

## Chapter 2

# Points of Departure and Major Arguments

**Abstract** The epistemologies of imperial mindset, imperial space economy and imperial cities are critical points of departure in determining the way forward for planning in Africa. The revision of these epistemologies, entrenched under the growing influence of informality, is assumed to be the challenge ahead of planning intervention in Africa. In search of an appropriate planning perspective, this work assumes that form-based planning attributes are not significantly resilient in planning within spatial systems in Africa. Although contrary to current trend, the work argues that in so far as a new spatial planning perspective is without the form element it lacks merit to initiate a theoretical evolution in spatial planning. As such it further argues that formal expertise knowledge should take precedence over informal expertise knowledge in planning. These dispositions point to the need to revisit neoliberalism as development ideology and thinking instrument for planning in Africa.

**Keywords** Epistemologies • Imperial • Formal planning • Neoliberalism • Spatial planning • Institutionalism • Africa

### 2.1 Points of Departure

The points of departure identified for this work are rooted in the epistemological foundations of imperialism found in Africa. These epistemologies are scattered in four of the six historical systems discerned in African civilization. The historical systems are: the period prior to tenth century when medieval African Kingdoms flourished; between tenth century and fifteenth century, the mercantilist period marked by the Trans-Saharan Trade; between fifteenth century and mid-nineteenth century, the slave trade period; between mid-nineteenth century and 1950, the capitalist colonial period; between 1950s and 1980s, the independence decade and partial Keynesian period; and from 1980s until now, the neoliberal period. The mercantilist period marked the watershed for imperialism in Africa. As imperialism

transited along the historic systems it built support structures that are manifest in spatial systems and planning approaches.

By mid-fifteenth century in the mercantilist period the notion of imperialism as private commerce was sworn following contact with European merchants. Imperialism of commerce consists of a trading base, a fort or a 'factory', often with a small defensive perimeter (Hawksley 2004: 18). The purpose of imperialism by private commerce is profit. The Europeans in their trade relations sort for control and trade monopolies. This followed strategic change of development ideology to classical liberalism, which redefined trade relations in favour of European mercantilism. The change caused fundamental changes in the system of base of traditional African cities. The first phase of imperial space economy developed by accretion within this period.

The capitalist colonial period, which ensued mid-nineteenth century, witnessed the change to material capitalism in which neo-mercantilism served as trade strategy to consolidate European mercantilism. Imperialism as commerce remained. The colonial system restructured peasant agriculture, introduced new administrative systems, and changed the pattern of urbanization with the incidence of imperial colonial towns (Rakodi 1997). In the process, the integrated cosmology of traditional Africa was replaced with single-minded utilitarian objectives which produced utilitarian designs for cities in Africa. The design options bulldozed cultural symbols, behaviour and beliefs that determined the base of traditional African cities. Cities in Africa became hybrids, an inevitable product of intervening culture and policy formulation hegemony from abroad. These events marked the second phase in the development of imperial space economy. At this time formal planning was introduced to deliver colonial interest in the use of space and facilitate the layout of infrastructure to enhance extraction and exploitative trade relations.

The independence decade (1950–1960) within the immediate post-colonial period witnessed transition in the manifestation of imperialism. Imperialism drops physical coercion in favour of social management to deliver structured coercion of governmentality. Imperialism of administration interprets this system in which the emerging ruling class at independence continued acting the script already written by the departing colonizers (Majekodunmi and Adejuwon 2012: 197). The changes in the traditional system of base vis-à-vis culture, value system and worldview remained valid and resilient to reversion. Shortly, after the independence decade the approach of neoliberalism as development ideology and economic orthodoxy engineered the criticisms of formal master planning to pave way for participatory planning. Participatory planning is all about democratizing planning decisions under the guise of enhancing plan implementation when indeed it facilitates exploitative partnerships. It is epitomized in neoliberal planning theory.

The era of neoliberalism and neoliberal planning theory crystalized in the 1980s and since then it has endeavoured precariously to guide development. So far the main points of departure in this period are the incidence of informality in the context of imperialism as international administration. The doctrine of informality impacts the economy, planning and spatial systems. Thus, informal economic sector, informality in planning and the informalization of cities gained momentum.

The spatial distortion this situation creates in the economic landscape of the urban regions is unprecedented.

The epistemologies of imperial mindset, imperial space economy and imperial cities are all critical points of departure that demand attention. This is because the resultant dominantly introverted urbanization and the informal and extroverted urban economy seriously challenge growth and productivity in African countries. The peculiar pattern of growth indicates positive GDP growth amidst stagnant or negative productivity measured in declining per capita GDP, growing poverty, debilitating unemployment and high Gini coefficients. This is typical in Nigeria it and South Africa and perhaps to a lesser extent in Tanzania and perhaps Egypt.

## 2.2 Assumptions

Spatial planning instruments that contend for relevance in redressing distortions in the structure of urban regions and reverse the extroversion identified in the development of space economy in Africa are arranged into two categories, namely form-based (formal) and non-form-based (pragmatic) planning instruments.

For purposes of clarity, form-based instruments operate with the principles of form and function in planning for land use interventions. Hence upholds planning rationality as determinant for integrated development of the urban region. On the other hand, non-form-based planning instruments dwell on informality, which disregards planning rationality in principle. It upholds market forces as a determinant factor for land use intervention. The two schools of thought represent alternative approaches to spatial planning for integrated development of space economy. Both approaches pursue economic growth but it is argued that the former does so in the context of shaping the urban region in the spatio-physical sense for nation-building, unlike the latter which does so strictly in the economic sense for private profitability.

Hitherto the space economy—that is the development of the urban region—in Africa has been fraught with sprawl and disconnects responsible for urban productivity decline and more so in the context of a dependent capitalism underpinned by the consumer economy. The revision of these attributes, entrenched under the growing influence of informality, is assumed to be the challenge ahead of planning intervention in Africa. Essentially, planning interventions should rework the space economy and make it compatible with introverted economic growth intended to relieve Africa from dependent capitalism. Delivering on this milestone(s) is assumed to be the primary function of the planning approach being targeted. In other words, the planning approach, in practical terms, will deliver an integrated development of the urban region in spatio-physical terms for enhanced productivity in Africa.

This work assumes that form-based planning attributes are not significantly resilient in planning within spatial systems in Africa.

## 2.3 Major Arguments

The African development surface is known to manifest distortions that are responsible for the urban productivity decline in the region. Indeed, these distortions, according to Hicks (1998) leave the legacy of isolated urban hierarchies with limited linkages in the urban region mainly in the form of urban-rural dichotomy and fragmentation of the private sector ‘with extroverted modern sector’ sparsely ‘related with the local economy’. Therefore, the global objective of development action for Africa is invariably focused on integrated regional development. Viewed from the planning perspective this objective focuses on spatial integration underpinned by territorial planning.

The global objective of integrated regional development is connected with sourcing enhanced productivity through the introversion of the economies of urban Africa. Succinctly put, the objective indicates an African renaissance. Efforts towards realizing the global objective have led to new partnerships in African development (NEPAD) initiatives with its political and economic reforms. This provides a compelling opportunity to consider appropriate spatial paradigms that will translate the global objective into space. The visionary process required to theorize the paradigm for the spatial planning intervention is seen to be in dilemma due to paradigm shifts in planning linked with the incidence of neoliberal planning.

In spite of the predating status of neoliberal planning perspective, it is clear from literature that the master planning paradigm remains resilient. In practical terms, process-oriented planning mainstreamed in the visioning process for NEPAD implementation, is upheld against formal planning perspectives upheld in national development planning. The resilience of formal planning paradigm preoccupies this work. Thus, applying this knowledge base to determine an appropriate planning paradigm in which participation is mainstreamed for the delivery of spatial regional integration within spatial systems in Africa represents the core problem of this work.

### 2.3.1 *Theoretical Perspective*

The cyclical evolution noticed in the development of planning theory from classic-rational–neo-classic, which is in tandem with the evolution from pre-modern, modern and post-modern periods in planning epistemology, is not a coincidence. Equally illuminating is the synchronizing evolution of urban design in planning represented by the changing orientation of urbanism from old urbanism—traditional urbanism—new urbanism. All three categories of evolutions are driven by new facts generated either through environmental determinism or humanistic interventionist activities or epistemologies of imperialism. The combination of neoclassical planning theory and new-urbanism acting in the post-modern period in planning provides a lead to the contemporary emphasis on the use of space in spatial

planning. Given their provisions the essence of planning without interferences from new perspectives such as neoliberal planning remains within the realm of morphology, hence the focus on the city.

Spatial planning ontologically is form-based and the integrity of planning rationality rests on this premise without prejudice to pluralism which is the hallmark of new perspectives in planning. Spatial planning remains an art and a science with the explicit aim to manage the use of space. This work argues that in so far as a new spatial planning perspective is without the form element, it lacks merit to initiate a theoretical evolution in spatial planning. Otherwise sustainable urbanism would have lost impetus under pressure from neoliberal planning. The hard reality of the limited role of new perspectives in driving evolution in spatial planning dawned on the use of neoliberal planning in Africa. The new planning perspectives do not have the integrative capacity to deal with the creative planning requirement of sustainable urban development. However, an interface could be sought that does not usurp the principles of form and function in spatial planning and this is where the African region misses the mark, unlike counter-part regions in the global north. In all of their commitment to neoliberal planning it is understood in these regions that form and function cannot be compromised hence the complementary role of urbanism.

It is noteworthy at this juncture that a participatory process is not necessarily what makes neoliberal planning a new perspective in planning. It is indeed a change in value systems associated with liberalization in global economy and planning outlook that is increasingly project-oriented and existential and the commitment to investigate development in a deregulated spatial planning context which identifies it as a new perspective. Participatory process plays a facilitating role and this perhaps explains the tango of neoliberal planning with the substrate of informality. On second thoughts, neoliberal planning is all about access to the control of space economy.

Informality is somehow connected with new perspectives in planning, hence the expression *informal planning*. Theoretically speaking, informal planning is an aberration amounting to parallel planning systems, although it could seek legitimacy on account of planning practised during the popular design tradition in the earlier segment of the pre-modernist planning period. Indeed, spatial planning of the earlier epoch, although practised in informal circumstances, was nevertheless orthodox spatial planning. The present dispensation argues that informality could be accommodated; however, as hypothetical design simulation(s). The simulations will be based on educated assumptions led by formal expertise/knowledge in planning and used as planning instrument for enhancing participation at the inception of spatial planning intervention. In this way planning principles are not compromised yet participation is not impaired.

Also, making growth in the context of territorial development theoretically compelling for spatial planning should inform new perspectives in spatial planning theory for the African region. Such developmental or indeed applied planning theory will drive the appropriate spatial paradigm to redress the distortions in the peculiar context of Africa's development surface.

### 2.3.2 *Analytical Perspective*

The quiet revolution in planning theory identified in the 1980s revolved around the determination of participatory process in planning. The primary argument leaned on poor plan implementation as rationale for change. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the progression of the argument led to the consideration of informality in planning. This was short-lived thus paving way for the gradual shift of emphasis to conceptual issues such as spatial justice and the resilient cities concepts. The latest entry is new regionalism. The problem with the arguments behind these concepts is that it is not clear if the concepts do not bear neo-imperial plot as hidden agenda.

Regarding poor plan implementation, the problem is instead related to sharp practices in funding mechanisms the circumvention of which indeed elicits the need for participation. *Ab initio* participation is rooted in a breakdown of trust in the manipulative planning system that is commonplace in Africa and which in technical terms is participatory in nature. Also participatory process is known to facilitate imperialism as international administration. It renders planning vulnerable to market force and in the process allows funding mechanisms to play a systemic role in plan preparation and implementation. This explains the preference for project planning.

Plan preparation which is becoming increasingly desktop is bedevilled by mediocrity and complicated by quackery and charlatanism. These vices in planning highlight the situation when untrained personnel engage in taking planning decisions. The interactive participation advocated in neoliberal planning tends to provide legitimization for this syndrome. Continued liberalization of planning decisions is likely to be counter-productive in modelling the urban region and shaping the city as it is the case with the application of IDP/SDF in South Africa. These design requirements are technical issues that demand a lot more than political analysis. Regardless the argument that the availability of reliable formal expertise knowledge could be limited in some African countries such as the DRC, Angola, Ethiopia, etc., this work argues that formal expertise knowledge should take precedence over informal expertise knowledge in planning. Informal expertise/knowledge should play a facilitating role in principle, on the basis of which an appropriate interface will be found for political and technical analysis in planning.

The argument in favour of classic participatory formal planning is mindful of the repressive attitude towards it and the high nuisance value of this attitude, which is responsible for undermining formal master planning. The argument builds on the momentum of the new master planning to uphold visionary planning in preference to the current vogue of neoliberal existential planning.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Given these epistemological points of departure, the choice of the best line of action presents serious challenges because significant structural changes are required to rework the status quo. In the first instance, there is a need to revisit neoliberalism as development ideology and thinking instrument for planning in Africa. Also critical is the need to condition the mission of cities to address the global objective of African renaissance. Priority action lies in conditioning the theoretical framework for spatial planning in Africa and synchronize it with the fundamentals of new formal planning, which mainstreams participation. It is against this backdrop that a spatial development paradigm for Africa will be formulated. The planning paradigm formulation presumably will follow a process that is based on new facts driven either by environmental determinism or by humanistic interventionist activities. In essence, the work is not chasing a new perspective rather in the light of new facts it is theorizing an alternative paradigm that will deliver African renaissance.

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