

# Re-Thinking Town and Country Planning Practice in Zambia

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## Abstract

Town and Country Planning is a dynamic professional activity that demands the experts in the field to be globally and locally in tune with the evolving innovative and creative practices as a result of the dictates of changing social and economic development, basically the urbanization problem. As a sensitive dynamic and multi-disciplinary professional activity, its main thrust is not the focus on physical designing of settlements but the total integration and harmonization of social and economic infrastructure development policies manifested in physical forms to provide effective guidance to developments. In Zambia, numerous questions are being raised by the public regarding the status and credibility of town planning vis-à-vis the changing socio-economic investment environment experienced in the urban areas, especially, Lusaka, Ndola, Kitwe, Livingstone and Solwezi. With this backdrop, the paper attempted to address the nature of town planning practice by planners that seems to hinder the effectiveness of the activity to guiding and directing social, economic and physical infrastructure development in urban areas in Zambia. The consequence is that, there is no effective town planning practice in Zambia, particularly in the districts and hence, to re-examine the flaws and provide pragmatic but dynamic solutions. This is an assertion that needs to be taken seriously by the experts in the field.

**Keywords:** Nature of Town Planning Practice, Political Environment, Local government system, Zambia

## Introduction

It is a common observation by both professionals and non-professionals in Zambia that, *Town and Country Planning* practice has fallen short of public and private sector expectations in directing physical development in most urban settlements. The assertion is based on the idea of the increasing haphazard physical development (i.e., ineffective development control measures hence, the increasing evolution and expansion of informal settlements at the peripheries of the urban areas; increasing ad hoc physical development projects not in consonance with the approved structure plan); the failure to create space for investment in real estate development, failure to pursue visions through the structure plans to expand the cities and urban areas to accommodate industrial and social infrastructure development. Reflecting on the topic brings to focus the issue of “*soul searching*”. The concept of *soul searching* in town planning practice is characterized by the emerging concept of “*planning culture*” (Taylor, 2013; Kneiling & Othengrafen, 2009; Stead & Nadin, 2009; Friedmann, 2005).

The paper focused on what has gone wrong with the practice of Town and Country Planning in Zambia and what is the way forward to restore the integrity and credibility of the profession, hence making its mark in Zambia as a credible dynamic professional activity that is respected and could be trusted to shape the socio-economic and physical developmental destiny of Zambian cities. The approach adopted herein to address this sensitive theme first looks at the contemporary nature and purpose of town planning. Secondly, attempt is made to review some experiences in Sudan, Albania, United Kingdom, and New Zealand. The experiences in Sudan and Albania are perceived to be similar to the situation prevailing in Zambia. The approach adopted by the Royal Town Planning Institute of United Kingdom is also highlighted. Finally, the lessons that could be drawn to assist to change the perceptions, culture and practice of town planning in Zambia are highlighted.

## 1. Nature of Town Planning in Zambia

Based on the traditions of planning thought, the practice of town planning in Zambian cities and urban settlements has been very static and seems not to be responsive to socio-economic and political changes hence, the inability of Local Authorities to exercise their legitimacy to implement the dreams enshrined in their physical development plans. In this respect, it is imperative to stress that, planning as applied to urban areas, is broadly on two levels, i.e., the use of approved structure plans drawn by the Local Authority with the guidance of the Town and Country Planning experts. The structure plan designates zones for different types of use, i.e., industrial, education, housing, communal, transport and health. The plan is not drawn up without any basis. It normally needs a thorough feasibility study of the Local Authority's area of jurisdiction on potential economic growth based on economic indicators, the feasibility of alternative growth strategies, and the extent to which specific projects would be commercially viable within the overall plan. Such an economic and social appraisal at Local level provides an objective basis for the physical redevelopment of the area, ensuring that environmental plans relate to the Authority's real opportunities and not simply to its subjective development ambitions.

The second aspect of planning applied to urban areas is planning consents for specific development which the developer has to obtain from the local planning authority, i.e., the District Council, before he/she can

proceed. This planning practice in urban areas, like Lusaka, Kitwe, Ndola and Livingstone has fallen short of public expectations simply because the political influence dominates the decision and implementation processes. The political interference in planning practice in Zambia has been ascertained by the failure to see Lusaka expand its physical boundaries for the City Council to realize its dreams.

Though planning is a political activity, its influence is more pronounced in policy formulation to support development and implementation of structure plans not the contrary whereby proposals are stifled by political interest by few powerful individuals within the nation. This approach to Town Planning in Zambia could be described as being archaic and negative that fails to tackle broader set of agendas. On this note, it is interesting to disclose that, the initiation of Town Planning in the United Kingdom by the Royal Institute of Town Planning realized their negativity and myopic perceptions to town planning practice. In a paper captioned, *“Reinventing Planning: Your Place and Mine – The Inquiry Report*, Warburton (1999), asserted that, the panel of Town and Country Planning Association appointed to look into the future of planning concluded that planning needs to be re-invented to reflect the visions that communities have for their future (ibid). Based on the realization of the panel in the United Kingdom to initiate reforms in town planning practices, whilst bearing in mind the exposition by Friedman (1993) on the *“Non-Euclidian mode of Planning”* and Taylor (2013), on *“Rethinking planning culture”*, it was perceived appropriate to suggest that, in much as Town Planning practitioners in Zambia stick to the routine practices, i.e., basically focused only on development control issues without being responsive to the dynamism of new tools and theoretical constructs of practice, as well as embracing the recognition of inclusive sustainable cities principles, they would not cope with the rapid rate of urbanization. The common practice by Town Planning experts in the Local Authorities in Lusaka, Kitwe, Ndola and Livingstone has been re-zoning of open spaces for residential developments. Even areas designated as right of way or buffer zones between main residential areas are being rezoned for residential and commercial developments. This practice is common place feature in the City of Kitwe. This has seriously created urban blight and congestions. The practice exposes the professionals engaged in urban and regional planning to serious accountability questions of their integrity and professionalism in upholding and maintaining the standards enshrined in the Town and Country Planning Act Cap 283 of the Laws of Zambia. Furthermore, the professional practitioners’ inability to be effective in their practice might be attributed to the pressure of political influence since they regard themselves public servants who are subjected to the ethics and values of their employment conditions.

### *1.1 Political Environment of Practice*

Planners as public servants operate in a political environment whereby the dictates and interest of the politicians affect their efficiency, effectiveness and creativity. The political environment also affects decision making choices. Two political environments have prevailed in Zambia since independence. The first was the Humanism Political Ideology which had a centralized system of planning and decision making process. This political ideology facilitated, promoted and ensured planning decisions made by central government were implemented; the second political system of pluralism propagates and supports economic liberation. Such an economic and political system advocates for greater participation of the private sector in the socio-economic development process. The implications and consequences of the pluralistic system of government and liberalized economic system challenge Town Planners to be responsive to spatially related investment needs of the nation. Nonetheless, the rapid rate at which private investments are being poured into the economy have exposed the weaknesses of the Town Planners. Examples of the Local Authorities failing to cope with the rapid rate of private investors vis-à-vis spatial needs in the urban economy are manifested in the urban centres in Zambia. In Lusaka, there has been a significant investment in residential properties; shopping malls, office complexes etc. The question the public and stakeholders pose every now and then is, “Were all the spatial needs of the investors predetermined or generated by re-zoning or conversions?” The ramifications of the huge investments are the continuous influx of migrants from the peripheral and other small settlements to the cities. This has resulted in the emergence of slums on the urban areas which occupy prime land that have been designated for other uses.

In view of the two aspects of urban planning highlighted above, the three main underpinnings that are always inherent in the general practice of town planning are:

- a) To reconcile the competing claims of land use in an orderly manner;
- b) To create and provide a good or better physical environmental, and
- c) To provide a physical basis for a better urban programme, a part of a broad social and economic policy effort (Thomas & Healey, 1991, p.11).

The question that arises from the basic principles of town planning as posited above is: *Has town planning as practiced by Town Planners and those who call themselves as planners in Zambia able to meet the standards and requirements as expectations enshrined in the Town and Country Planning Act Cap 283 and thus meet public expectation vis-à-vis meeting the three (3) major underpinnings of the practice of town planning?* To answer this question, requires a thorough evaluation of what has been happening in the past, i.e., the political and

governance structure before independence in October 1964; the period of Humanism ideology (from October 1964 to November 1991) and the period after the introduction of the Multi-party politics (when economic liberalization and political pluralism took over the government system and structure in Zambia).

The perception of this paper is that, a critical appraisal of town planning practice in Zambia vis-à-vis, the historical trends of political governance and socio-economic environments would expose the major weaknesses and opportunities that could be addressed and taken advantage of to transform the practice. However, before discussing in detail the Zambian town planning practice experience, it is prudent to look at the experiences from the United Kingdom (Warburton, 1999), Albania (Nientied, 1998), Sudan (Post, 1996), New Zealand (Southgate, 1998) and the global South planning issues as described by Watson (2009). The selection of the four specific geographical areas and the general global south provides some unique insights that are similar to the current experiences Zambia is going through. Two of the countries are developed whilst the other two are developing or underdeveloped. The experiences from the global South as expounded by Watson (2009) highlighted some of the similarities and differences in the approaches of town planning. Although Watson (2009, p.2260) indicated that the reasons why systems of urban planning have been less than adequate in addressing issues in the cities of global South are complex and cannot always be blamed on planning itself, the fact remains that, in most of the regions and countries, the planning systems were either inherited from previous colonial governments or have been adopted from the Northern contexts to suit particular local political and ideological ends.

## 2. Literature Review

Town planning practice in developed and developing countries might be assumed to be of the same standard and norms. Unfortunately, this is not the case. There are variances and diversities. The practice of town planning in most developing countries south of the Sahara is characterized by political and cultural factors that influence decisions and choices. To this effect, Nientied (1998, p.41), in his paper, "The question of Town and Regional Planning in Albania," stated that, "Town and Regional Planning, once powerful instruments of the state are now almost meaningless. For the gradual development of realistic and relevant urban and regional planning in Albania's current critical times, planning needs to change its formalistic land use approach to a more realistic, basic, and integrated type of planning, rooted in community autonomy". This statement, the paper believes puts Zambia's Town and Regional planning practice in the right perspective of a search for the indigenously evolved system that addresses national spatio-social and economic development needs. Interestingly, Friedman (1993), in his stimulating paper titled, *The Non-Euclidian Mode of Planning*, stressed the point that, planning should be done in *real time* perspective based on *experiential knowledge*. In the same vein, Casella (1993, p.485), also stressed that point and reiterated that, "planning should evolve appropriate technical strategies and tools to effectively handle the quantum pace of the changing world of human spatial systems". This philosophical perspective of redesigning the practice of planning in all forms is a serious challenge to all dedicated and committed planners to have a rethink in their geographical areas of jurisdiction (see Watson, 2009 and UN Habitat, 2009).

In a similar sentimental vein, the experiences in Sudan and the United Kingdom called for a total transformation of Town Planning practice. In Sudan, Post (1996, p.121), reiterated that, urban planning in the Sudan fails to deal adequately with the problems of rapid urbanization. He stressed that, the poor performance of urban planning (town planning) is related to developments in the planning environment. The point raised by Post is very pertinent to current experiences in town planning practice in Zambia. In the context of Zambia, town planning practice is somewhat behind the facts. Zambia's experience is following the same trend. For instance, the poor planning practice in Sudan has seen the cities of Khartoum and Post Sudan experiencing more than a third of their population residing in informal settlements characterized by extremely poor housing (such as inadequate supply of drinking water, virtual absence of garbage collection, lack of privacy and flood danger). Cities like Lusaka, Kitwe and Ndola have experienced the mushrooming of informal settlements occupying prime areas, hence distorting the implementation of development programmes enshrined in the structure plans of the local authorities. The observations and reflections on the illegal developments at the peripheries of the cities make the general public to conclude that planners and urban managers have failed in their civic responsibilities to seriously adhere to the ethics and principles underlying the practice of town planning. The prompt and wrongful judgment of the failures of planners needs more rethinking.

The Sudan and Albania experiences indicated that, the political environment within which planning is practiced is the root cause of the failures of town planning. Post (1996, p.125), reiterated that in Sudan, as a result of the political strain, planning as an autonomous profession is increasingly discredited. He further stated that, Sudan's political history since independence in 1956 has been one of inherent instability, with governments oscillating between parliamentary democracy and military dictatorship. With the political instability, urban planning was seriously affected. Post further disclosed that, one of the most salient features of urban development politics was that, there were few policy plans, and little policy implementations. He also indicated

that, the main reason for this apathy was that statesmen do not usually stay in office for long. As a result, the development of new policy often breaks down at an early stage. Hence, newcomers tend to detach themselves from the policy intentions and plans of their predecessors (p.124). Similarly, in Albania, Nientied (1998, p.42), highlighted that the communist styles of government after the World War II until 1990 had a firm grip on planning. He stressed that, the central planning system during the period was absolute and grounded in very hard-line nationalism. During the same period, private property and initiatives were absent. The birth of political democratization, witnessed the introduction of economic liberalization policies. The change to a market-system of governance and the privatization process led to instituting private initiative and private property at the core of economic life (ibid). With free market economic systems and political democratization in place, the state machinery in-charge was ineffective and weak (Nientied, 1998). Corruption became the order of the day which permeated all aspects of the public sector. In view of the democratization process and the endemic corrupt practices, the National Planning Institute (NPI) failed to perform its national responsibilities with respect to town and regional planning practices in Albania. The two experiences that characterize town planning practice in Sudan and Albania have a bearing on the experiences Zambia is currently going through (see the *Zambian experience*).

Contrary, the United Kingdom's town Planning practice is very unique. In the case of the United Kingdom, the members of the Royal Institute of Planners were the initiators of change and transformation of the town planning practice. The Institute after serious reflections on the professional practice and responsibilities of the town planners came up with the ideology of "*Reinventing Planning: Your place and Mine*" to incorporate the philosophy of sustainable planning in a broader perspective that should reflect the visions that communities have for the future in their report on the inquiry for the transformation of planning and practice. The panel entrusted with the responsibility to bring change in the planning practice, recognized that, a new approach to recover a more positive and comprehensive view that would allow planning to tackle a much broader set of agendas (Warburton, 1999, p.32). The sustainable development concepts of planning requires that the traditional scope of planning should be extended beyond narrow land use planning and address the sustainable development agenda of social, economic and environmental well-being and quality of life (ibid). *In this vein, planning processes would need to move beyond their current focus on where development takes place and also consider why, what and how development takes place? Who does it? Who benefits from it and what the short term and long term impacts will be (ibid)?*

In line with this thinking, the UN Habitat (2009) also recognized the need for the fundamental review of urban planning profession to see if it was able to play a role in addressing issues in rapidly growing and poor cities in the developing countries (see Watson, 2009, p.2260). Similarly, there was a call by UN Habitat Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka (2006), on planning practitioners to develop a different approach that is *pro poor and inclusive* that places the creation of livelihoods at the centre of planning efforts (see also Watson, 2009, p.2261 and Harrison, Tordes and Watson, 2007).

This new approach to planning is being adopted and being practiced throughout the world, at least for the dynamic nations who have seen the flaws in the land use planning approach. For instance, in 1991, New Zealand commenced a radical overhaul of the planning system (Southgate, 1998). On October 1<sup>st</sup> 1991, a highly innovative legislative provision, i.e., the Resource Management Act (RMA) took effect in New Zealand (Southgate, 1998). The Resource Management Act repealed over 20 major statutes, including the Town and Country Planning Act of 1977. The RMA has been described as a public policy master piece design for efficacy, efficiency, equity and transparency of process. The lessons learnt from the review of the experiences discussed are that, Zambia needs to engage in a serious evaluation of the planning process including town and country planning. However, before any directions for change could be suggested, it is important to briefly have an overview of Zambia's planning trajectory. The next section discusses the *Zambian urban planning experiences*.

### **3. Methodology**

The study was purely qualitative which utilized observed trends in the practice of town planning and execution of land delivery for heavy investment projects such as the mushrooming of shopping malls and residential activities in the major cities of Lusaka, Kitwe and Ndola. Besides the critical examination and reflections on land conversions and rezoning for other usages other than the originally approved land use plan, the increasing mushrooming of informal settlements as well as expansion of existing ones trigger a research into the practice of town planning in Zambia. Finally, the uncontrolled scrambled for space in almost all the cities and urban areas by street vendors generate questions regarding the effectiveness of Town and Country Planning Act Cap 283 and the bylaws of the city and municipal councils. Hence, the methodology was observational and review of planning documentations as wells as engaging in some interviews with stakeholders on the state of town planning in Zambia.

## 4. Observations and Discussions

### 4.1 Challenges of Town and Country Planning Practice in Zambia

Town planning practice in Zambia has seriously being affected by the political and governance system. It is common knowledge that, the general public is quick in pointing fingers at town planners accusing them for not being professionally effective and competent in performing their civic responsibilities. Such accusation tends to distort information hence, diverting attention of interested stakeholders in addressing the factors affecting the deteriorating and declining physical appearance of Zambian cities and urban settlements. The view of this paper is that, in as much as the town planners could be part of the problem, the thrust of the matter is that the socio-economic and political environment greatly influence town planning practice. The case of Albania and Sudan are typical examples. Similar challenges are being faced by town planners and city managers in countries like Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya.

In the case of Zambia, it is worth noting that, three political environments have characterized the practice of town planning. The first was the pre-independence era, i.e., under the colonial rule. This period saw the introduction of the practice of town planning in the country under the British rule guided by the Commonwealth Town and Country Planning Act for both the Caribbean Commonwealth countries and the Anglophone Commonwealth countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Home (1990, p.397), indicated that, town planning in the British Colonies before and after the first two world wars highlighted the developing of the transfer of British planning concepts and legislation to the colonies including today's nation of Zambia. During that period, town planning was undertaken by three different groups of planners, i.e., surveyors or engineers with colonial service, consultant architects brought out from Britain for specific assignments; and occasional peripatetic propagandists. The observation was that, the three groups of planners were not professional planners with in-depth knowledge of planning principles and ideology. Their lack of in-depth professional knowledge in planning failed to comprehend the local and internal forces that control physical planning. As such, the transfer of British planning concepts and principles to the colonies was for different clientele. Berrisford (2013) stressed that, "the planning law has a poor record in Africa". Berrisford pointed out that, "The law designed to protect the public from the negative aspects of urban land development has all too often been used by the state to enhance the value of land owned by the wealthy and to penalize and intimidate the disadvantaged". This scenario is a common place phenomenon in the practice of town planning in Zambia. The practice is perceived and usually branded as "*corruption at work*" which discredits the Local Authorities and in particular, the professional planners who are the technocrats to educate on such execution of injustices against the disadvantaged. The failure to respect and duly apply the tenets of the planning legislation to protect public places and facilities to enhance civic life has been aptly described by Berrisford (2013) as, "*a fault line running through society*". Home (1990, p.98), further reiterated that, town planning operated for different client groups primarily the colonial administration but also British Commercial interest, traditional elites and white settler communities. Similarly, Berrisford (2013) reiterated that in Africa, planning law was unashamedly used by colonial regimes to assist interest of small minority over those of the majority. Under the British rule, town planning practice was strictly and professionally executed. This was the period informal settlements were not a common feature in the urban areas. The practice during this period was that, the law was effective as such planning practice had some dignity and credibility because the indigenous citizens were under suppression and had no freedom to construct any unauthorized structures within the Central Business District of urban areas or at the peripheries of the urban areas.

Similarly, during the United National Independence Party (UNIP) era, under President Kaunda, planning was centrally controlled. Under the UNIP government, the central command system of planning effectively ensured that all decisions, including both socio-economic and physical development planning were executed to the letter. Planners had the powers and confidence to carry out planned strategies and decisions. The good thing during this period was that, there was some discipline and fear on the part of the public to engage in illegal transactions of land and unauthorized construction of personal houses and other land use activities contrary to the regulations enshrined in the legislative instrument for physical planning. Taylor (2005, p.7) emphasized that, "the humanism ideology and the centralized political system supported the legislative instrument that protected the practice of town planning during the UNIP era". The centralized system of political command structure implied that, the town planning authorities and agencies were empowered to exercise full development control measures, hence regulating the physical development activities in accordance with approved statutory development plans of the municipal and city councils.

Physical planning continued with the colonial legacy, i.e., there was strict enforcement of the regulations enshrined in the Town and Country Planning Ordinance, Cap 475 enacted in 1961 and implemented in 1962 (Taylor, 2005). In effect, the practice of town planning had a strong support from the government. The enforcement of the development control measures meant that unauthorized development like informal settlements was fully controlled. Similarly, unauthorized encroachment on public open spaces was non-existent. This was because the physical planners and their urban and city managers were very conscious of the political

implications that might have arisen out of their unorthodox activities (ibid). Thus, the general public appreciated the cleanliness and the orderliness of physical development of the urban areas. Besides, the professionalism, of the self-discipline of the planners was excellent.

The period of multi-party democracy characterized by laissez-faire economics which commenced after the Movement for Multiparty Democracy Party won the November 1991 elections, saw the decline of town planning practice. In a democratic political system characterized by the evolution and operations of private investors in all sectors especially, in the mining, manufacturing, trade and commerce, the authority and power to execute planning practice becomes very much subdued if there is very little support from the government. Campbell and Fainstein (1996), on the constraint within a mixed economy on planning power, disclosed that planners do not have the monopoly on power of work. They stressed that, "planners work within the constraints of the capitalist political economy and their urban visions compete with those of developers, consumers and other more powerful groups. When they call for a type of development to occur, they cannot command the resources to make it happen. Instead, they must rely on either private investment or a commitment from political leaders. They also work within the constraints of democracy and of the bureaucracy of government. Their goals however, often have low priority with the overall political agenda. Thus, despite the planning ideal of a holistic proactive vision, planners are frequently restricted to playing frustratingly reactive regulatory roles" (see also Healey, 1991). This is the situation Zambian planners, especially those employed by the Local Authorities are experiencing.

Ever since multi-party democracy was born in Zambia in November 1991, town planning practice has failed woefully to meet public expectations. The reasons are obvious. The technical and advisory roles of planners seem to have been ignored by implementers of projects. The gradual urban degeneration and decay is attributed to lack of political will to support and protect the profession of town planning. The profession has been hijacked by non-technical experts to make decisions that are detrimental to national interest. Such sensitive political decisions have affected the physical growth and developmental activities. A typical example is the invasion of informal traders and street vendors in almost all urban settlements. The physical implications and consequences are the mushrooming of temporary kiosks (also known as "ntembas") and ramshackle structures in the city centres as markets and informal settlements. This is a common feature in almost all Zambian cities (Lusaka, Kitwe, Ndola and Livingstone), and relatively larger urban settlements like Kapiri Mposhi and Solwezi. The situation in Zambia reiterates the call by the UN Habitat (2003, 2009) and Watson (2009, p.2260), that planning systems in many parts of global South are increasingly seen as inadequate and often inappropriate. The scenarios of Sudan and Albania as case studies indicate that a number of radical transformation processes must be put in place. Issues of priority concerns include the following:

#### *4.1.1 Political Will and Support for Planning Practice*

The practice of town planning is seriously linked to government physical development policies and implementation guidelines. Town planning is a public sector activity that needs serious political will and support. In this respect, it needs to be seriously supported by effective and pragmatic legislative instruments. The situation in Zambia is that, the Town and Country planning Act, Cap 283, though has been revised on numerous occasions has not been seriously adhered to and applied to augment the practice of town planning. This is a serious flaw that affects the planning practice. The ineffectiveness of the legislation gives room for inefficiencies that include:

- a) The liberty with which specific personalities and individuals within the Local Authority establishments engage in illegal town planning practices, i.e., basically, the demarcation of plots, illegal transaction in land delivery which in most cases might have been designated and zoned for different uses apart from the use sold for.
- b) Non-formulation of pragmatic and dynamic structure plans to guide physical development. It is a fact that, none of the major cities in Zambia have evolved structure plans that guide physical development projects. For instance, the Kitwe, structure plan which was formulated for the period 1972-2000 was not implemented to the letter. Similarly, the new structure plan for Lusaka had experienced political constraints in its implementation basically because the issue of the concept of initiating the Greater Lusaka physical development has not been embraced by some interested stakeholders who wield authority in the custodian of land surrounding Lusaka. Land ownership rights and the power to either release or not has a major institutional arrangement that has affected the practice of town planning in Zambia.

#### *4.1.2 Ineffective National Body for the Practice of Town and Country Planning*

The Zambia Institute of Planners is the recognized national body of practicing professional Town and Country Planners. The Institute has failed to perform in accordance with its national goals, objectives and vision. In its current organizational structure and form, the Institute does not only constitute membership of only qualified town planners, but also have Architects, Surveyors, Geographers and Social Scientists to exhibit its multi-disciplinary nature. The composition of its membership shows the multi-disciplinary nature of planning such that if the institution was to be serious with its operations (as enshrined in its constitutions), the government and all stakeholder institutions and organizations engaged in physical planning activities such as Real Estate Agencies,

Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO), Non- Governmental Organizations and other international development agencies were going to collaborate with it to ensure that physical planning of settlements and development projects are well coordinated and implemented.

#### *4.1.3 Standard Guiding Planning Practice*

Planning practice as already stressed is dynamic and innovative (Friedmann, 1993). The planning standards used by planners have never been reviewed to incorporate contemporary needs and aspirations. This is a major setback to planners especially if they are to stick to outdated standards that exhibit rigidity in the practice.

#### *4.1.4 Integrative Approach to Structure Plan Formation*

The contemporary town planning practice is not a unitary action but an integrative one. Effective town planning requires all stakeholders in all sectors to fully participate in the planning process to formulate a comprehensive structure plan that all stakeholders would be proud of. An integrated approach to structure plan formulation would incorporate adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that would ensure checks and balances, thus avoiding the non-operation of the plan. This eliminates the numerous development control issues and planning conflicts that have to be dealt with. At this juncture, it can be stated that, the Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Local Government and Housing has initiated a process of developing Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) for all Districts, Municipal and City Councils.

#### *4.1.5 Irregular Urban Development*

One significant feature in almost all the cities of Zambia is the irregular development as a result of illegal occupation of land for housing and commercial developments particularly at the peripheries. This shows the complete absence of any form of development control. This situation has significantly contributed to environmental and social problems. This also goes with the phenomenon of re-zoning any appropriate open space for the development of housing, commercial and industrial activities

#### *4.1.6 Failure of the Authorities to evolve structure plans based on the concept of Inclusiveness*

Since the Town and Country Planning Ordinance was revised in 1995 specifying that wherever the words “development plan” appear, it should read “structure plan”, no local planning authority has updated its structure plan, not even Lusaka, the largest metropolis. In the past fifteen years, only 10 of the 103 local authorities have had structure plans prepared. These are Mazabuka, Kafue, Livingstone, Luanshya, Ndola, Mufulira, Lusaka, Kitwe, Chingola and Chililabombwe. Thus, one wonders the basis for development control in the remaining local authorities that have no structure plans. The reason for this is that, it appears there is no commitment or support from government (Ministry of Local Government and Housing) in the preparation of structure plans since most of the earlier development plans were financed by collaborating partners such as the World Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for Lusaka and Ndola (see Mwimba, 2002). The Ministry seems not to care whether a structure plan is approved or not as is the case for Mazabuka Planning Authority, where the plan prepared in 1998 has not yet been approved. Unlike the structure plan for Lusaka, where there are disputes over extension of the planning boundary with the neighbouring districts of Chibombo and Chongwe, one cannot understand why the Mazabuka Structure Plan has not been approved for nearly seven years since its preparation in 1998. The need to assess and review development control procedures is long overdue (ibid). However, the failure of the planning authorities to evolve new structure plans implies non-adaptive to the evolving socio-economic dynamics triggered by the government’s economic restructuring policies.

#### *4.1.7 Political Environment of Planning Practice*

Planners as public servants operate in a political environment whereby the dictates and interest of the politicians affect their efficiency, effectiveness and creativity. The political environment also affects decision making choices. Two political environments have prevailed in Zambia since independence. The first was the humanism political ideology which has a centralized system of planning and decision making process. This political ideology facilitated, promoted and ensured planning decisions made by central government were implemented. The second political system of pluralism propagates and supports economic liberalization with private sector taking centre stage of economic development initiatives to stimulate local economic development.

The implications and consequences of the pluralistic system of government and liberalized economic system challenge Town Planners to be responsive to spatially related investment needs of the nation. Nonetheless, the rapid rate at which private investments are being poured into the economy have exposed the weaknesses of the country’s town planning practice. Examples of the Local Authority failing to cope with the rapid rate of private investors vis-à-vis spatial needs in the urban economy are manifested in all the urban centres in Zambia. In Lusaka, there has been a significant investment in residential properties, shopping malls, office complexes etc. The question is, “*Have all the spatial needs of the investors being predetermined?*” The ramifications of the huge investments are the continuous influx of immigrants from the peripheral and other small settlements to the cities. This has resulted in the emergence of slums on the urban peripheral areas.

#### *4.1.8 Local Government System*

The local government system is perhaps the most important agency of town planning which cannot be left out in the discussion. This is because nearly all town planning procedures and processes involve local authorities, be it

in land alienation, grant of planning permission, or enforcement of planning legislation through development control. However, since local authorities are the employers of the town planners, the malfunctioning and inefficiencies affect the work morale and attitude of the planners. Thus, the state of the local government functioning and operations undoubtedly affect town planning practice. Mwiimba (2002) disclosed that, local government system in Zambia is dysfunctional. Most workers in the local authorities describe their establishments as being dead, whilst some scholars believe there would be no local government to revive without immediate government intervention in retrenchment of workers (Crook and Manor, 2001, p.19).

#### *4.1.9 The Drawbacks with Changing Times*

Town planning is not a static professional activity that is tailor made. It is an evolving activity as a result of the dynamism of society due to factors such as population growth, demographic dynamics, human values, aspirations, tastes, preferences, technological dynamism and its effect on the environment, cultural practices etc. The aforementioned factors have a serious bearing on town planning practice. For example, population growth and demographic dynamics seriously affect the rate of housing development projects. It does not only require increasing the housing stock but the quality and type of housing.

Issues of human values and aspirations are deeply intertwined with town planning practice. Spatial planning is not done in a vacuum. It is done to meet human needs. If the needs are not met, this implies that the planning vision and objectives were not in consonance with the societal values and aspirations. However, it must be stressed that, achieving societal goals is very difficult. It presumes that there is one goal which is not the case. The diversity of societal needs, values, and aspirations make it very difficult for town planners to satisfy the population.

#### *4.1.10 Technological Advancement and Town Planning*

The world is being controlled by technology. Throughout the world, technological advancement and techniques are playing significant roles in all aspect of social, economic, physical environment and even spiritual development. In the area of spatial planning, planners in the developed world have made tremendous effort to incorporate ICT and other technological aspects in their practices. This is exemplified in Japan, USA and parts of Europe. Town Planning in Africa (Zambia inclusive) has not experienced this technological revolution and development. The technological revolution has been evidenced in the architectural designs of building vis-à-vis road and railway infrastructure planning and development. The evolution of technological innovations in architectural designs of building and railway and road transportation infrastructure implies a review of physical planning standards. This is an area whereby Zambia Town Planning practitioners have failed to reflect on and thus be prompted to review its planning standards.

#### *4.1.11 Corruption*

Town planning in the economics of the South is prone to corruption as a result of the desire of few influential personalities. In most cases, the rich and influential personalities in the communities use money to influence planning decisions. Such practices tagged corruption frustrates any form of planning control, especially, town planning.

## **5. Conclusions**

Improving town planning practice in Zambia requires restructuring and transformation processes to be initiated by the government and Zambia Institute of Planners in conjunction with Local Government Institutions. The experiences from Albania, Sudan and the United Kingdom should provide guidance for the transformation in Zambia. The following are suggested:

- a) *Government of Zambia to recognize planning as a vehicle to build up a responsible civic society:* One issue that has been ignored in the practice of town planning is the education of the public on planning principles and standards. An effective education and training of the public on planning principles and standards is perceived to create awareness and build a more responsive civil society that is adequately prepared to uphold good and positive town planning practice in Zambia. A well informed civil society on basic planning principles and standards would enhance the elimination of illegal developments hence, facilitating the creation of sustainable human settlements.
- b) *Government to recognize Town planning as a means to stimulate local economic development:* The role of spatial planning in initiating and stimulating local economic development is unquestionable. However, to date, the government has presumed that directives could always be given to spatial needs regarding infrastructure investments. This attitude has negatively affected the spatial planning practices and physical development projects. It also implies structure plans are disregarded. It is proposed herein that, for a country, a region or a local community, to initiate and stimulate endogenous local economic development, infrastructure investment has to be targeted at the right sectors and places. Thus, adequate (spatial) planning is needed for this (Nientied, 1988). Spatial planning and management at the local level seem to be done on at hoc basis with a lot of political interferences regarding where, when, and how projects should be implemented sometimes in contravention to the dictates of the approved plan



c) *Urban and Regional Planners together with the Government should acknowledge planning realities:* Nientied (1998) stated that, “realism should be a starting point for any form of planning. This is a very significant point. Planning as it has been emphasized in this paper, deals with real issues at the real time (see Friedman, 1994) on the non-Euclidian mode of planning. Friedman (1994) defined planning as that professional practice that specifically seeks to connect forms of knowledge with forms of action in the public domain. This definition is very important in the context of this paper. It highlights the dynamism with which planning is being perceived by academics and practitioners. Friedman’s definition focuses on the realities of urban problems, i.e., the issue of urbanization, urban growth and economic development. In the case of most cities, and urban areas in Zambia, such as Livingstone, Lusaka, Kitwe, Ndola, Kabwe, Kapiri Mposhi and Solwezi, there are unique urban development issues that should be addressed with respect to spatial planning. Lusaka is specifically struggling with urbanization and population growth. This reality demands serious planning, regarding housing and other physical infrastructure development. Similarly, the case of Solwezi brings to the fore an integrated approach of spatial and socio-economic development planning. This approach seems to be done in an ad hoc manner which does not uphold the principles enshrined in the concept of inclusive sustainable cities and urban settlements.

The other reality that should be taken into consideration in transforming town planning practice is that, households and firms shape cities and urban areas, not governments. Nientied (1998, p.45) disclosed that, “in the absence of down-to-earth urban planning, the private and community sectors carry out “irregular” construction, and do a substantial part of planning”. This contribution in the planning practice is not recognized and taken as part of the planning process. Furthermore, for town planning practice to improve, the following priority areas should be addressed:

- a) *Comprehensive Review of the Town and Country Planning Act Cap 283:* The legitimacy of town planning practice hinges on a good legislative framework. The Zambia Town and Country Planning Act, Cap 283 has been reviewed a number of times but it appears the transformation had not been with respect to changing socio-economic needs. Currently, the draft Urban and Regional Planning legislation seems to have been completed. There is therefore need for all stakeholders (in the interest of physical planning in Zambia) to ensure that all necessary contributions are made to produce a legislative framework that will support Town Planning practice in Zambia for the foreseeable future. The New Zealand approach could be considered as an example to see if it could be reviewed to look at urban development with respect to the concept of sustainability.
- b) *Improvement in Planning Contents:* Contemporary planning is not only focused on land use and zoning activities. From the studies in Albania, Sudan and United Kingdom, the emphasis has shifted to include environmental, economic, infrastructure and implementation concerns. This paradigm shift is enshrined in the concept of sustainable planning for the sustainable cities and urban settlements. This requires changing attitudes, training and institutional development.
- c) *Credibility of Planning:* One area of major concern in Zambia is the credibility of the planning profession. As it was pointed out earlier under the Zambian experience, the credibility of the profession is very poor. To regain the credibility and confidence of the public, there is need for the following to be done.
  - i) Awareness among the public especially the politicians and public officers. There is too much involvement of politicians and public officials in land transactions and physical planning processes. This tends to affect the implementation of approve plans as per the design.
  - ii) Secondly, the professionalism of planners must be upheld at all levels and in all sectors. This requires that the Zambia Institute of Planners must evolve code of ethics that will ensure that all members adhere to. Planning practice must not be the responsibility of every member of the public. It must be an exclusive right of trained Urban and Regional Planners and registered members of the Zambia Institute of Planners. The Institute must also make it as a responsibility to disseminate contemporary Town and Regional Planning skills to members to develop pragmatic planning guidelines as well as setting up technical support relations with regions, districts and towns. The Zambia Institute of Planners has been very weak in its current organizational set up. It requires to re-organize its structure and to seriously engage in national issues on urban and regional planning. This is the only way the government and the general public will recognize its existence and roles in national planning and development issues.

It is good that, Zambia’s urban problems have been noticed by the general public and all stakeholders. However, in comparison with the experiences in Albania, Sudan, United Kingdom and New Zealand, it is obvious that the *first* issue of concern is the role of government in creating the right institutional structures and political environment that will strongly uphold government planning policies, decisions and seriously act on them. The *second* issue is the partnerships between the government and the Zambian Institute of Planners to ensure that basic planning principles, guidelines and responsibilities are performed to the expectations of all stakeholders. The *third* issue is that, the legislative framework supporting urban planning should be comprehensive to incorporate the concept, ideology and philosophy of creating and promoting sustainable

human settlements. *Finally*, it must be stressed that, planning is a moral activity that requires professionals to uphold the rule of law and hence not to be corrupted. Corruption constrains planners to be frustratingly ineffective to perfect their expected responsibilities. Even though the environment of planning is characterized by illegal transactions and dealings that affect planning practice, planners must do well to refrain to uphold their integrity, innocence and credibility.

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