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The Efficiency of Urban Planning Regulations on Environmental Management in Bamenda, North West Cameroon

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Abstract
In the past five decades or so, rapid rate of urbanisation and urban development and urban environmental planning and management has become a cardinal issue to urban dwellers, government institutions and professionals in the developed and developing countries. It is in furtherance to this that this paper examines the efficiency of urban planning regulations on environmental management in Bamenda. Field surveys, participant observations, questionnaire administration, interviews and on-the-spot appraisals constituted the main data sources. The findings have revealed that Bamenda is replete with an avalanche of robust urban planning regulations. Irrespective of these robust laws, it was pathetic to observe that the integration of environmental management into urban development planning was sub-optimal as over 63% of the respondents claimed ignorance on the existence of these legislations. In the context of such a seismic shift in awareness, most environmental benchmarks for sustainable urban planning have remained trapped in an environmental time-warp due to non-adherence to these regulations as a result of ignorance of their existence. This has brought about negative reverberations, ushering the urban environment of Bamenda into a frivolous path to profligacy. In order for sustainable urban planning and management to be deeply entrenched in Bamenda, this paper proffers for a synergy between government and non-government agencies responsible for urban development planning.
Kewwords: Urban Planning, Management environmental management, urban development

1 - Introduction

In the past five decades or so, rapid rate of urbanisation and urban development and urban environmental planning and management has become a cardinal issue to urban dwellers, government institutions and professionals in the developed and developing countries. This is because settlements emerge and develop into cities on varied geophysical environments with intrinsic traits that influence the type, pattern and level of sustainability of the development (Fogwe, 2004). Such a scenario presents many challenges necessitating the need for the implementation of sound urban planning regulations, a condition sine qua non for effective environmental management. Urban planning is a deliberate ordering by public authority of the physical arrangements of towns or parts of towns in order to promote their efficient and equitable functioning as economic and social units and to create an aesthetically pleasing environment (Sutcliffe 1981). By varying the category and range of permitted activities from place to place within the urban context, urban planning ensures that there is a place for every worthwhile activity while keeping away noxious activities from residential areas, thus protecting and safeguarding the integrity of the urban environment.

The effectiveness of urban planning regulations as a tool for environmental planning and management is more of theory than practice Bamenda given the fact that the town stands at the cross roads of an avalanche of environmental catastrophes due to its intrinsic physical setting (topography, geologic structure, the degree of slope, soil characteristics and rainfall). In a bid to ensure sustainability, the Cameroon government instituted a battery of legal/regulatory instruments (Law No 2004/003 of April 2004 to regulate Town Planning in Cameroon and Law No 96/12 of 5th August relating to Environmental Management) to serve as an interactive discourse and compromise in sustainable urban planning and management. This regulatory rearmament was expected to be an essential pre-cursor for environmental stability. Irrespective of these robust laws, however, environmental dilemmas have undoubtedly developed, leading to a contradiction between the goals to urban planning and environmental management. This concurs with misplaced urban planning at the dawn of inadequate implementation of these laws. Based on this, the concept of 'environmental sustainability' (Goodland, 1995) which suggests a planning process that allows human societies to; 'live within the limitations of the biophysical environment' is far from being achieved as urban environmental planning deficiencies is the role rather than the exception in Bamenda. Solving this puzzle is the main issue that remains for a comfortable margin of tolerance to be drawn between urban planning and environmental management. Providing, therefore a safe, healthy, useable, serviceable, pleasant and easily maintained environment for sustainable urban development is a top most priority. It is only germane to ask the question; How have urban planning regulations (environmental and town planning) with respect to the building industry been implemented in Bamenda? How has the government ensured their sustainability through good governance and how can it be translated into concrete policy options with the integration of urban planning regulations to enhance environmental management? Moving in that

direction will require foresight to orient the use of urban land within an explicit concern for environmental values.

2 - Meterials and Methods

In order to examine the efficiency of urban planning regulations on environmental management in Bamenda, primary and secondary sources of data were used. The primary data sources comprised a semi structured household questionnaire, interview and field observations. Visual appreciation through pictures aided the collection of data from the field. Questionnaires were administered to inhabitants of sampled neighbourhoods as well as the authorities of the three councils that make up Bamenda not living out government sectors charged with urban planning and management (Bamenda City Council, the North West Regional Delegations of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development as well as their respective divisional and sub divisional councils). Questionnaires administered to local inhabitants probed on the level of awareness of urban planning and environmental legislations in relation to the building industry, the problems inherent in obtaining building permits and the effectiveness of decentralization as a governance strategy for environmental management. For stakeholders saddled with urban planning and environmental management, questionnaires probed on governance strategies in urban planning (management, institutional strengths, inclusion of population on urban planning issues, the degree of collaboration between them and the effectiveness of decentralisation on environmental planning and management).

3 - The Study Area

Bamenda is located between longitude 10^{o} 09" and 10^{o} 11" East of the Greenwich Meridian and between latitudes 5^{o} 56" N and 5^{o} 58" North of the equator and (Figure 1).

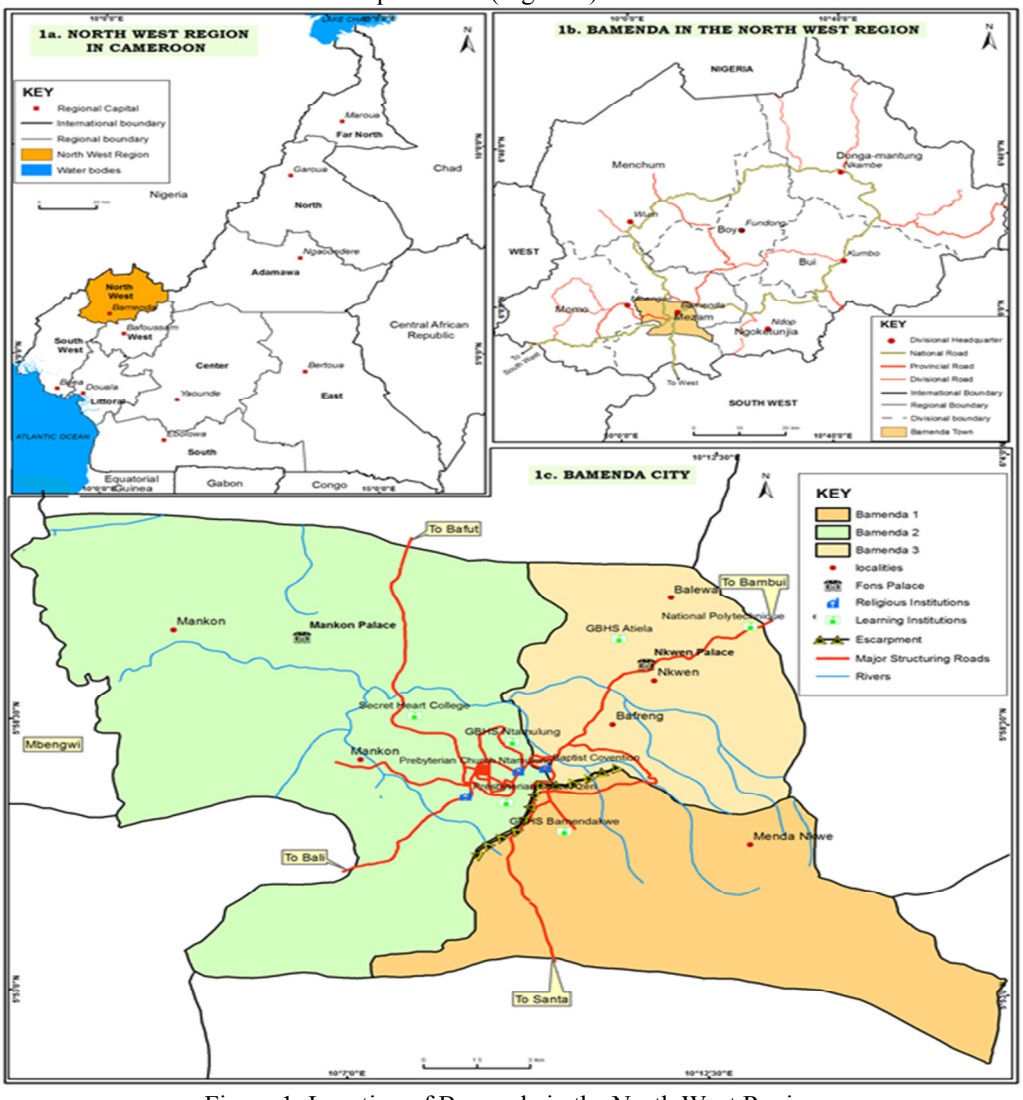

Figure 1: Location of Bamenda in the North West Region

The location of Bamenda has exposed it to the caprices of natural and human induced disasters as its

location falls along the Cameroon Volcanic Line (CVL), implanted on two well distinct environments-the High Lava Plateau (Up Station) with an altitude of about 1400m and the Low Plateau (Down Town) with an average altitude of 1100m above sea level. These two plateau surfaces are separated by a broad escarpment. Increasing rates of urbanization and urban development have, however, forced people especially the poor to construct houses on this escarpment without recourse to urban planning regulations. Although man has defied the physical constraints and inhabited part of this escarpment, the difficulties and threats of slope failure to the houses and human life remains evident as most of the built up structures seem to be in 'transit' whenever heavy rains and surface runoff show their ugly appearance (Lambi, 2004).

4 - Results and Discussions

Bamenda, capital of the North West region of Cameroon has experienced a pyramidal rate of population growth (Figure 2). In 1995, the town had a population of 202162 inhabitants and by 2015, it moved up to 909424. It is further projected that by 2020, Bamenda's population will hit 1323716 inhabitants. .

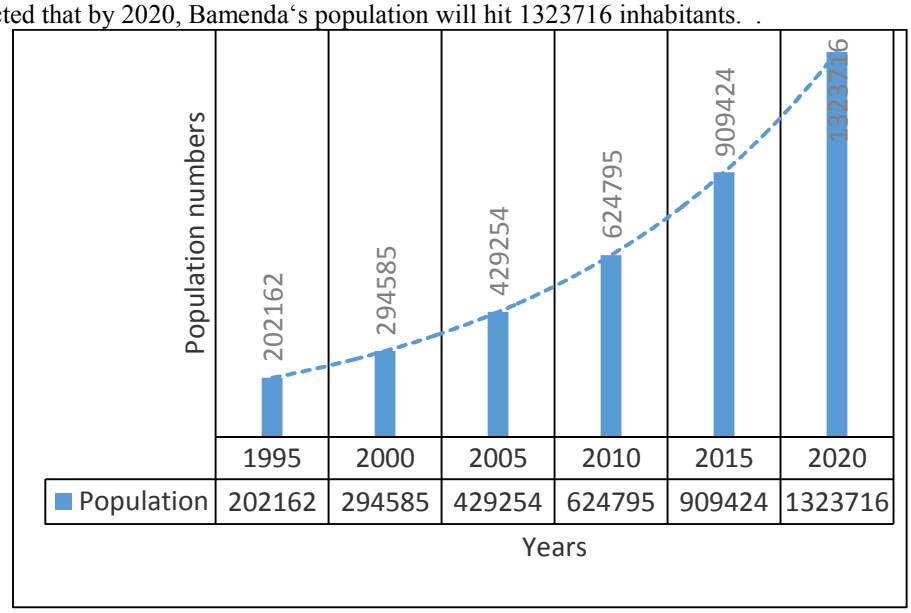

Figure 2: Population evolution of Bamenda

Source: North West Regional Service of Statistics (1995-2015), Projections (2020)

Such an astronomical rate of population growth has outstripped planning as the town is rapidly sprawling into environmentally marginal locations in fragrant disrespect of urban planning regulations. This breeds environmental management problems as development is generally informal and unplanned, often resulting in people settling on environmentally marginal locations, in flagrant violation of Section 9 of law N° 2004/003 of April 21st, 2004 regulating town planning in Cameroon which states that: 'Except otherwise especially prescribed, any land in danger of a natural hazard (flood, erosion, landslide, earthquake etc), portions of state land classified as such and ecologically protected areas as defined by legislation related to environmental management shall not be built on'. It is thus germane to ask the question; why have people chosen to inhabit environmentally challenged zones without the respect of urban planning regulations?

It is observed from Table 1 that 33.6% of the respondents were unanimous that their paramount reasons for inhabiting environmentally marginal areas was due to the very cheap nature of land parcels in such zones. Given the fact that the prices of land values in more conducive locations has risen dramatically and those of wetland/slope acreage is still at a very low ebb, the poor have very little choices but to invade such stigmatized or off limit terrains in total disregard of urban planning regulations inherent in such zones. That is why Achuo Chi (1998), noted that the cost of land per square meter within the Bamenda urban space is generally 300-400 times greater than on the very steep hill sides and marshy/swampy low lying areas while Fombe and Molombe (2015) averred that the low-income and landless majority occupy the marginal zones that are cheaper, 'free' and usually hazard-prone. Increasing poverty according to most respondents was borne by the economic crisis that hit Cameroon in the late 1980s aggravated by the 70% reduction in the salaries of public servants in 1993. This problem was further compounded with the devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994 (from 50 to 100 per French Franc) with a consequent increase in the rate of inflation in Cameroon in general and Bamenda in particular. In this atmosphere, urban and regional planning was generally sidelined despite the unprecedented rates in urban development in Bamenda. This crisis, accompanied by the institution of the economic stabilization plan – the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) virtually overlooked the urban sub-sector as it involved state withdrawal from the provision of basic urban services, cuts in public expenditure, privatization of state assets,

workers retrenchment and further salary cuts.

As a result, some people were forced to perch on unplanned risky swampy and sloppy locations in absolute defiance of N° 2004/003 of April 21st, 2004 regulating town planning in Cameroon. The fear of eviction prevents them from investing to make such homes better for habitation, reasons why some of these homes are always in transit. Their very low resilience means that even small disaster impacts are translated into a number of environmental outcomes.

Table 1: Cumulated responses for the habitation of environmentally sensitive areas in Bamenda

Council Area	Neighbourhoods	Number of respondents (sample)	Reasons for inhabiting fragile areas			
			Family ties	Inherited land	Cheap land	Proximity
Bamenda I	Abaingoh Central	17	3	5	5	4
	Abaingoh Ntasha	13	2	3	6	2
	Ntangang	19	4	5	7	3
	Ayaba	30	9	5	10	6
	Ntenefor	10	1	3	4	2
Total for Bamenda I		89	19	21	32	17
Total Percentage (%)		100%	21.3%	23.6%	36%	19.1%
Bamenda II	Lower Ngomgham	36	8	9	11	8
	Musang	29	5	10	7	7
	Mulang	20	6	3	8	3
	Atu-Azire	25	5	5	9	6
	Small Mankon	28	8	7	8	5
	Ntamulung	34	8	10	6	10
	Upper Ngomgham	14	2	4	6	2
	Old Town	36	9	11	10	6
Total for Bamenda II		222	51	59	65	47
Total Percentage (%)		100	23%	27%	29%	21%
Bamenda III	Below Foncha	18	4	3	7	4
	Ntasen	9	1	2	4	2
	New layout	25	5	7	10	3
	Sisia I	25	6	4	11	4
	Sisia II	29	9	5	9	6
	Sisia III	22	5	4	9	4
	Sisia IV	34	8	9	12	5
Total for Bamenda III		162	38	34	62	28
Total Percentage (%)		100	23.4%	21%	38.3%	17.3%
Grand Total		473	108	114	159	92
Percentage		100%	22.9%	24.1%	33.6%	19.4%

Source: Field work (2016)

As averred by other informants in neighbourhoods like Abaingoh, Sisia II and III, such environmentally challenged zones are cost effective and attractive because they are gotten illegally without the necessary administrative procedures in securing administrative documents (town planning instruments) like land titles, town planning certificates and building permits. More fundamental as the Government Delegate to the Bamenda City Council puts it: "The buildings which have so far been erected on the escarpment at Sisia, New layout and Abaingoh, as well as those living within swampy areas of Bamenda were so erected in absolute violation of the existing urban planning regulations." This confirmation is eloquent testimony of the fact that the town planning acts of Bamenda have been poorly implemented. Besides, the ubiquitoes presence of local building materials such as stones, sand, timber and the constant availability of water significantly reduces the cost of construction especially for such low income earners. From such startling revelations, it can be ostensibly inferred that such low costs coupled with the lack of any legal obligation in purchase transactions has encouraged low income dwellers to virtually engulf slope and wetland environments in Bamenda.

24.1% of the population opined that they inhabited such ecologically fragile areas because of inheritance. In such a situation, they find it unlawful to relocate elsewhere even though such areas are environmentally fragile. Quizzed on their awareness on the occurrence of environmental hazards in such zones especially in landslide prone-zones, most of them were unanimous that in the days of their predecessors, such things did not happen and will never happen even now. Others even stressed that: 'it could happen on other hill sides but never this one'. This corroborates the findings of Lambi *et al* (2012) that the major problem with mankind is that man elects to live in hazard prone areas because of the lure of economic benefits and also because of the belief that the worse

cannot happen. The few who were of the opinion that such zones were environmentally challenged stressed that: "We have no other choice, where do you want us to settle then when it is our land of birth.'' 19.4% of the respondents reported that they inhabited such areas due to proximity or easy access to their places of work. Most of such workers were involved in informal sector activities such as petty trading and motor bike riding. Given the fact that such areas especially the slopes of the escarpment are enclaved and thus difficult for vehicles, the preponderance of motor bike riders was a common idiosyncrasy.

5 - Awareness on the Existence of Urban Development and Town Planning Regulations

Urban planning regulations are intended to set up an enabling and inclusive environment for the efficient/sustainable use of the urban space so as to deliver the required development needs and goals at the appropriate time so as to ensure environmental sanity. The extent to which people are aware of the existence of urban planning regulations is important because it determines partly, the extent to which they will comply with these regulations. As noted by Priso (2011), there continues to be problems regarding implementation and compliance with town planning laws in Cameroonian towns and cities. This is corroborated by the UN Habitat (1999) which affirmed that a large proportion of people in the urban areas are not aware of urban planning regulations. Field responses (Figure 3), indicates that Bamenda is currently becoming a ridicule of anthropogenic activities against the backdrop of the inability of planning legislations to work contrary to the deteriorating effects of urban development. This is because the institution of planning laws has done little to improve the environmental efficiency of the town.

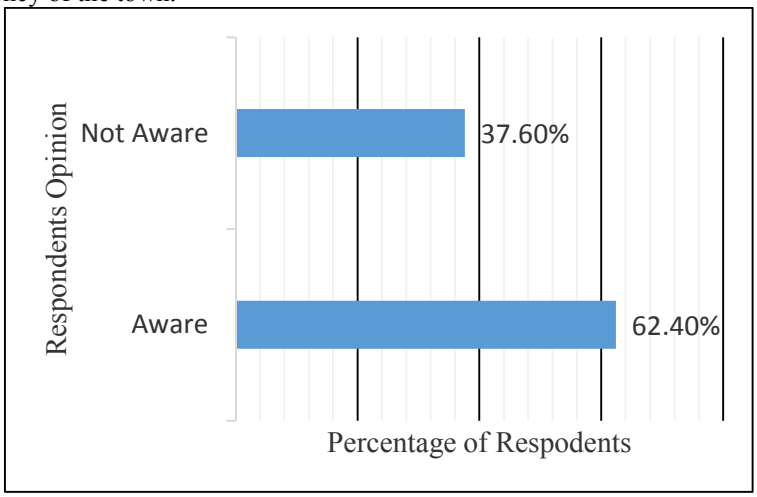

Figure 3. Cumulative responses on the awareness of the existence of urban planning Regulations in Bamenda
Source: Field work (2016)

Figure 3 reveals that 62.4% of the respondents claimed ignorance of the existence of the 1996 environmental management laws of Cameroon, the 2004 laws of town planning in Cameroon as well as the site specific laws of urban planning in Bamenda as against 37.6%. 62.4% of the respondents were unanimous that the existence of urban planning laws in Bamenda were more of theory than practice as they have never been sensitized on the existence and stipulations of such laws, let alone having a glimpse of a hard copy of such a legal framework. This is in direct contravention of Chapter II, Section 49 of the 2004 laws of town planning in Cameroon which states that; "The involvement of the population, organized groups and civil society in the implementation of the general rules of town planning and management and construction should be encouraged through free access to town planning documents as well as sensitization, training, research and education in the area of town planning and management." This has become a clog on the wheel of the awareness on the existence of urban planning regulations ushering the urban environment into a frivolous path to profligacy. As noted by the quarter head of Sisia II; **"**the only law they are aware of was leaving a setback from the main road and the stream channels before construction". He, however, lamented that the exact setback to be left is not even known as some people talk of 3m, others talk of 5m and yet others talk of 10m.

The non-awareness of the existence of these laws is not only limited to the local population but to urban planning stakeholders especially authorities of the municipal councils. Under Law No.2004/003 of 21 April 2004 governing town planning in Cameroon and Law No. 2004/018 of 22 July 2004 laying down rules applicable to councils, the status and roles of the various players involved in urban development. The main players include: the State as supervisory authority, Decentralised Local Authorities as main players, and citizens and the civil society as stakeholders. But as noted by Priso (2014), in spite of the improvements to the legal situation of town planning in Cameroon brought about by that law, it turns out that many of the officials responsible for enforcing the instruments on the field don't know about them. The case in Bamenda could

perhaps be justified by the fact that the responsibilities of the ministries and the decentralized local authorities overlap and are not clearly defined as the state continues to exercise tutelage over local authorities and as a result sound environmental planning and management policies are far from being reached. In this light, Arthur Lewis (2015) prefaces his book; 'Development Planning' with the observation that 'the economics of development is not very complicated; the secret of successful planning lies more in sensible politics and good public administration.

The non-awareness of the existence of urban planning laws has thus helped to undermine the environmental credentials of planning. In the context of such a seismic shift in awareness, most benchmarks for sustainable planning facets have remained trapped in an environmental time-warp. **"**What a dilema when man swims in environmental ignorance of the unlawful disaster that the landscape holds install for him?" (Lambi *et al* 2012). The formidable challenge, therefore, is not a lack of legislation but ignorance of its existence. That is why Achuo Chi (1998), stressed that between 6 to 8% of the population of Bamenda live in informal settlements developed on steep slopes with about 20% on flood plains while Ndenecho and Eze (2004) avarred that about 55% of the population of Bamenda live outside laws governing urban planning regulations.

From such revelations, it is ostensibly clear that massive construction on environmentally fragile locations in Bamenda is an epitome of non-adherence to urban planning regulations due to ignorance of their existence. This is because the legal structures under which development control is being enforced is either too weak or inappropriate in addressing the myriad of problems of urban development especially the occupation of disaster-prone areas. The Minister of Housing and Urban Development according to Circular No. 0003/E/2/MINHDU/SG of 21 July 2014 on the implementation and compliance with town planning instruments in Cameroon was, therefore, right to affirm the fact that Cameroonian towns have continued to develop haphazardly.

The 37.6% of the respondents who were aware of the existence of urban planning regulations were those who had attained a certain level of education though some completely ignored their implementation while others partially implemented for selfish reasons. As a matter of fact, a respondents at Abaingoh professed that he is aware of some of these laws but has been reluctant to apply them because certain provisions of the legal framework like living a setback from the road and stream before construction directly constricts the size of his plot. As such he finds it unreasonable to comply with such a regulation. It is as a result of this that corrupt government officials sometimes fraternise with such defaulters to bypass urban planning regulations. That is why a respondents at Atu-Azire lamented that: "We have well-crafted and grounded town planning regulations. The major problem lies in its implementation as these regulations have been flouted with impunity. An individual may be constructing without due consideration to urban planning regulations. When the work is stopped by some appropriate authorities, you discover the next day that construction work is transpiring in lips and bounds as a result of clientelistic practices".

6 - Poor Sensitisation on the Existence of a Planning Tools

Pursuant to Law No. 2004/003, four urban planning tools exist to regulate planning in Cameroon- the Urban Master Plan (UMP), the Land Use Plan (LUP), the Urban Sketch Plan (USP) and the Area Plan (AP) (Yongo, 2014). Amongst these tools, the urban Master Plan constitutes the most important as all the other tools are circumscribed within it. It constitutes a fulcrum for sustainable development of cities because effective development cannot be sustained when built on an ineffective master plan. It aims to identify the basic guidelines for developing a city, as well as the general allotment of land and programming of facilities. Irrespective of the importance of an Urban Master Plan and other planning tools, field responses revealed controversial perceptions on the existence of these planning tools in Bamenda.

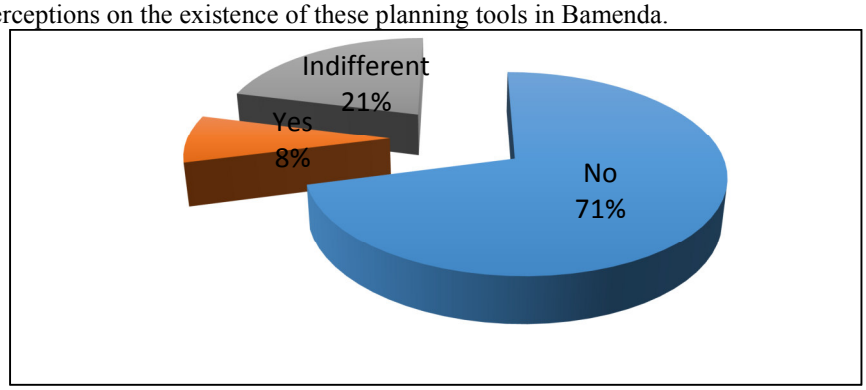

Figure 4: Respondents' awareness on the existence of a urban planning tools in Bamenda
Source: Field work (2015/16)

As shown on Figure 4, 71% of the respondents were not aware of the existence of urban planning tools in

Bamenda as against 8% while 21% remained indifferent. Such a high proportion who were unaware (71%) and indifferent (21%) could be accounted for by the fact that irrespective of the importance of these tools for urban planning and management, it was disheartening to observe that since 1985, just one Master Plan had been developed. An earlier report by Chris Che Neba (8th/10/2014), a journalist from the Cameroons Radio Television (CRTV) had much commonality with the above findings. He stressed that Cameroon has experienced an astronomical increase in its urban population from 37% in 1987 to 52% in 2010, a figure projected to reach 75% in the next 30 to 40 years. Based on this he noted, that urban development in Cameroonian towns has taken place in an anarchical, deregulated and uncontrolled manner, with town planning documents rare to come-by. For example, of all the 374 local councils in Cameroon, less than 100 have town plans. Even where and when these plans do exist, they are not respected.

The old 1985 Master Plan even went obsolete and outdated as contemporary urban planning exigencies could hardly fit into it until 2013 when a new one was developed. Such a long time span that is 1985-2013 (28years) has contributed to the very little awareness and indifference on its existence. This has had an upper hand in dictating the development path that Bamenda was forced to follow as the outdated master plan proved to be inapplicable or unfit for guiding urban development in the preferred/desired direction. That is why Cameroon's Minister of Housing and Urban Development during a preparatory meeting (8th/10/2014) for the first ever urban forum in Cameroon under the theme: "Planning and Managing Urban Development, Time for Action is Now", avouched that; "We can build modern cities''. He, therefore, underscored the fact that Cameroonian towns lack Master Plans as land is occupied and developed long even before town planners come in. Alluding to this assertion, the representative of the UN-Habitat in Cameroon, echoed that 'Failure to plan is planning to fail' and thus concluded that. "Making a proper diagnosis is the first step in the right direction" which the upcoming forum will seek to do. In this light, Arthur Lewis (2015) prefaces his book; 'Development Planning' with the observation that 'the economics of development is not very complicated; the secret of successful planning lies more in sensible politics and good public administration.

The absence of an up to date master plan until 2013 seriously constrained development making planning more reactive than proactive. Corroborating this current view, Tsepiso (2006) averred that plans in most less developed countries are made and finalised but implemented a couple of years later, irrespective of the socio economic, political, environmental and demographic changes that occurred between the time of planning and implementation. At the time developers moved to their sites for construction, therefore, no detailed up-to-date land use, Urban Sketch Plan, Area Plan and site development plans as well as engineering design for most parts of Bamenda town especially the environmentally challenged zones existed. There was thus little or nothing to guide them towards the orderly development in line with the provisions of a contemporary Urban Master Plan. As a result, the urban environment of Bamenda has remained disjointed and uncoordinated since the implementation of urban development regulations most often than not came after urban development activities had taken place. This has resulted in an outmoded urban structure providing little satisfaction from the point of view of environmental aesthetics. Even with the development of a new Master and Land use Plans in 2013 stressing on guidelines on urban planning and management as well as the future direction of growth for the town, rarely, if ever, have these plans being realized since their validation, adoption and promulgation in 2014. It is thus no paradox that most open spaces delineated by the new Master Plan are presently being over-run by informal settlements which carries identification hall marks of unsound urban environmental management.

7 - Governance Failures

Urban governance deals with the way in which cities are managed, regulated and/or controlled. According to the World Bank (1992), the decision making process of most government institutions in the developing countries are basically flawed. That is why the urban environment of Bamenda has been blandly plundered by the inability of urban management stakeholders to infiltrate good governance and sustainability strategies into the discourse and dynamics of urban environmental planning and management. This is partly due an elusive decentralization policy (poor governance) manifested through inefficient and technically weak institutional structures and capacities, lack of capacity for urban development control institutions, shortage of personnel, niggardly available resources, bureaucratic ambience and corruption, and disjointed budgets which are unable to make requisite impacts on environmental planning.

As already noted, part of the environmental planning enigma in Bamenda is orchestrated by an elusive decentralization policy. Decentralizing urban governance as a strategy for urban environmental planning and management ensures that people in the grass roots (community) must have a voice, interest and ownership in the development of their land. This is because cultivating a thorough understanding of the complex realities on the ground is the key to ensure proper environmental planning and management. Greater community involvement does not only minimize the chances of conflicts that have been a setback to the respect of urban planning regulations but also enhances environmental monitoring, management and capacity building of local community members. This, therefore, raises the question of whether the decentralisation of environmental management in

Bamenda is 'participatory' or just 'administrative'.

Field responses in sampled households, however, showed contrasting discrepancies on the inclusion of the community and other stakeholders in matters of urban environmental management in the era of decentralisation. As shown on Figure 5, a greater proportion of respondents (60%) were unanimous that the opinion of the community (citizens), some government institutions and the various sub divisional councils were not considered in development issues pertaining to the urban environmental planning and management. Such respondents averred that lapses and inadequacies did exist in the co-option of citizens and other local stakeholders in the management of the Bamenda urban space.

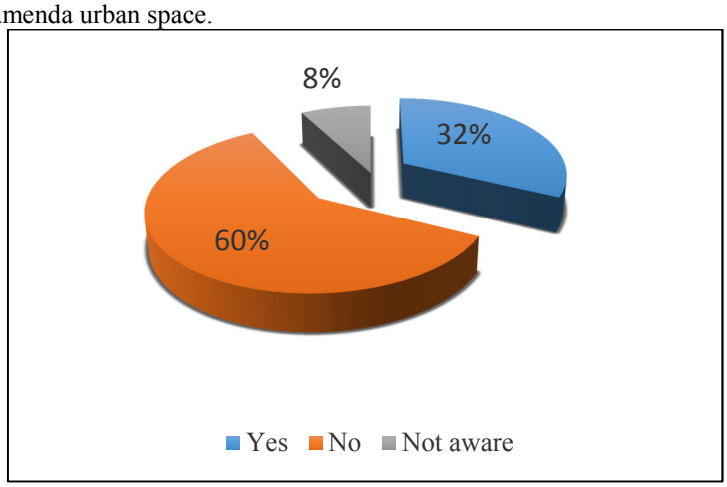

Figure 5: Cumulative responses on the inclusion of the community and other management Stakeholders in urban environmental planning and management
Source: Field Work (2016)

This is in direct contravention of Agenda 21, Chapter 21 and Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration which states that: "Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, on a relevant level. On a national basis, each individual should have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on activities in their communities and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes". That is why the Director of Urban Development in the Bamenda City Council stressed that; "The non-involvement of citizens and local stakeholders charged with urban development in the execution of development projects of top environmental concern in Bamenda stands tall". In such a circumstance, success is far from being achieved as exogenous stakeholders conceive and implement environmental management issue through the top-bottom than bottom-up and by so doing, fall short of site specific environmental realities, aspirations and needs of the people at the bottom."

Under such a condition, the call for citizens to identify and align their development objectives to the targeted priorities of their municipalities is nothing to come-by. This is in direct contravention of Article 17of the 1996 decentralization laws which describes decentralisation as the "basic driving force for the promotion of development, democracy and good governance at the local level". That is why Eyong and Mbuagbo (2003) argued rather trenchantly that the current administrative and political logjam observed in the decentralization of city governance in Cameroon has alienated local residents who feel excluded. That is why urban environmental planning and management in Bamenda is still basically "for the people" rather than being "with the people".

8 - The Quality of Personnel at the Various Decentralised Sectors of Urban Management

The quality, quantity and capacity of stakeholders of decentralized local councils as well as government institutions in urban environmental planning and management are major environmental challenges to the decentralisation programme currently underway in Cameroon in general and Bamenda in particular. A diagnosis (Table 2) carried out with stakeholders of urban planning and management in Bamenda, however, revealed a lacuna or incompatibility between urban planning regulations and environmental management as technical and professional inadequacies stand tall. The glaring gap in qualified human resources for designing and thereafter, for monitoring the implementation of urban planning tools, is likely the major handicap of the current context of urban planning in Bamenda. There is the severe lack of specialised skills indispensable for quality data collection and treatment for the enhancement of effective urban planning operations such as modern day geo informatics softwares like in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Remote Sensing (RS)) and Disaster Management (DM) for urban planning and management.

Table 2. Existing capacities of the different stakeholders charged with urban Planning and Environmental Management in Bamenda

Institution	Knowledge on RS	Knowledge on GIS	Knowledge on DM
Bamenda City Council (BCC)	1	1	0
Bamenda I Council	0	0	0
Bamenda II Council	0	0	0
Bamenda III Council	0	0	0
MINDHU	0	0	1
MINCAF	0	0	1

Just one personnel in the department of Urban Development in the entire BCC has a fair knowledge of both RS and GIS while in all three municipalities, individuals with such skills are non-existent. In the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development as well as State Property and Land Tenure there is also the complete absence of personnel's with skills in RS and GIS. From such findings, it can reasonably be inferred that a dearth of spatial information from which to make intelligent governance decisions and from which to pre-empt and forecast the escalation of emerging or pre-existing urban planning deficiencies is lacking. This means pre-existing spatial data or geo-information in the form of maps, plans, aerial photographs, satellite images which form the base on which urban environmental planning is undertaken are poorly updated and put into use. As a result, no realistic and sustainable environmental planning can be done without an adequate spatial information base as it becomes difficult to plan, subdivide, develop and provide appropriately for infrastructure, utilities and services in order to enhance environmental viability. The inadequacy, obsolescence, and even the lack of essential statistical information (economic, demographic, technical) and that of mapping data, are the main handicaps that affect the quality of the available urban planning tools.

It is unimaginable that in a town with a fragile ecological setting like Bamenda susceptible to natural and human induced environmental disasters, none of the personnel in the planning machinery in the entire BCC alongside all three sub-divisional councils has a sound knowledge on DM (Table 2). Available scientific knowledge is thus limited and poorly utilized in forecasting hazardous locations to deter habitation and necessary outreach for the benefit of the inhabitants of the city. This is a clear indication that disaster management in Bamenda is still at its infancy and so the town is continuously prone to the caprices of environmental hazards due to lapses in urban planning.

9 - Conclusion and Policy Implications

The primordial objective of urban environmental planning and management is the creation of places that are economically vibrant, environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. However, these expected outcomes have only been met in Bamenda to a very marginal extent. The road in ensuring sound environmental planning and management in Bamenda is thus paved with failed efforts to integrate environmental considerations into the discourse and dynamics of urban development. This is hatched and amplified by the non-compliance of urban planning regulation as a result of ignorance of its existence. This is a clear testimony that management stakeholders seem to be losing the battle of coping with the gamut of environmental challenges posed by the non-respect of urban planning regulations. Therefore, man's ability to bypass the laws regulating town planning in Bamenda and his inability to handle the complex and diverse problem of environmental management have brought about negative reverberations, ushering the urban Bamenda into a frivolous path to profligacy. That is why Lambi (2001) noted that; "Man is ingenious, strong and innovative and has done a great deal to conquer nature. At the same time, however, he is unfortunately not wise enough to handle the complex problem of development that arises from this prolonged misuse of nature." Urban development in Bamenda has thus failed to interweave the environmental, developmental and sustainable threads into a common tapestry.

In order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning regulations in Bamenda, environmental mainstreaming should be integrated into the whole planning process as it will enable more efficient planning of environmental assets. Improved transparency, accountability and inclusion of citizens in decision making, is further advocated as a means to good governance and to improved management. Besides, existing laws relating to urban planning and management especially the environmental laws should be reviewed and new laws designed and crafted in a participatory manner in which every aspect of the environment are incorporated into it. Having a proper regulatory framework is not enough, but a sustained implementation and enforcement is more important. Strict enforcement and implementation structures should be developed by the authorities that be with defaulters punished according to the law. This should be fortified by adequate monitoring and evaluation.

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