

From planning to implementation in Africa

For urban planning to contribute to improving the living conditions of current slum dwellers and provide adequate alternatives to new slum formation, **planning needs to be able to deal with informality**. First, it is necessary to move away from denial or elimination and recognise informality. Local authorities need to recognise the potentially positive role that informality can play and adopt policies, laws and regulations that are adapted to its dynamic, such as legal provision against evictions, regularisation and upgrading of informal settlements, and land-sharing arrangements.

Informal communities should be involved in the planning process so that they understand and support the outcome of the plan. However, for participation to be successful, there is a need for the political system to **provide a strategic planning process with a legal basis for participation** and give legal status to the planning outcomes through urban pacts, regulations, adoption by council, by-laws, et cetera.

Urban planning also needs to include local economic development strategies through community-empowering participatory processes in which local government, local communities, the informal sector, civil society, as well as the private and public sectors work together to stimulate and improve the local economy. These strategies can contribute to poverty reduction if they are inclusive and pro-poor. For planning to create enabling conditions for employment, there is a need to **adopt more flexible land-use management and zoning systems for mixed land use**, as opposed to the mono-functional zoning typically promoted by master planning. This allows income-generating or economic activities to take place within residential areas or any other appropriately located sites.

Emerging climate change issues have serious implications for the spatial structure and functioning of African cities. Steering settlements away from flood- and landslide-prone areas, coastal land at risk, watershed protection areas, forest and agriculture land will require state intervention to **adopt a climate responsive pattern of urban growth** through planning, including urban form, and through promoting compact cities instead of current urban sprawl.

Strategic Planning in a Nutshell

Because its main concern is implementation, strategic urban planning is:

- **Strategic rather than comprehensive.** Because the scope of action is limited by the scarcity of resources, strategic planning focuses on few strategic actions that can contribute to steering urban development.
- **Flexible rather than prescriptive.** The urban reality on the ground changes rapidly. Strategic planning can swiftly respond to emerging issues and newly identified trends and patterns of urban development.
- **Based on broad-based participatory processes instead of an expert-driven, top-down approach.** Strategic planning builds ownership from all actors, which in turn increases implementation by a wide range of stakeholders and enhances accountability in delivery.
- **Captured in concise documentation.** In order to become the common vision agreed on by all stakeholders, strategic planning results in concise documents that are easy to read, understand and communicate instead of technical documents aimed at only few technocrats.
- **Concerned with space.** In particular, strategic planning considers natural resources that the city needs for its development as well as environmental hazards that pose a threat. It also uses territorially-based strategy to coordinate sectoral or department policies, plans and actions.
- **Linked to budgeting exercises.** Budget linkages enable planning to be informed by the availability of resources and selected actions are implementable through existing budgets.



How to make planning work? Focusing on essential questions:

- Are the plans simple and clear enough to be understood by all? Do the plans, at a minimum, identify the areas of desired urban growth and areas to be protected? Are the plans clearly making provisions for future urbanisation?
- Are key strategic urban projects identified that significantly improve the functioning of the city, such as public transport, markets, bus stations, et cetera? Are Public Private/Community Partnerships used for their implementation?
- Are capital investments prioritised to orient the development of the city through the creation of trunk infrastructures?
- Is strategic planning linked to regulatory planning instruments? In particular, are regulatory instruments used to protect land necessary for future infrastructure and services? Does the plan create clear and unambiguous development rights encouraging investment by the private sector and developers?
- What roles can be played by communities in addressing priority issues? Is there effective engagement with communities through community urban appraisal, community action plans and community contracting?

Cities Alliance

1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433
U.S.A.

Telephone: (1 202) 473 9233
Fax: (1 202) 522 3224
Email: info@citiesalliance.org
www.citiesalliance.org

Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

ISTED

Institut des Sciences et des Techniques de l'Équipement
et de l'Environnement pour le Développement
2ème étage - La Grande Arche, Paroi Nord
92055 La Défense Cedex
France

Telephone: 33-(0)1-40-81-24-06
Fax: 33-(0)1-40-81-23-31
Email: isted@i-carre.net
www.isted.com

ISTED

The Need to Rethink Urbanisation in Africa

In Africa, while ongoing decentralisation has brought urban issues closer to local authorities directly involved with urbanisation, it has also resulted in increased planning responsibilities at the municipal level without the adequate means to do so. In reality, mayors and their municipal teams seldom have the time, resources or capacity to reflect on the future of their cities. Currently, managing African cities is more about crisis resolution than steering urban development; most of the time and resources are devoted to immediate responses to urgent needs.

For decades African cities have been managed with the aid of master plans, which consistently failed to accommodate the way of life of a majority of residents. Because master planning relies on controlling space and regulating its use, it has been largely ineffective in dealing with the challenges of African urbanisation, which has become characterised by informality. In fact, master planning has contributed not only to informality, but also to increasing social and spatial marginalisation and has arguably exacerbated poverty. In African cities, colonial and post-colonial master planning has usually resulted in a planned urban core surrounded by vast areas of informal and slum settlements, with some elite, developer-driven, commercial and residential enclaves. Less than a fifth of Africa's urban population lives in the "official" city.

Current planning frameworks continue to ignore the informal areas and do not recognise the rights of the poor. For new urban dwellers, informal housing is often the only op-

tion that is available and affordable for them, placing the responsibility of city building squarely onto the poor. The net result is growing informal settlements and slums.

Inappropriate and unrealistically high planning standards also contribute to the growth of settlement on unsuitable and often hazardous land, or in areas outside of the city, as the poor try to escape planning laws that exclude them. Indeed, many planning regimes still explicitly serve the elite and the wealthy—a minority of population of the city—and thereby contribute to the creation of informality and illegality.

Often, there is a fundamental belief that urbanisation is a problem. Over the past two centuries, however, cities, migration and trade have been the primary causes of progress. Far from being viewed as a problem, urbanisation should be considered as a positive force with the potential to transform societies and economies for the better. Most of the world's successful economies are already urbanised or are rapidly urbanising, such as China, India and Vietnam. The current experience of Latin America, where massive slum upgrading programmes are now trying to overcome decades of unresponsive public policy, demonstrates how much more difficult and expensive it is to retroactively upgrade slums and cities. The big challenge in Africa is for governments to anticipate, and plan for, urban growth. Within the context of rapid urbanisation, planning is a necessity, not a luxury.

The Promises of Strategic Urban Planning

With the recognition of the fundamental flaws associated with master planning, it became necessary to formulate new planning approaches. These new approaches are being developed on the following basic premises: (a) African urban forms are driven by forces outside the control of local government, mainly by efforts of low-income households to secure well-located, affordable land; (b) planning authorities cannot fully control how development should take place, and planners can only orient and try to maximize their opportunities; and (c) urban planning is, ultimately, a political exercise that requires the intervention of the government, which should seek to promote the common good while reconciling competing interests.

As these basic premises were translated into planning approaches over the past two decades, strategic planning emerged as a promising response to urban development. By shifting the objective towards **steering urban development rather than trying to control it**, strategic planning focuses on the need for strategic directions, decisions or projects to be implemented. Strategic planning has been introduced and promoted by development partners supporting urban development, including city consultations supported by the Urban Management Programme, Sustainable Cities projects supported by UN-HABITAT, ECO-

LOC exercises supported by the Municipal Development Programme, Local Agenda 21 supported by decentralised cooperation and city development strategies supported by the Cities Alliance through its members including the World Bank, UN-HABITAT, GTZ, USAID, UCLG.

Because of the fundamental participatory nature of these programmes, they share common successes in mobilising stakeholders and initiating entirely new relations among urban actors. Evaluations of these programmes have demonstrated that systemic changes are taking place, including: (a) the adoption of a new culture of planning; (b) the establishment of productive relations between actors; (c) changes in behaviour; and (d) an improvement of the policy, fiscal and institutional environment relating to urban planning. Nevertheless, these evaluations have shown that in order to initiate significant change at the local level, continuous support lasting at least five years is necessary; for changes at the national level, ten years is required. Evaluations of Cities Alliance activities have shown similar findings: long-term support provided to South Africa, Mumbai, São Paulo and the Philippines produced major successes and survived changing local and national governments, while isolated, short-term and ad-hoc projects had very limited impact.

Challenges to Urban Planning in Africa

These new strategic planning exercises, however, have had limited success when it comes to translating planning into implementation. One commonly identified reason is an overemphasis on the process itself and not enough on the outcome of the process. The lack of implementation is also the result of failing to rely on an appropriate combination of implementation instruments such as regulatory instruments, economic incentives mechanisms, public information campaigns and capital investments.

More recently, progress has been made in linking technical cooperation with capital investments provided by international funding institutions. For example, in city development strategies supported by the Cities Alliance in western Africa, the combination of technical cooperation provided by UN-HABITAT, ENDA, the Institut Africain de Gestion Urbaine (IAGU) and the Municipal Development Programme (MDP) among others is closely coordinated with ongoing and planned capital investments from the World Bank, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the European Union.

Beyond the issue of financing, another primary obstacle to proper planning is a severe shortage of appropriate skills and knowledge. The rapid turnover of technicians results in a lack of continuity in planning functions, and many urban

skills are underrepresented, absent or simply not responsive to the needs of massive and rapid urbanisation.

In this regard, the situation of planning education in Africa raises concerns. There are 69 planning schools in all of Africa; over half of them are in Nigeria, which has 39 schools. Too often, planning education still focuses on physical design instead of policy, economy and social science. With this kind of background, graduates from planning schools are often unable to facilitate strategic planning process that emphasise participation, sustainable development, job creation and social equity.

Moreover, too many planning initiatives still rely primarily on international expertise, associating only perfunctorily with local consultants and consulting firms. This situation does not facilitate the emergence and strengthening of local expertise or offer a market for training institutions working on urban development, sanitation, transport and other skills urgently needed for African cities.

An emerging response to this issue is the creation of structures such as “urban agencies”. Organised and functioning relatively independently, these structures are able to play a supporting role for municipalities and other public and private urban development actors.

Urban Agency in Douala

The Douala Urban Community created a Directorate of Research, Urban Planning and Sustainable Development to reflect on future urbanisation. The role of this Directorate, which was initially created as an urban planning institute, is to orient strategic choices of the urban community at the scale of the agglomeration; it plays this role in the current preparation of the city development strategy supported by the Cities Alliance. The Directorate responds to the issue of fragmentation resulting from projects based on badly coordinated sectoral approaches and offers a platform for local authorities to plan for the future.

Participatory strategic planning has been encouraged by national programmes that provide funding for municipal development. These programmes make it a prerequisite that municipal projects funded by the national government are identified through a participatory strategic planning exercise. In Kenya, for example, local governments are required to prepare Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) based on participatory planning, identification of priorities and linkages to budget. The mechanism seeks to use strategy formulation to inform budgeting decisions. The preparation of a LASDAP is a condition for accessing resources from the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF). However, the programme is not disbursing to the intended level because cities are unable to comply with the basic conditions. In this case, it shows that the issue is more of planning capacity than availability of resources.

African metropolises are experiencing a mismatch between administrative boundaries and responsibilities and the constantly evolving physical reality of the city, especially in the case of rapidly growing informal peri-urban suburbs. Decentralisation often resulted in the creation of a large number of sub-national entities with a wide range of mandates and responsibilities over various parts of the territory. It is often unclear who has authority, control over the budget, or the authorisation to raise resources, capture revenue and make investment decisions. There are seldom strong metropolitan authorities that can provide coherence in addressing issues of common concern or issues that require coordinated responses, such as metropolitan mobility, solid waste disposal, water supply to name a few.

Four Different Metropolitan Governance Systems

The case of four West African capitals—Ouagadougou, Cotonou, Bamako and Dakar—show the diversity of the challenges for metropolitan governance and offer an interesting range of institutional set-up.

Ouagadougou has a metropolitan mayor who has authority over a city comprising five districts (each with a district mayor). These five districts are themselves divided into a further 30 sectors and 17 villages attached to the city. This model proved to be quite efficient in coming up with a city-wide coherent development strategy, including peri-urban areas that are experiencing rapid urban expansion.

In Cotonou, the agglomeration is divided into three municipalities: Cotonou, Abomey-Calavi and Seme-Podji. In order to prepare a city development strategy that addressed some of the key issues faced by the agglomeration, the three mayors created a steering committee, although the establishment of a long-term inter-municipal mechanism has not yet been achieved.

Bamako is divided into seven territorial entities with elected mayors (six district mayors and one city mayor). A plan has been prepared for city under the technical supervision of the national Directorate of Urban Planning. Despite involvement at the local level in its preparation, the plan has not yet been approved because of a lack of clarity in terms of responsibilities and administrative boundaries.

In Dakar, decentralisation has resulted in extreme institutional fragmentation with 47 local bodies, 13 intermediary bodies and regional authorities. For the preparation of the grand Dakar initiative, innovative inter-municipal mechanisms have been put in place. However, in the absence of a clear political leader, it has been very difficult to come up with strong common vision for the future of Dakar, especially in a context in which the central government intervenes with important urban projects without much consultation with local authorities.

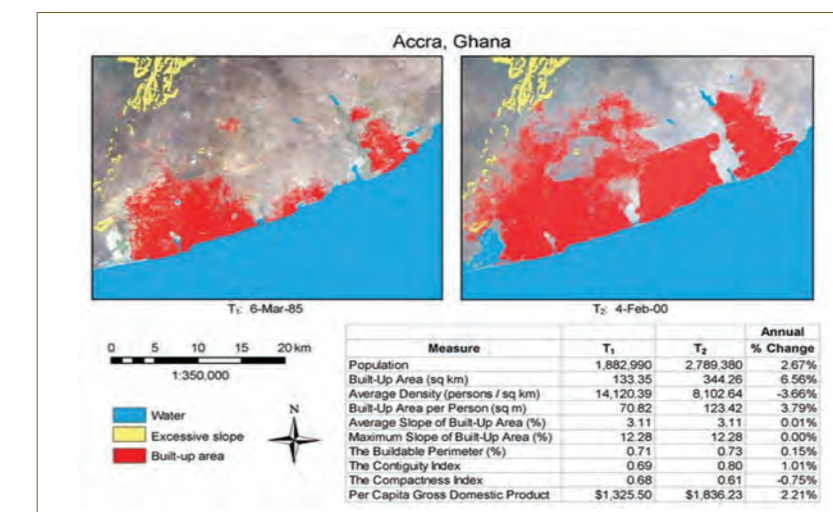
In the best case scenario, big cities have some technical and financial resources to engage in an urban planning exercise. However, the majority of secondary cities and small towns in Africa have neither the capacity nor the resources to do any type of planning.



Limited Planning Capacity in Secondary Cities: The case of Ethiopia

Ethiopia remains a mainly rural country with a low 18 percent urbanisation rate. Over the next decades, however, it is expected to experience considerable urban growth. Currently, secondary cities do not have accurate and updated data on land to support their development decisions. They have little or no knowledge about the amount, the location and the status of vacant land within their jurisdictions. Because of this situation, the decision-making process is slow, inaccurate and wide-open to corrupt practices. As a result, local urban economic development has been slowed down.

To respond to this issue, some secondary cities have taken the initiative to establish parcel-based land information systems. These emerging initiatives would require that support be based on a proper evaluation of their effectiveness.



Although land is not the focus of this document, it is important to underscore that African cities are usually faced with complex land use patterns and different forms of tenure, some of which involving traditional authorities and key planning instruments, such as land management, that are not under the responsibility of the local authority.

Are these challenges insurmountable? How can local authorities improve their planning functions and fulfil their planning responsibilities? How can municipalities ensure that urban planning translates into implementation?