

Chapter 5

Desired and Achieved Urbanisation in Africa: In Search of Appropriate Tooling for a Sustainable Transformation

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ABSTRACT

The chapter aims to make a nuanced contribution in plugging out the mentioned gaps using human (skilled, managerial, etc.) and material (digital technology, financial, etc.) resources available or developable locally with or without global aid support system. The study is a case study based and uses examples of Cape Town, Abuja, Harare, Nairobi, Cairo and Kinshasa, these being examples of cities where plans and visions have been or are being put in place to ensure that urbanisation is a process that emerges on strategically laid out platform. Nevertheless, achieving that is a continuous struggle because diverging forces are also at play in these cities. The chapter recommends capacity building and professionalization of the conduct of business by these authorities to ensure sustainable urbanisation. It also argues for a planning thought that makes the optimal mix of both local and international resources towards achieving sustainable urbanisation in the various cities of Africa.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This study emanates from a realisation that, while a good number of African local authorities are trying to formulate grandiose plans that reflect standards from the Global North, most are frustrated as their efforts are being strained by rapid urbanisation. The burdensome rapid rural-urban movements are triggering both inner city decay and increased informalisation of the city margins. That way, the dreamt picture of the city gets soiled and disturbed. The situation is usually worsened by the human factor decay; the personnel needed in sanitising the obtaining state of affairs are caught in malpractices like land corruption and abuse of public resources meant bring the desired transformation. In some nations, local financial resources are negatively affected by poor revenue collections and also political abuse. While the use of urban monitoring systems through earth observation and related tools may be desirable, the local authorities are not in a position to acquire such equipment. Where they have the equipment, the soft skills to operate it may not be readily available. Apart from faulty capacity building in those areas, municipalities suffer the problem of high labour turnover as the trained employees leave for ‘greener pastures.’ Moreso, planning for urbanisation is often disturbed by the politics of patronage whereby communities are left prey to politicians who in most cases disturb the local and master planning processes for their personal benefits.

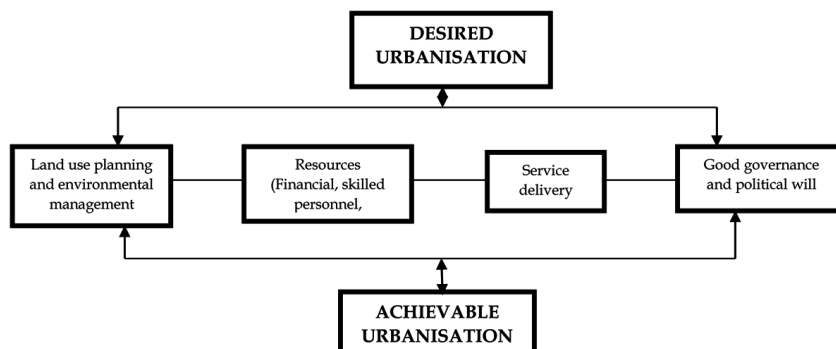
THE ANALYTICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The desired urbanisation is likened to sustainable urbanisation which epitomises the hallmark of contemporary urbanisation. However, this remains utopia given that a multiplicity of challenges faced ultimately stifle the success of sustainable urbanisation in Africa; the achievable urbanisation contradicts what is desired. The conceptual framework in Figure 1 attempts to explain the situation that emerges in relation to the desired and achievable urbanisation in Africa.

The desired urbanisation remains utopia for most African countries considering that there are various issues that stifle the achievement of this desired urbanisation. The issues include, poor governance, lack of human, technical and financial resources, poor urban or landuse planning and inadequate infrastructure. Africa lags behind in terms of competent human resources, financial resources to champion urban

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors' Creation (2016)



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