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Roles and Responsibilities of Town Planners in Sustainable Development of Urban Centres in Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Town planning is concerned with spatial ordering of land use both in the urban and rural settings for the purpose of creating functionally efficient and aesthetically pleasing physical environments for living, working, circulation and recreation, thus bringing about the social and economic well-being for the majority of mankind. Town planners conduct the survey and collect data for carrying out development schemes inside and outside the limits of towns and cities. In this study, the primary objective is to find out how Town Planners can achieve sustainable development in Urban centres of Imo State ie integrating physical development with socio-economic development. Using questionnaire, the researcher collected facts and analyzed them. The study identifies the roles and responsibilities of Town planners as to prevent urban sprawl, prevent mixed land uses, bring orderliness and beauty into living environment, that is safe, healthy, ensure that the environment provides a sustainable base for economic and social development etc.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the

concept of “needs”, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet

present and the future needs (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Town planning is concerned with controlling the use of land and with making the multitude of different uses fit together in the best possible way, to achieve the greatest advantages and the least inconvenience for the individual and the society as a whole. It is also concerned with trying to turn our dreams and hopes about the kind of life we want to lead and the kind of surroundings we want to enjoy to a physical reality. The essence of town planning is to establish a spatial order of land uses in urban and rural areas for the purpose of creating a functionally efficient and esthetically pleasing physical environment for living, working, circulation and recreation. Town planners bring orderliness and beauty into living environment, that is safe, healthy and ensure that the environment provides a sustainable base for economic and social development.

Owerri, Okigwe and Orlu are the Urban Centres in Imo State which need Town

Planners to achieve sustainable development that is integrating physical development with socio-economic development.

The primary objective of the study is to find out how town planners can achieve sustainable development in urban centres of Imo State.

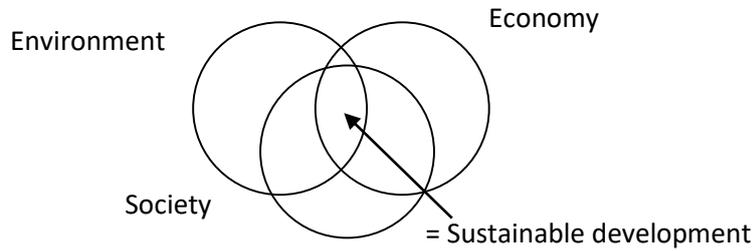
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable development seeks to create cities and towns that improve the long term health of the planet's human and ecological systems. The ultimate objective of all human settlement development is to improve the social, economic and environmental quality as well as the living and working environment of all people especially the urban and rural poor (Duruzoechi and Ezirim, 2003). This can be achieved through Town Planners.

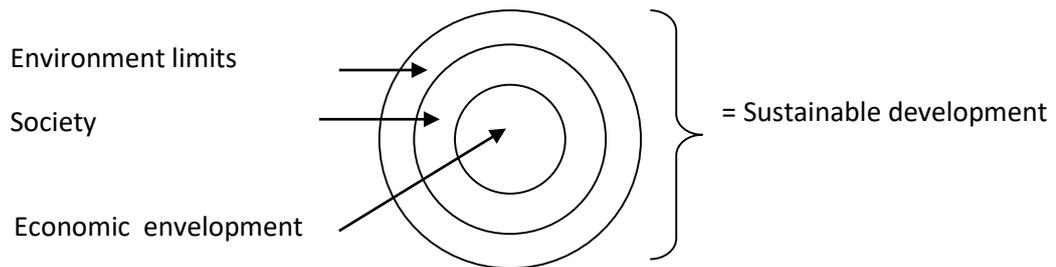
The concept of sustainable development is represented diagrammatically as shown in fig 1 and 2

Fig 1: From Venn diagram to Russian doll explanations of sustainable development

a. Venn diagram explanation

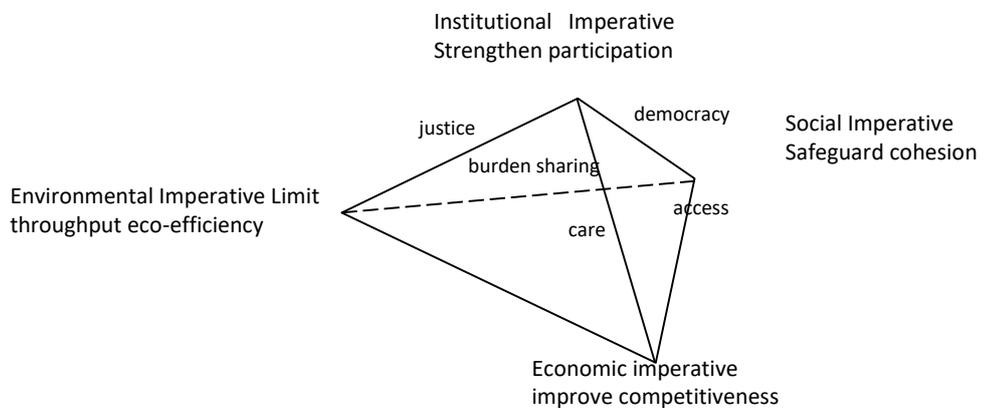


b. Russian doll explanation



Source: O’Riordan 1998 "<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/05/23091323/4> assessed on 23 September, 2016.

Fig 2: A multi-dimensional understanding of sustainable development.



Source: adapted from EPA Ireland Technical Document, 2004 (1998) "<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/05/23091323/4> accessed on 23 September, 2016.

In mathematical terms the concept of sustainable development can be better understood.

Put succinctly: ‘sustainable development is the sum total of economic growth plus social welfare and environmental protection?.

In terms of equation, SD = EG + SW + EP ----- (1)

Where: SD = Sustainable development

EG = Economic growth

SW = Social welfare

EP = Environmental protection

By adopting a sectoral approach to promote economic growth (EG) without consideration for others the above equation becomes:

EG = SD – SW – EP ----- (2)

Similarly, by adopting a sectoral approach to promote social welfare (SW) without consideration for others, the above equation becomes:

SW = SD – EG – EP ----- (3)

Also by adopting a sectoral approach to promote environmental protection (EP) without consideration for others the above equation becomes:

EP = SD – EG – SW ----- (4)

It will be obvious that SD can only be achieved if all the three sectors work together to achieve development goals, objective and programmes.

Town planning is a technical and political process concerned with the use of land,

protection and use of the environment, public welfare and the design of the urban environment, including air, water, and the infrastructure passing into and out of urban areas such as transportation, communications, and distribution networks (Zubairu, 2016).

According to MacDonald, 2005, he further describes town planning as “the better use of land, shaping space, community and safety, improving the quality of the environment, sustainable development , encouraging growth in the economy, housing, improving the historic environment, the best use of resources and quality.

Town planning is the art and science of ordering the use of land and the character and sitting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure the maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty”.

Nigerian institute of Town planners (NITP): “Town planning is concerned with the spatial ordering of land use both in the urban and rural setting for the purpose of creating functionally efficient and aesthetically pleasing physical environment for living, working, circulation and recreation “(NITP, 1993).

American Planning Association (APA). “ Planning, also called urban planning or city and regional planning, is a dynamic progression that works to improve the welfare of people and their communities by creating more convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient and attractive places for present and future generations” (APA, 2015).

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI): “Planning involves twin activities – the management of the competing uses for space, and the making of places that are valued and have identity. These activities focus on the location and quality of social, economic and environmental changes” (RTPI, 2006).

Urban and Regional Planning plays a foundational role in the orderly growth, development and management of cities. Urban planning lays the foundation for sustainable and prosperous city development by producing plans, projects and programmes that would ensure physical, social, economic and environmental development of the city (Yari, 2016).

Urban planning is not about image but is a way to make a difference, it is a framework that helps leaders transform a vision into reality using space as a key resource for development and engaging stakeholders along the way (UN Habitat, 2014).

Town Planning Profession was described as the art and science of ordering the use of land and setting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure the maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty (Kebble, 1968).

Mcloughlin (1969) defined town planning as an attempt to formulate the principles that should guide us in creating a civilized physical background for human life.

Ral-cliffe 1978) sees town planning as concerned with providing the right site at the right time, in the right place for the right people.

A town planner is a “post-modernist, moderator, politician, rationalist, advocate, realist, economist, critic, risk-taker developer, healer, geographer, sage, critical thinker, environmentalist, urbanist, manager, technocrat, strategist, statistician negotiator, economist, ruralist, deconstructionist, internationalist administrator” (MacDonald 2005).

MacDonald shares the view that town planners are “Jacks – of – all – trades”

A town planner formulates policies and plans for development and management of urban and rural areas, typically analyzing land use compatibility with economic, environmental and social trends, giving consideration for a wide array of issues, such as sustainability, air/water pollution, crime, traffic congestion, land values, legislation and zoning codes/regulations (Bolanle and Alabi (2016).

A town planner is a person who acquires knowledge, skills through training by formal education to perform physical planning functions and becomes a member of Nigerian Institute of Town Planners and Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria Decrees No 3 of 1988, section 7, clearly stipulates the attributes of a person to be registrable as a town planner.

3.0 STUDY AREA

Imo State is located in South – East of Nigeria. Imo State is bounded in the North by Anambra State, in the East by Abia

State, in the South by Rivers State, in the West by Delta State. The State is located at latitude $5^{\circ} 30'N$ and longitude $7^{\circ} 6'E$.

The State is situated within the sub-equatorial south. The region extends from the coast of roughly 130-160km in land. Imo State was created in 1976 and Owerri becomes the Capital the State. The State comprises of 3 Political Zones, 27 Local Government Areas and 304 Wards.

There are headquarters in every Local Government Area which are responsible for its local government administration and provision of local services based on the National and State policies. It lies within the lowlands and scarp-land of South – Eastern Nigeria. This relief unit may be divided into three units namely; the cross river plains, scarp-land Eastern costal lowlands.

Imo State has been transformed progressively from a two or three Government Reserved Layout environment to one with a capital city Master plan and eight Action Area Layouts, now to one of thirty one Master Plans and about 136 layouts comprising industrial, commercial, residential, recreational, institutional, circulation, and other land uses. The future of physical planning in the state is assessed in addition to the present planning stock and more importantly, in the level of implementation of the plans in the context of the new Urban and Regional Planning Law, Decree No 88 of 1992.

Abundant physical and event tourist-attractions are abound in the State. The study area among other areas in the South Eastern Nigeria is made up of the tertiary geological succession built on a coastal plain and sandstone formation.

Imo State is within the sub-equatorial climate belt. There are two major seasons- the raining season begins in March and ends in October, and the dry season begins in November and ends in February. A period of dry, cold dusty wind known as Harmattarn occurs between December and January. Temperature ranges from $25^{\circ}C$ to $30^{\circ}C$ (Eze, 2012) the highest temperatures occur in March, while the lowest temperatures occur in September. The highest rainfall occurs in July and September while December is the direst month.

4.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research covers Imo State which was divided into 3 zones Data for the study were from primary and secondary sources, Survey methods using questionnaire and interviews, direct observation, records, private papers, journals, official records and in the internet were conducted. A total number of 360 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the three Urban Centres of the three zones of Imo State namely; Owerri, Okigwe and Orlu Urban Centres.

5.0 DATA ANALYSIS

Description statistics were used in analyzing the data

6.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To find out how Town Planners achieve Sustainable Development in Urban Centres of Imo State, the

respondents were asked to indicate their zones or residence, the data are shown below:

Table 1

Zones	Frequency	Percentage frequency
Owerri Zone (Ow. Muni)	140	39
Orlu Zone (Orlu)	120	33.3
Okigwe Zone (Okigwe)	100	27.7
Total	360	100.0

Sources: Field Work, 2016

In table 1: It is observed that Imo State has three political zones questionnaire were distributed to the three zones. Owerri Zone had its share of 140 questionnaire copies which accounts for 39 percent, it has the highest population in Imo State because it is the capital city of Imo State, Orlu Zone had 120 copies which accounts for 33.3 percent and Okigwe Zone had 100 copies which accounts for 27.7 percent.

Table 2

Which of the Professionals conduct the survey and collect data for carrying out development schemes inside and outside the limits of towns and cities.

Professional	Frequency	Percentage frequency
Planners	305	84.7
Architects	10	2.8
Builders	5	1.4
Engineers	20	5.5
Quantity Surveyors	10	2.8
Land Surveyors	8	2.2
Estate Surveyors	2	0.6
Total	360	100.0

Sources: Field Work, 2016

Table 2 reveals that town planners conduct the survey and collect data for carrying out development schemes inside and outside the limits of towns and cities, Architects

and Quantity Surveyors account for 2.8, Engineers accounts for 5.5 percent, Land Surveyor’s accounts for 2.2, Builders 1.4% and Estate Surveyors 0.6 percent.

Table 3

Town Planning is the art and science of ordering the use of land and the character and sitting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure the maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage frequency
Yes	348	96.7
No	12	3.3
Total	360	100.0

Sources: Field Work, 2016

Table 3 shows that 96.7 percent agreed that town planning is the art and science of ordering the use of land and the character and sitting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty while 3.3 percent of the response said no.

6.1 Role and Responsibilities of Town Planners and how they can achieve Sustainable Development in Urban Centres of Imo State are identified as follows:

- a. Town Planners day – to – day work mainly involves improvements in parts of a community
- b. They arbitrate between activities and space
- c. Being futuristic, they do not limit their consideration to demands of today but for years to come.
- d. They predict future space needs and accommodate them
- e. Their predictions help government and individuals to plan for the years ahead.
- f. They guide the development of cities, towns and the rural areas.
- g. They advice the Government on ways to improve the communities and real

- estate developers who are planning entirely new communities.
- h. To achieve sustainable development i.e integrating physical development with socio-economic development.
- i. They view a community as single system in which all the parts are interdependent. They deal with the physical layout of communities, make proposals and initiate policies designed to make life comfortable, enjoyable and profitable.
- j. To prevent urban sprawl
- k. To prevent mixed land uses
- l. Bring orderliness and beauty into living environment, that is safe and healthy
- m. To ensure that environment provides a sustainable base for economic and social development
- n. Land use tool and strategy for dealing with several societal problems such as poverty reduction, job creation, minimize environmental pollution or to other problems.

6.2 Challenges of Town Planners

Town Planners face several problems which constitute challenges including:

- a. Shortage of manpower i.e not enough Town Planners employed in the public

- sectors – low ratio of Town Planners in public service when compared with the population being planned for.
- b. Lack of funds to carry out their jobs, Town Planners operating without land use plan
 - c. No good and conducive working environment to operate from.
 - d. Lack of access to ICT
 - e. Problem of corruption.
 - f. Poor image of Town Planners in public service
 - g. Ineffective development control as reflected in the problems of collapsed buildings, urban sprawl, traffic congestion, slum proliferation, poor amenities, mixed land uses;
 - h. Conflict between Town Planners and their political masters interpersonal relationship problems.
 - i. Lack of job satisfaction
 - j. Poor remuneration.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Town Planners have an important role in creating correct planning policies that will ensure the delivery of shelter and necessary infrastructure that ensure good quality life for city residents.

This can be achieved by promoting a city through adequate provision and location of spaces for economic activities in a planned manner and with appropriate accompanying basic services

Every local government chairman, government and president in Nigeria should at least have a town planner as a close advisor whom he relies heavily upon to effectively govern his people in the case

of infrastructural development etc. The reality is that people do not actually understand their value because we as Nigerians have never actually experienced what it means to live in a town or city that has been properly and systematically planned, designed, constructed and maintained by these skilled urban planners.

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