

Citizenship Participation in Environmental Planning and Management in Nigeria: Suggestions

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ABSTRACT Existing approaches of environmental planning and management in Nigeria is grossly deficient of citizen participation even though appreciable provisions are made in existing environmental planning legislations. This paper is therefore an exposition into existing planning legislations in Nigeria with emphasis on the opportunities provided for citizen participation. The paper attempts a critic of planning laws during the pre-colonial period, the colonial period and the post independent situation. It suggests the need to encourage environmental education and journalism in Nigeria, active participation of the community leaders, industrialist, academia, interest groups, advocacy planning, appropriate capacity building and replication of best practices in different parts of Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Nigerians are faced with the fact that their cities are in trouble and that there is an urgent need to do something that will ameliorate the emerging problems. The questions is what are the nature of the problems and how do we solve these problems. There exist many approaches to solving the emerging problems of Nigerian cities however this paper is on the nature of physical planning problems and the need to involve the public who are the major stakeholders in the city affair. The need for this approach is based on the fact that existing physical planning framework gives little attention to citizen's contribution to how the cities should be modeled except where they are only involved in financing projects either individually or as corporate bodies. It has increasingly been noticed that the professional town planner and the political class cannot do it all alone. This is important especially when it is realized that the complexities and ambiguities surrounding the mechanisms sustaining cities have become more difficult to understand, fund and implement.

In an attempt to substantiate the need for citizen participation in the planning and development of cities in Nigeria, this paper discusses the nature of physical planning problems in Nigeria. It also discusses the existing provisions for citizen participation through physical planning legislations in Nigeria. Suggestions were made on interest groups that

should be involved in the planning process. The paper suggests that planners should include government agencies, professionals, the business sector, community groups and political leaders in environmental planning processes.

THE CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING

The process of land use planning has increased in scope and scale to the point that the traditional practices where the town planners' tool of operations, which is in the form of, established professional paradigms, concepts and models are no more adequate. These ideological basic tools are often deception and have on many occasions been discovered to run into the problem of contemporary relevance and social acceptance. This had led to the need for responsive planning approach whereby the existing gap between the public perception of how the environment should be modeled and the professional perception can be integrated. During this attempt, the public involvement in the planning process will range from the individuals to voluntary organizations and pressure groups to community interest groups. However, the concept of participation could be perceived in different ways depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. Basically it means the participation of the individual as a citizen or a group in the planning process. It is *essentially the democratization of the planning process*, which allows greater say and

involvement to beneficiaries of the planning system. The community should be involved in the process of formulation and implementation of proposals and policies of the physical developments of their areas. This process involves the mobilization of both men and material resources to improve the quality of their environment. This process is described by Oyesiku (1998) as an active process in which the person in question takes part in the contribution and implementation of decisions for the fact that the government cannot alone provide the need of the people. Oyesiku (1998) further stated that it is necessary for the community concerned to initiated plans and execute projects that are beneficial to their existence. It is only by incorporating local people in the decision making process that the decision can be tailored to the specific needs of the people (Akinmoladun and Oduwaye, 2000).

The major objectives of citizen participation can be summarized to include the need to establish good communication link with the public at the initiation of a programme so effectively that there will be no frustration at any stage of the programme formulation. The objective of citizen participation should be tailored to inform and educate the public about planning procedure in order to enable them understand the scope and limitations and to be able to select alternatives and useful policies that will be of general interest to the community. Planning problems identified through this process should be jointly prioritised.

NATURE OF PHYSICAL PLANNING PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA

Physical planning generally referred to as town planning is the act of controlling the use of land and the character of buildings and communication routes so as to achieve economy secure convenience and beauty (Keeble, 1956). This definition can be extended to include the concern of the state i.e. government through intervention in physical and environmental development during which government agencies regulate the physical growth and change, resolve conflict of interest in land use, secure and maintain a continuous improvement of the environment. Thus, physical planning is something that presents itself in an answer to environmental problems. It involves the

reconciliation of socio-economic aims of public and private enterprise. Planning is therefore directed to the future, learning from the past and typically trying to preserve its strengths and opportunities (Alden and Morgan, 1974).

It is therefore desirable to state the nature of problem in our contemporary settlements which physical planning strives to resolve. This will provide the background on which the role of planning in attempts to solve these problems can be highlighted.

Environmental planning and management is now a basic requirement for survival as man advances technologically so does his ability to destroy his environment increases (Tandy, 1988). The destruction of the environment most often occurs during attempts to achieve development objectives such as provisions of housing and infrastructures. This trend can be arrested and the environment made acceptable by the people through sound land use planning and management with the integration of users participations in the decision making process. The nature of contemporary environmental problems varies in physical, socio-economic, cultural, legal and administrative dimensions. Physically such problems include ecological, lack of infrastructure, and lack of adequate open-space management. In terms of socio-economic and cultural dimension, they include low income, illiteracy, lack of public enlightenment and citizen participation in the physical planning process. Legal and administrative problems include general absence of laws on environmental development standards and where such laws exist the full implementation are confronted with the problem of non-availability of appropriate and adequate manpower, coordination, lack of political will and absence of multi-disciplinary approach to physical planning administration in Nigeria. There also exist areas of conflicts and overlaps in the administrative framework of planning agencies especially between government agencies and between different levels of government. It is in the light of the general nature of planning problems highlighted above of which citizen participation is one that this paper discussed the present level of citizen participation in the planning process in Nigeria. This is discussed based on the situation from pre-colonial period to the present time.

THE PLACE AND ROLES OF PHYSICAL PLANNING IN ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING IN NIGERIA: HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

Prior to colonial administration, before 1854, land-use administration in Nigeria was vested in natural rulers or community heads in different part of the community. They are the Obis, Obas, and Emirs in the east, west, and northern part of the country, respectively. They had the legal status of trustee beneficiary on land. They had the power to allocate, re-allocate and supervise land use (Olomola, 1999). With the arrival of colonial government in 1854, Nigeria experienced tremendous changes in her land use system (Oduwaye, 1998). Though the influence of the British on Nigeria land use system were improvements on what existed before colonization, most of the approaches might have been motivated by their own selfish desires. A prominent example was the racial segregation and dual urban structure system imposed on Nigeria urban centers though the 1902 European Reservations Ordinance in which the residential areas of the Europeans were separated from the Nigeria residential areas with the former serviced with better infrastructure and landscape. With the advent of the colonial administration, the traditional and development systems declined drastically especially in urban areas. Up of the end of the Second World War, senior civil servants under the Health Boards carried out urban development in Nigeria. This commenced with the promulgation of the 1908 Public Health Ordinance. During the colonial period up to 1946, the control of land use was fundamentally the function of government with no power given to the citizen, traditional rulers, and community leaders. The promulgation of the 1946 Nigeria Town and Country Planning Ordinance made provision for the planning improvement and development of different parts of the country through the use of planning schemes. The 1946 ordinance remained the most comprehensive law for more than two decades after independence in 1960. Sections 16 of law made little provision for preparation and publication of notice on any scheme, through government gazettes and such publicity as the planning authority may consider necessary. The authority shall also within one month after publication of such notice if practicable cause to be brought to the notice of every owner of property affected by any scheme

the fact that his property is affected and require him if he wishes to object to the scheme within six weeks. The objector or his agent to substantiate his view. This showed some degree of citizen participation in the planning process contrary to the pre-1946 era.

After independence in 1960 various regional governments in Nigeria retained the 1946 Town and Country Planning Ordinance as Town and Country Planning Law: chapter 123 of the laws of Western Nigeria 1959, chapter 130 of the Northern Nigeria and chapter 155 of the laws of Eastern Nigeria. Later many states promulgated planning regulations of which the 1986 Lagos State building planning regulations in one. The promulgation of "*The Nigeria Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree No. 88*" 1992 is the only comprehensive planning law covering the whole country after the 1946 ordinance. The 1992 planning law outlined the roles of different levels of government, type of physical development plans, development control mechanism, land up-grading among others. Unlike the previous laws the 1992 law established the framework for broad based multi-disciplinary approach and opportunities for citizen participation in the planning process. To enhance multi-disciplinary input in physical development section 5 of the law states that for the purpose of the initiation, preparation and implementation of the national physical development plans, the Federal, State and Local Planning Agencies, shall establish and maintain respectively National Urban and Regional Commission, a state Urban and Regional Planning Board in each state and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and a Local Planning Authority in each Local Government Area. The Agency shall at Federal level comprise of the following members: a chairman who shall be a Town Planner, one representative of each of the following who shall be a registered members of the relevant professional bodies i.e. Town Planning, Architecture, Land Surveying, Law and Estate Surveying. In addition to the professionals, one representative of each of the following shall be members: Ministry of Works and Housing, Agriculture, Water Resources, Rural Development, Finance, Commerce, Tourism, Power and Steel, Transport and Communication. Also the following agencies will have their representatives as members: National Electric Power Authority, Nigerian

Telecommunication Plc, one representative of Nigerian Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Mines and Agriculture, 10 representatives of the State of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory and an Executive Director as Town Planner appointed by the commission who shall be the chief executive of the commission.

At the state and local government level the only major differences in the structure of membership of the planning board and authority is that instead of 10 representatives at the federal level, at the state level this is replaced with 5 representatives from the local government in the state in rotation, for the state planning board and not more than 5 representatives of the wards in the local government area, for the Local Planning Authority.

Section 13 of the 1992 law in the statement of procedure for preparation of national physical development plans made provision for public involvement in which it stated that the commission shall during the preparation of the national development plan call for the submission from all relevant government organizations, non-governmental organizations and interested members of the public whose contributions will serve as part of the input towards the preparation of a draft plan. Section 15 also allow any member of the public, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations and professionals bodies during the exhibition of the draft plan to submit to the commission in written statement of their objections to anything appearing in the plan stating the nature and reason for the objections and suggest alteration and amendment to be made to remove the objection. The commission is mandated by section 15 (2) of the law to acknowledge receipt of any objection in writing. All this shows the extent of citizen participating efforts in the planning process in Nigeria. The place of public participation is further enhanced in the Nigeria Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Decree No. 86, 1992 section 7 which stated that before the EIA agency i.e. Federal Environment Production Agency or her state equivalent gives a decision on an activity to which an EIA has been produced the agency shall give opportunity to government agencies, members of the public, efforts in any relevant discipline and interest group to make comments on EIA of the activity.

From the discussion above it can be

concluded that substantial efforts has been made by government in enhancing the involvement of the public in the planning process. What is presently lacking is public awareness of the existence of these opportunities and the inability of the public to know how to make use of such opportunities. Therefore among critical issues required if the existing gap is to be bridged are identified here. This paper thus submit that the issue of public enlightenment, appropriate capability building and method to be used by those who are to assist the public in the presentation of their views just like the lawyer and the doctors will assist the justice seekers and medically sick in solving their problems are the major problems. It is on this premise that this paper suggests the need for appropriate roles for environmental professionals, improvement of environmental journalism, and education, encouragement and integration of the community leaders and opinion leaders in the planning process, need to encourage advocacy planning practice and general improvement of the urban management systems through the involvement of the financial sector such as the banking and insurance sectors, the business community, industrialist and privatization of key infrastructural sectors.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to benefit from the laudable efforts of governments through the various existing laws put in place to guide planners towards sustainable environmental development in general and enhancement of citizen participation in particular this paper suggest the following in order to fill the existing gap between available legal framework and appreciable citizen participation in the physical planning process in Nigeria. There is need for re-examination of environmental journalism education, active participation of community leaders, planning advocacy practice and appropriate urban management strategies in Nigeria.

The environmental professional strategic intelligence requires sound knowledge of the business environment in which they operate. Professionals should be able to anticipate change and design appropriately either in public agencies or private firms. Alliance between private-firms or between public-private sectors may be required and this is important for

professionals. There is need for creative planning by professionals whereby foreword planning involving holistic views will be adopted rather than the present piecemeal and sectoral planning approach which most often create embarrassing side effects. The recent case of private sector participation in waste management in Lagos State and the collapse of the primary mortgage institutions should be considered as unfair professional negligence by environmental professionals in Nigeria. Relevant professional bodies whose scopes of competence are in these areas should be called by the public to give account of efforts made by them to tackle these problems.

The stakeholders in environmental development consist of relevant professionals, residents, and entrepreneurs. All stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in the process of planning. To achieve this, planners should be ready to stimulate, communicate, and educate these stakeholders. This should be the consultative role of not only the town planners but also the architects, lawyers, surveyors among core professionals involved in environmental management. To win the support of the busy entrepreneurs the information dissemination system should be of high degree of transparency and un-ambiguity. In this process of multi-background participation for example the businessman should be encouraged to offer part time services at either board or committee levels, to use their experience in order to enrich the physical environment. The business sector has the financial and corporate resources which it can deploy to support local public sector officials who are involved in the initiation of research on environmental problems such as traffic congestion, slum upgrading, water supply, amongst others in neighborhoods where they operate. The industrial sector could sponsor environmental related programmes on television, radio and the print media. This will be a means of educating the public on their roles and available opportunities amongst others in environmental planning in Nigeria.

Environmental journalism should be given a pride of place. This is more important on the training of professional journalist especially at postgraduate levels. This will improve the quality of presentation, which will be an improvement on the present laudable efforts of this sub-sector of Nigeria journalism. The contents of

environmental planning studies in architecture and town planning does not indicate explicitly the place of citizen participation in the planning process. This should be made a compulsory core course on its own that must be offered and passed before graduation at first degree and diploma levels. Also important is the need to introduce environmental planning education in primary, secondary and at post secondary levels as a compulsory general studies course. This was earlier emphasized by Oduwaye (1998) that children will accept their role in identifying solutions to environmental problems, thus influencing development as they are highly vulnerable.

The concept of advocacy in planning should be given consideration especially through the formation of partnership by multidisciplinary groups such as the town-planners, architects, surveyors and the lawyers coming together to form environmental advocate groups. This could also be done in form of non-governmental associations. Among the major merits of the advocacy-planning concept are availability of richer range of plans, exposing government planners to expert criticism, aiding the disadvantaged, education of the client and the government on planning (Eduputa, 1998). The politicians should be encourage by advocate groups as the former could serve as invaluable planning agent because they form the bulk of representatives of the community at all levels of government decision making. Thus they are vital tools as advisers and presenters of planning information. Advocacy groups should also organize talk-shops with interest groups such as market women, drivers union, on how to contribute to make the environment livable for all.

There is need to put in place appropriate land use management and planning systems. Towards this there is need to integrate the efforts of theorist, government officials and private practitioners. These sectors will require a meeting point to exchange ideas. The thinkers whose theories are providing the intellectual brain for environmental planning and the investors whose investment affect and propel development should share ideas. This can be extended to the need for appropriate capacity building. The process of capacity building should involve human resource development in the area of urban resource development and institutional

development in the area of urban governance, integrated environmental planning and management, awareness and involvement of local communities, promoting partnerships, capacity building of actors, stakeholders and replication of best practices. To make planning proposal acceptable to the people and carry them along it should be recognized that the environment are structurally different and cannot accommodate standardized formula or rigid methodologies. To manage the diverse physical geographic, socio-economic, cultural and political factors, necessitate pragmatic approaches. Therefore there is need for appropriate technological choices of strategies. Affordability, users friendliness, ease of operation and maintenance of services should be considered when undertaking technology, choice of infrastructure and services. This call for shifting from generalities into specific plans based on consumers needs and carrying capacity of the consumers and environmental resources. Innovative policies and the cultural environment should be explored. To achieve this, opportunities should be given to the planning process for cooperation and active participation of a variety stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

To achieve any meaningful and effective environmental planning in Nigeria there is need for people oriented and community involvement as the centerpiece of planning. The twenty-first century environment will be highly dynamic in all facets of human endeavors. This means that all agencies and professionals involved will have to improve and increase the scope of their knowledge. Therefore there is need to search for

wider horizons in a systems approach manners that will assist in the process of environmental planning. No matter the direction and complication that will arise, human being must always be the center piece and this is why citizen participation will also remain a recurrent decimal in environmental planning.

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