) and Easton (1965) revealed the steady nature of growth and development as a true operation of politics and planning in some parts of the developed African countries in terms of striving for creating a conducive physical environment for people to leave through the adoption of planning policies, urban master plan, upgrading slum cities, development plan, safer city concept, poverty eradication programmes, pro-active measures against man-made and natural disasters.

The realist model rejected the claims of community, good life and public interest and viewed politics in which individual self-interest is positioned as the foundation of social life. In other words, states are formed primarily to provide security against the depredations of others, anything beyond this represents a set of conditional, contractual arrangements to facilitate our personal self-interests. The Epicurean school of thought is of the opinion "that individual self-interest is the driving force in humankind and the "good life" amounts to nothing more than the satisfaction of our personal appetites and material wants. According to the Epicurean paradigm, "there is no instinctive preference for or obligation to society and that justice is solely a matter of expediency". The cynic school of thought under realist model rejected all social life, all rules of social intercourse or conventions even the benefits of learning and their attitudes ranged from rugged individualism to utopian anarchism and an idealized communism.

The ethological model found its argument from the emergence of the science of ethology in the 1960s. The scholars of this model were of the thought to equate politics in human societies with dominance competition in the natural world. Thus, politics is a world of winners and losers which means political system is tantamount to dominance hierarchy (Lionel and Robin, 1971). They also argued that politics is essentially a struggle for power which made them to concede that politics in human societies serves different purposes, which is associated with leadership, division of labour and cooperative activities of various kinds. The modern ethological model believed that if political system is organized it would be characterized by overarching collective goals, decision-making, interpersonal communications, social control processes and feedback. It is concluded under the ethological model that political systems are cybernetic systems.

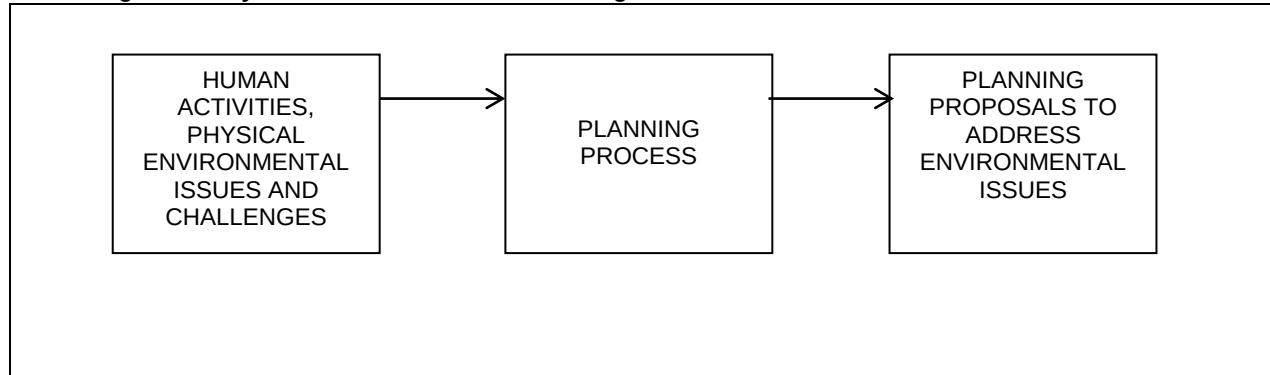
The cybernetic defines politics as being isomorphic with social cybernetics. That is “a political system is the cybernetic aspect, or subsystem of any socially organized, cooperating group or population. Politics in these terms refers to social control processes that involve efforts to create, or to acquire control over, a cybernetic social system, as well as the process of exercising control”. According to this definition, power is essentially a means not to an end. Corning (2004) buttressed the definition of politics given by cybernetic model by saying that political power can be attained in many different ways including family inheritance, acquired wealth, seniority, expertise, and merit, drawing straws, elections, the use of lethal force and the often-potent influence of amorous love. The cybernetic definition of politics is functionally-oriented in the sense that it focuses on the processes of goal setting, decision making, communications and control (including all important concept of feedback) which are indispensable for all purposeful social organizations. The regulatory process of cybernetic exists in families, football teams, business firms, religious setting and at all levels of government. Dahl (1970) says “whether he likes it or not, virtually no one is completely beyond the reach of some kind of political system. Cybernetic model is not only compatible with realist, idealist and ethological model but also conforms with Aristotle’s and Plato’s enduring vision on political system. Critical examination of realist, ethological and cybernetic school of thought revealed the epidemic nature of growth and development as a true operation of politics and planning in major parts of the developing African countries in terms of creating a conducive physical environment for people to leave through the adoption of planning policies, urban master plan, upgrading slum cities, development plan, safer city concept, poverty eradication programmes, pro-active measures against man-made and natural disasters. Generally, the systemic view of planning and politics in African countries, having put into consideration the input factors, planning and politics become engines that process the actualization of common interest known as output.

Process View of Planning and Politics- according to Cripps and Mall (1969), “the continuous nature of planning makes it necessary to view the activity as a process, which is founded on the system approach”. Cripps and Mall (1969) further identified the stages of the planning process as follow: *(1) the decision to adopt planning (2) formulation of goal and identification of objectives for planning (3) examination of possible courses of action (4) evaluation of possible courses of action with the aim to selecting an operational course by giving attention to assume social values and the estimation of costs and benefits (5) development of action to implement the plan, including both direct works and the continuous control of public and private proposals for a desirable change (6) feedback for stage one to act, thus starting the whole process again.* Thus, planning is seen as a cyclical process. Economic theory view politics as a marketplace and political process of exchange. The economic theory stressed the bargaining and cooperative elements in the political process. This implies that self-interest pursuit by people coupled with high exchange capacity of political good i.e. votes if influenced, can be used as fundamental instruments in changing the political system.

Theoretical views of planning and politics revealed that both are processes with almost the same inputs which emanate from man’s needs, environmental issues and challenges but differ

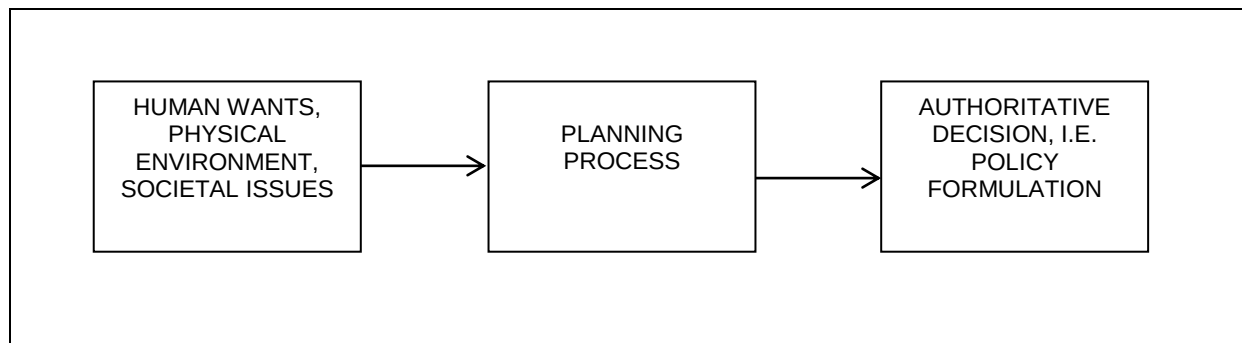
in outputs or results (See figure 1 and 2). Planning proposal is used as output factor in the planning process to address the environmental issues that emanate as a result of human activities while the authoritative decision in form of policy formulations is used as output factor in the political process to address societal issues and challenges in African countries.

Figure 2.1: System Characteristics of Planning



Source: Adapted with modification from Solola (1981), p. 11

Figure 2.2: System Characteristics of Politics



Source: Adapted with modification from Solola (1981), p. 11

3. Origin of Planning and Politics

Origin of planning and politics in Africa can be traced back to the precolonial, colonial, post-colonial and modern period. In the precolonial era indigenous African cities and villages had planned structures in their geographic settings which varied along ethnic and religious line. Based on primitive knowledge, land uses were allotted to various necessary functions such as markets, religious site, farms, recreation square/playing ground and communal assembly spaces in an orderly, rationally and politically manner and governed by the traditional rulers of the people. According to UN-Habitat (2013), "land was vested within traditional leaders, families and communities, and controlled and managed through customary practices". Factors such as locations of natural resources, land for grazing and other farming practices, water courses and religious practices influenced settlement pattern and location in African countries, while customary practices of land governance were overseen by traditional rulers such as kings, chiefs and family heads. Colonial political systems and planning ushered in the development of private and individual ownership of land governance in African countries.

After the Berlin Conference in the 1880s, colonial political systems and planning emerged, though colonial powers were slow to impose Western theories and methods of urban planning upon the newly conceived colonies in Africa, nevertheless, colonial urban planning began to be prominent in the 1940s. According to UN-Habitat (2013), “modernist planning in Africa can be traced to its colonial roots and the interests of colonists in the continent’s natural resources, including agricultural produce, fresh water, minerals and, in particular, humans as slaves”. From 16 century onward, colonist introduced the establishment of new settlements along the African coastline which were away from the existing traditional settlement, thereby hindered the growth of these traditional management system that existed in some of these African countries. UN-Habitat (2013) said that “the colonist planning systems were largely aimed at controlling the development of settlements, land use management and the construction of buildings in the colonies without consideration to the existing traditional settlement”. Some of the African countries experienced settlements segregation during the colonial era as a result of the fact that colonial settlements were away from the traditional settlements and land uses were restricted to housing and local stores to protect the interests of colonial in the then core areas. Colonial political systems and planning lasted for more than a century in African countries before the advent of postcolonial political systems and planning which was characterized with dictatorships and military rule.

In the postcolonial political systems and planning era, urban planning practices in Africa countries were affected differently and significantly by decolonization. UN-Habitat (2013) expressed that “political instability was common for most countries throughout the initial independence period, characterized by coup d’etats, political dictatorships, presidents who occupied office for life, the banning and imprisonment of political opposition, and the induction of military government”. Though the political instability had direct impact on the establishment of postcolonial political systems and planning governance for development models in African countries, nevertheless, the planning systems and laws introduced by the colonial era were adopted and sustained for the postcolonial period till today. Modernist planning ushered in the adoptions of planning degrees, ideas, and ordinances borrowed from foreign countries like United Kingdom, United State of America, and Britain in order to enhance the growth of urban settlements in African countries.

In the modernist planning era, most of the African planners were trained in European and American Universities which informed their knowledge based, hence the adoption of the colonial modern planning skills in African countries. Among these, we have British Town and Country Planning Systems such as blue print planning, development control, permits and licenses and Town and Country Ordinances like master planning, structural planning and spatial development frameworks in African countries. The major idea of the modernist planning is that all development in African countries would be formal and modern. But it was unfortunate that the modernist planning system was not realistic in African countries as a result of slow growth of manufacturing and formal commercial activities, rapid expansion of informal settlements and slum manifestation in most of African urban settlements. Hence, the need for paradigm shift to the localization of the idea, theory and concept of modern planning system into the indigenous African planning system by institutionalizing environmental planning process as planning reform and innovation that outgrow the existing urban planning processes in confronting current development challenges of poor management of rapid urbanization, slum proliferation, informal settlement, climate change, urban crime and violence, urban disasters and insecurity that are putting pressures on urban growth and development in African countries.

4. Interrelationship of Planning and Politics

Planning and politics are inseparable because their common nature and operational activities. The nature includes: political, power, participatory, procedural, progressive and comprehensive while the operational activities among others are: meeting people’s demand, decision-making

process, overriding interest, public interest and implementation of plans. In order to show the relationship that exist between planning and politics their nature and operational activities are explained further as follow:

Politics- planning decisions in African countries are political in the sense that it takes cognizance of individuals and groups that are positively or negatively affected by planning the intervention, which is otherwise known as public participation which cannot be achieved without political skill. Also planning activities or actions on spatial order affect city structure of African countries with remarkable impact and credit on the political scenario. This supports the assertion of Bubshait (2009) that “planning often involves matters in which people have large emotional intakes which require political knowledge in order to avoid casualty”.

Power- planning in African countries is power because it makes public control of government decisions through advocacy on city development. Planning is heavily based upon the use and extension of statutory powers and sanctions with strong political skill when it comes to improving or making viable the physical environment.

Participatory- planning is participatory because city planning involves the engagement of the whole population in visioning exercises that deal with full aspects of issues facing African cities today, democratization skill is what planning needs to help in articulating what people want for their cities in the future and assigning priorities to possible actions for their implementation. More so, the choice of the “right site for the right use, at the right time and in the place for the right people”, have political and politicking skills that help planners in actualizing their plans in African countries.

Procedural- planning is procedural in the sense that it involves the coordination of various activities within the domain of the physical environment. Planning resolves environmental problems through the planning process which is in stages. The relevance of politics in planning is well pronounced in the planning process when it gets to the implementation of the plan (s). At this stage, planners put into consideration the participation of private and public sectors to canvas for their political will to actualize the plan.

Progression- planning is progressive because of the fact that it is dynamic, multi-purpose, multi-functional, multi-dimensional and applicable to emerging contemporary environmental issues. According to Moor (2014), “one of the clearest indicators that politics around the world is becoming more inclusive and democratic is the changing approach to the planning function”. The physical approach of planning places equal importance on social, economic and environmental issues. This political equity leaves politicians in African countries to facing the classic problem of trade-offs among these three domains. However, the progressive process of planning is reflective in one of its functions to city development by providing assessments and advice on choice to make among the conflicting goals of social, economic and environmental trends.

Comprehensiveness- planning is comprehensive in nature. According to Davidoff and Reiner (1962), “planning serves to relate the components of a system “Planners uses planning proposal as instrument in guiding the decision-makers to choose rationally among alternative programmes in order to improve practice and policy. Davidoff and Reiner (1962) expressed further that “given scarcities, social and individual choices must be made about the manner in which resources are to be allocated: how, when, to whom, to what purpose, and in what combination”. Comprehensiveness of planning is revealed in the democratic ethic of carrying the public along in the plans in order to make a good choice among alternative programmes.

Meeting people's demand- planning and politics operate on the platform of meeting the demand of individuals, group of individuals, communities and State in general. This platform makes planners be politically holistic and future-oriented in their proposals while politicians, on the other hand, work with political consideration motives in the midst of strong influences, in which case it becomes inevitable not to have value or profit interest in their plan.

Decision-making process- the act of making decisions is common to planning and politics because of the general environment in which they operate. General environment influences the plans and decision-making process of planners and politicians, but on the other hand considerations for these influences in decision-making are weighty on the basis of their relevance towards achieving the politicians' goal of gaining and retaining power. More so, planning and politics involve two processes which are decision-making and rule of enforcement. Decision-making is said to occur when steps are being taken on behalf of the majority for the collective interest of resource is being allocated for collective people. Conversely, rule or enforcement is when the member of the collectivity is induced to accept resource allocations as binding.

Overriding interest- political considerations override the consideration and decision-making of both planners and politicians in the preparation and implementation of their plans. This is because they enjoy the recognition of the community as the overseer of public issues. This is reflective in the location of activities in geopolitical zones to serve as grow factor in terms of socio-economic development. The setting of physical development and controls is subject to a variety of political influences, depending on the scale involved. In planning, overriding interest requires given consideration to a broad range of issues and stakeholders. Issues like infrastructural requirements, building for demolition and preservation of monumental structure, flooding, economic goals and the nature of the locality while stakeholders such as the citizens, local, state and federal governments are germane to improving planning outcomes.

Public interest- planning process cannot be divorce from political influences because planners and politicians play a crucial role of protecting public interest. This is done by reconciling the conflicting demands of stakeholders with the aim of securing outcomes that are in the long-term the interest of the community.

Implementation of plans- planning and politics are embellished with policy-making and forecasting. When it comes to the implementation of plans, politics and power are being used in achieving planning vision for towns and cities.

5. CONCLUSION

It is not possible to divorce planning and politics, therefore, in order to make planners and planning profession complete, African planners must be political by learning: how to lobby and negotiate behind the scene; how to identify the influential people in the community for policy actualization; how to determine the goal agenda to be accomplished by the decision-makers; how to reflect planners great ideas to great achievements for those with political power. On the other hand, politicians must be planners in order to be successful in achieving their political vision through effective and result-oriented policymaking, good governance and right usage of power.

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