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Urban governance and planning for Economic growth

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TITLE

URBAN GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

Governance in short is a shift from bureaucratic process to shared power for the people. Governance in the urban areas goes hand in hand with planning. Issues of governance cannot be dealt with completely without proper planning. However, planning in the two largest cities of Kumasi and Accra has seen some major changes over time both spatially and administratively. Spatial, urban planning system has moved from new towns and town expansion to high standards of living. Administratively there has been the frantic effort of merging all law governing land use into one legal document which was not previously the case. But planning for growth and governance are faced with the following weakness; selective restraint, institutional and geographical fragmentation, short termism and power and resources.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses governance and economic growth in two major cities of Kumasi and Accra in Ghana. The paper also discusses some of the main challenges facing planning for growth in these two cities. Previous researches have shown that the process of planning and managing urban growth in areas where growth pressures are strongest is characterized by significant weakness and biases. Spatial planning in some of these localities seems deficient in capacity to address conflicts around land-use and development, negotiate appropriate trade-offs and reach and implement decisions that can deliver economically and environmentally sustainable development[1]. This paper shall try to identify some of the possible challenges and weakness and outline ways in which urban governance in planning for growth might be enhanced.

Planning in Ghana especially in the two largest cities not spatially but developmentally (Kumasi and Accra) is facing some challenges. Christine Lambert and Nick Oatley, identified some challenges in general planning system across all major cities and Ghana is no exception. First is the considerable change in the spatial logic of the economy, generating strong development pressures in parts of the country where environmental concerns are especially strong. Second is the changes in households which generate significant additional housing demands, with the highest demands occurring in the most successful areas economically. And the last is the environmental protection and the pursuit of sustainable development which has assumed great significance in the planning system, but this often seems to be irreconcilable with the accommodation of the development requirement of contemporary economic and social development.[2] We shall explain these problems into details and consider their effects.

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[1]Goran Cars, Patsy Healey, Ali Madanipour and Claudio De Magalhaes (2002), *Urban Governance, Institutional Capacity and Social Milieux*, Ashagate Publishing Company, UK, p.125
[2] Ibid. p. 125

2.0 GOVERNANCE

According to Jessop 1997, governance encapsulates a shift in modes of policy making and implementation away from the dominance of formal state power organized through bureaucratic hierarchies, towards more open networks of cross-sectional coalitions and partnerships, characterized by share power[3]. There are some factors that underlie a shift from government to governance. Some of these include

- Restrictions on state finance and powers necessitating partnership with partial public and private interest,
- Recognition of the complexity of contemporary social and economic problems requiring more flexible and fluid responses,
- Growing competition between localities for investment
- Central government requirement that policy making and implementation process be opened up to the involvement from business and community interest. (see stocker and Mossberger 1995)
- Goran Cars, Pasty Healey, Ali Madanipur and Claudio de Magalhaes also identified increased academic and policy interest in the concept of institutional capacity and how it can be created. An example is the national policy fair that was organized by the government of Ghana in May 2010 to among other things sanitize the public on government policies.

Rhodes et al 1997 acknowledge that as a result of this shift to governance, action is said to flow from the co-operative efforts of a range of interests and agencies. Government itself has only 'imperfect' control and its capacity to govern depends on the effective co-ordination of interdependent forces within and beyond the state. Governance between and among different localities may vary.

Healey et al 1998 discuses how the conditions affecting governance may vary between different localities. Healey writes

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[3] Jessop B (1997), Governance of complexity and the complexity of governance, Edward Elgar Cheltenham, pp.95

> '*A key element of such governance lies in the quality of local political culture some of which are well-integrated, well connected, well informed and can mobilize readily to capture opportunities and enhanced local condition. Other are fragmented, lack the connections to sources of power and knowledge and the mobilization capacity to organize to make a difference*'

A clear case can be seen in the two largest cities whereby certain government undertakings are first made to occur in Accra before replicated in Kumasi. The demolition exercise of unauthorized structures of the central business district and houses built on water ways is one clear example. These exercises are planned and executed successfully in Accra by the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. Even though it is not a governmental order to replicate this exercise in Kumasi, the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly follows suite. Why is Accra always the first? This is because of Healey's (1998) reasons of the quality of local political culture – well integrated, well-connected, and well informed. It is clear that Accra is well- integrated, well-connected and well informed because almost all government officials, departments, agencies, private works, banks, industries, diplomats etc are headquartered there than Kumasi.

However these 'replications' of policies are also not on the 'bad' note. It forms a new form of governance and planning which involves building up collaborative relationships with 'stakeholders' in territories, to generate not merely specific programmes but governance cultures through which territorial political communities can collectively address their conflict and maximize their chances to shape their place (Healey 1998).

It seems that the creation of strategic capacity is a particularly important issues in relations to strategic, sub-regional spatial planning in areas under growth pressures where there is often intense controversy about urban planning, growth and it accommodation. Recent debate by Amnesty International about the demolition of houses on water-way which is the major courses of flooding in Accra has brought about the issue of human right abuses paralleling economic growth and governance. Where should line be drawn? Is it in favour of growth (governance) or justice? In this case we can argue that locally based antidevelopment sentiment has taken precedence over

strategic responses to the development challenges of economic and social change in Accra.

In many cases, localities are unable themselves to develop a 'strategic line' that is acceptable to all stakeholders in the process. Let's take the case of when the commercial transport system was changed from eighteen sitting capacity to fourteen sitting capacity. The Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly undertook such strategy when it was approaching Christmas season where people badly needed transportation and the commercial transport system was scare because of the influx of people from the villages and small towns to Kumasi. This caused a lot of conflict and generated heated radio debates about the fusibility of such policy at that particular moment in time. Central government which retains important roles in planning system was drawn into such disputes and a strategic line was imposed. This was one issue where top-down imposition by the central government was timely and important.

However, in the general sense, top-down imposition continues to face obstacles as implementation process take over. But where governance at the local level is seen to be failing, more traditional hierarchical arrangements take over. Such arrangement cannot take place in the absence of proper planning. For this reason Cowell and Murdoch (1999) claim that planning has proved rather immune to the wider shift to governance apparent in other policy areas. Planning is however, a policy area where there have been significant changes in the powers available to steer patterns of growth, in administrative arrangement and procedures for policy making and mechanism of implementation and political changes such that past assumptions about aims and objectives are increasingly questioned (Chirstine L. and Nick O). Planning in the two major cities of Accra and Kumasi has been one of the major problems facing the metropolitan authority. Simply because of apathy on the part of the local residence, implementation problems or simply incompetence on the part of the local authorities as these are mostly political appointment and their decisions are politically motivated.

3.0 CHANGES IN THE PLANNING SYSTEM

In Ghana there has been some loosening of controls and selective attempts to de-regulate urban growth from the 1980s. This has led to the fact that the planning system has not escaped fundamental reforms or changes. We should note that the foundations of the planning system stems from a comprehensive and proactive regional policy, which was one aspect of a national policy, dealing with inter and intra-regional dimensions of urban and regional development. An explicit example of that is the appointment of regional ministers and mayors to oversee the development of the respective regions or better still the regional capitals.

Historically, new towns and town expansions were a key tool in accommodating growth with substantial resources available to manage and steer development. That is, the larger the frontiers of Accra or Kumasi spatially, the more developed that particular city was perceived to be. City authorities were therefore interested in the spatial expansions instead of standard of living of city dwellers. But over the years, new towns have fallen out of favour. Now, attention has shifted towards the standard and/or quality of living in the urban city. For instance, how long does one get stuck in traffic for travelling from one side of the city to another. In Accra for instance, one can spend about two hours in traffic during working days on a road that would have taken ten minutes to cross in non-working days. This situation seems to be above the control of the immediate city authority or regional ministers in a de-centralized system of government because it has got to do with major road expansion and/or construction. But what about issues of sanitation, drainage systems, lightning of the principal streets to reduce street robbery, ensuring commercial drivers' discipline, overseeing the activities of community police and city guards who do not come under the direct control of the police force etc. New urban planning and development are beginning to take on these issues. The importance of a shift away from the new town policy/spatial expansion is the reduction or cuts-backs of public expenditure as it involves an expansion of already existing infrastructure and not the building of new ones.

Another shift from this spatial expansion has been the use of demographic household projections to establish targets at regional and local level for land release for housing

and related purpose (Goran Cars, Patsy Healey, Ali Madanipour and Claudio de Magalhaes, 2002).

In administrative terms, there have been a number of changes to local government structures and boundaries with respect to legalities, with important implications for planning. For a long time, land use and land litigation has been one important issue especially in Accra. There have not been a single law regulating land purchases and land use and thus different law about land use are applied in different law courts scattered around the two cities. The problem is that depending on which law court one submits his/her plead; the person will be on the advantage side of the law or otherwise. The process of enacting all these conflicting laws together as one and applying them simultaneously to all cases pleaded at the court is a major and the most recent administrative changes ever recognized. This process when finished will solve major problems of litigations in these two cities.

Another administrative shift is the issues of the AMA (Accra Metropolitant Assembly) and KMA (Kumasi Metropolitant Assembly) customized car number plate for commercial cars aside the ones issued by the Drivers and Vehicle Licensees Authority (DVLA). This was in response to the use of commercial vehicles (especially taxis) to commit crimes such as robbery. Under that administrative shift drivers were required to pick up these new vehicles plate from their respective metropolitan offices. Each driver was supposed to give verifiable personal details and also an inclusion of his/her extended family's details and any other details that is deemed necessary. So that in event of the use of that particular car in a crime, all the police require will be the special number issued by the assembly. This has reduced commercial vehicle crime to some extent.

3.0.1 THE CHALLENGES FACING PLANNING IN GROWTH REGIONS

Christine L and Nick Oatley writes, 'the challenges facing planning in growth regions essentially revolve around the difficulties of reconciling economic competitiveness, social need and environmental protection'

Different regional economic performance was and is still an issue that has attracted great deal of policy attention in Ghana. The long-lasting long-standing evidence is the north-south divide in growth rate. This reflects the key role of the southern part of Ghana making massive economic contributions more than the northern part. As a result, national economic competitiveness is increasingly seen as tied to economic success in those regions in the south where the 'new knowledge economy is concentrated'. Coupled with this is the centralization of employment in the largest cities of Accra and Kumasi.

But even within the two largest cities, employment seems to be concentrated in the central business district. There is every likelihood that there will be a major shift from this as Edge cities develop. Edge cities and decentralization trends more generally begin to change conventional views about the structure of urban regions. Reflecting these shifts in the spatial organization of the economy, there is increased debates about the emergence of urban networks and polycentric urban regions, replacing traditional notion of mono-centric cities, coupled with debate about the extent to which policy should recognized these shifts (Goran Cars, Pasty Healey, Ali Madanipour and Claudio de Magalhaes, 2002). This however does not take away the problem of regional development divide. But there is seemingly a way out of this. This paper will like to recommend that planning of the major cities in part which has less contributions to the economy in Ghana (northern part) should accommodate market driven process, essentially because the scope to do otherwise is now quite limited. In other words the 'regional imbalanced' should be tackled by preventing the economic magnetism of the overheated southern part draining away vitality and population from other regions in Ghana. As the major urban cities in the northern part are market-driven, edge cities are also likely to develop in these areas and growth will be accelerated.

Over the years, spatial planning for growth has assumed a new role to protect the environment integrated into a term called sustainable development. This role derives in part from international policy influence and commitments linked to global climatic changes. Sustainability, as a key guiding principle is increasingly reflected in national planning guidance, official policy statement and regional development plans. The concept of sustainable development itself is very broad, encompassing economic and

social and environmental dimensions. However, in planning, particular aspect tend to have been emphasized, notably the transport impacts of land use decisions and the need to minimize the use of undeveloped land for new housing development. The emphasis on sustainability poses major challenges and difficulties in implementation.

4.0 WEAKNESS IN PLANNING SYSTEM AND GOVERNANCE IN GHANA

This section discusses the major weakness in the planning system (both spatial and administrative) and the governance of urban cities in Kumasi and Accra. Christine L. and Nick O. identified four major weaknesses which also generally pertain to Ghana as well. These include selective restraint, between areas and development sectors; institutional and geographical fragmentation, fragmented institution and inappropriate local government boundaries; short-termism/opportunism, and limited powers and resources to intervene positively in the development process.

4.0.1 SELECTIVE RESTRAINT

Lambert and Oatley writes 'planning at a local level in those parts of cities which are experiencing the greatest growth pressures is frequently dominated by an approach that seeks to resist development'. This statement holds true for most big cities including Kumasi and Accra. In Kumasi for example one will barely find a land in areas such as Ahodwo, Amakom, Asafo etc. Even if the place will be used for residents for government officials, office complex or even the construction of industry very high price will be charged for it. These cost policy will definitely cause individual and companies to move to less developed areas such as Morshie Zongo, Asennua etc.

Selective restraint is sometimes introduced and forces to operate not by policy makers, but by 'forces' surrounding urban development. These could include demand and supply in the spatial context, taxation system etc. Selective restraint reflect a wider, more structural feature of planning, giving rise to systematic variations in planning policy for restrictive policy in affluent and growing areas and more permissive policy in poorer declining areas. In this case the concentration of planners in relation to issues such as environmental qualities will be titled towards the poorer areas. This is because residents

in richer areas value environmental qualities and are likely and have the capacity to organized and protect their environment by themselves more than the poorer areas.

Selective restraint cuts across so many dimensions including economic development. Motivation for selection of a spatial locality to support employment development for instance might be expected to be in an area which in a specific time has experience economic decline and high unemployment. A fire outbreak of a major area such as Suame magazine; an area noted for vehicle repairs and which is one of the largest vehicle repair areas in West Africa can be a clear example. These general features can be illustrated more specifically by planning policy development in the Tema Municipal Area where there is an area called the Tema Industrial Area. Planners will ensure selective restraint within economic and political context to protect this area from all unforeseen circumstances.

It must be stated that in Ghana selective restraint is not an intentional policy pursued by planners and city authorities. What can be said is that their actions and inactions sometimes portal or shows evidence of selective restraint.

4.0.2 INSTITUTIONAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL FRAGMENTATION

The institutional structures that are in place such as the assembly members and the unit committee members of the local authorities are more 'informal collaborative arrangement' instead of the formal arrangements that is deemed to have been perceived by individuals. Even though these are democratically elected local council officials who should have been contacted before major issues about planning be undertaken they are not. Day in day out announcement about city planning arrangements are broadcast on radio without a fore knowledge by these council officials.

Inappropriate geographical boundaries of administrative jurisdictions have also tended to mitigate against strategic planning. Where is the line drawn between two towns? In Kumasi for example, the dimension is mostly done using streets, traffic light and sometimes even stores. Where cities within urban regions are tightly bounded in their administrative areas (as in the case of Amakom and Oforikrom), they lack control over development and development opportunities in their hinterlands. How can one

demarcate Amakom and Oforikrom and where will be the locality of the one big manufacturing company that is established on the proposed imaginary lines where one part of the company's building falls within Amakom and the other part falls within Oforikrom.

4.0.3 SHORT TERMISIM AND POWER AND RESOURCES

Urban planners are faced with the problem of having to stay for short terms in office. This is mainly because of the fact that planners of urban city in Ghana are mostly political appointment. A planner is immediately removed from office when there is a new government and thus his/her competence does not come into play at all. Again local political process is driven by different rationalities. Do people want to get to mainstream management of the urban cities because of their personal gains or because of their experteers. The turnover of local politicians can also undermine process of building knowledge and intellectual capital. A sometimes obsessive focus on issues of having development means that more integrated understanding of local economic and social development and potential are neglected (Goran Cars, Patsy Healey, Ali Madanipour and Claudio de Magalhaes, 2002). Again as noted earlier, political time-scales driven by the electoral cycle are relatively short-term and responsiveness to local electoral pressures in many areas under growth pressures translates into concern with protecting the existing environmental qualities of areas.

By powers and resources, we mean money and certain infrastructure such as transport and social infrastructure and its control. This point relates to our earlier comments about public expenditure limitations. Another question to ask is who controls and ensures the quality of infrastructure built. Is it the government official including the president coming down to inspect new infrastructure development? If this president does this, then what is the role of the urban authority? Is this done because it is government founded project? If so then where do we address the issue of 'resources provider' and 'quality control?'

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that, answers to these problems are quite difficult to come by. In the first instance, is selective restraint really a problem? This question is had to answer. Selective restraint can become a problem, when development of towns is undertaken on political lines. The creation of additional district capital without taken into consideration the economic strength of the town by the government in 2006 can be cited as one example. But even that there are different issues that needs to be addressed. It is clear that the problem of short termism is mainly political and needs to be seen in that sense. The only way this issue can be addressed is by taken off the political lens.

Even though, governance and planning in the city of Kumasi and Accra has improved, a lot still needs to be done in terms of sanitation, land use, commercial activities, etc.

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