

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS PHYSICAL PLANNING IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF TALATA MAFARA, ZAMFARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Land has been the major pivot of physical planning and development in Nigeria and virtually the entire world, and physical planners as the major promoters of development. Besides, numerous questions are being raised by the public regarding the status and credibility of physical planning. Thus, the aim of this paper is to examine the level of public awareness and perception on physical planning profession and practices and it's implication on the effectiveness or otherwise. For this purpose, systematic random sampling was implored in sample choice and questionnaire administration to the selected samples, interviews were conducted with some officials of planning authority. Relevant literatures were consulted also. The collated data was analysed. It reveals from the study that, most of the public are short of what town/physical planning is all about; in terms of its rules, laws and activities which seems to hinder the effectiveness of the profession and its practice. To achieve effective planning practice in the study area, the study recommends the need for frequent public enlightenment Programmes on TV channels, Radio and print medias by Government, NGO's and professional bodies of Planning. It also recommends the recruitment of more staff, organized public lectures, provision of more surveillance vehicles and adequate funding. Planning bodies should also advocate zero tolerance to corruption and planners should stick firmly to their code of conducts.

Keywords: Public, Awareness and Perception, Physical Planning laws, Talata Mafara

INTRODUCTION

Over the years there has been a general understanding on what planning is in many text and professional articles written on planning, however, a close look at these works and the dynamic nature of the profession show the difficulty in arriving at an agreed-upon operational definition. Perhaps one of the foremost views is express by Keeble (1969) that physical planning as an activity concerned with the spatial ordering of land use both in the rural and urban settings for the purpose of creating functionally efficient and aesthetically pleasing physical environment for living, working, circulation and recreation. This view is typical to pre-mid 20th century view of urban planning but it is still a very common perspective of physical planners in developing countries, that is an architectural oriented perspective that emphasizes the static nature of environment ignoring the dynamics of the town and surrounding (rural) environment, Kayode O. (2014). Town and country planning is a dynamic professional activity that demands the experts in the field to be globally and locally in tune with the evolving innovative and creative practices as a result of the dictates of changing social and economic development, basically the urbanization problems (Thomas, et al 2015). The 20th century has witness remarkable urbanization of the world population which is inescapable and irreversible, making it necessary and fundamental for policy makers to adopt technologies such as Remote Sensing, Global Positioning System and Geographic Information System as imperative for urban planning (Uttarwar,2010, Dantanin et al, 2014). Professional in the built environment should be able to anticipate change appropriately as sound environmental planning is generally in the interest of the society. Thus, public must be carried along through intensive participation as provided in the environmental physical planning rules and regulations, but this is not seen to be (Olayede et al, 2010). Which resulted to the fact that public are left unaware of physical planning activities and its rules. Community participation should be a prerequisite in planning, for example, by carrying out public campaigns towards positive and constructive approach on all planning insures (Dantani et al, 2014). Thomas et al, (2015), assert that, it is a common observation by both professional and non professional that, town and country planning practice has fallen short of public and private sector anticipations in directing physical development in most urban settlements. The assertion was based on the idea of haphazard physical development emanating from illegal developments due to irregular surveillance by the development unit. As establish by Leke, O. (), as part of

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ways to curb illegal development, Planning officers are expected to carry out monitoring of development, but in so doing, planning officers are in several occasions exposed to attack on the field, because planning acts are instructive in nature and many developers consider physical planning activities as means of limiting their right to construct any type of development of their choice. Thus, indicated that, public have wrong notion about the profession as they are not enlighten on its activities.

Furthermore, town planning practice in developed and developing countries might be assumed to be of the same standards and norms. Unfortunately this is not the case. There are variance and diversities. The practice of town planning in developing countries south of the Sahara is characterized by political and cultural factors that influence decision making and choices (Thomos KT,2015). Nigeria in particular, town planning has seriously being affected by the political and governance system. It is common knowledge that, the general public is quick in pointing fingers at town planners accusing them for not being professionally affective and competent in performing their civic responsibility. It is in line with this therefore, the UN Habitat (2009) recognized the fundamental review of the urban planning profession to see if it was able to play a role in addressing issues in rapidly growing and poor cities in the developing countries (Watson, 2009).

The paper therefore, focused on what has gone wrong with the practice of town planning profession in Nigeria and what is the way forward to restore the integrity and credibility of the profession as respected and significant profession that could be trusted in shaping the socio-economic and physical development of the public now and in the future.

METHODOLOGY

For this purpose, the approach adopted in carrying out this study to address this issue is to look at the history of the profession in Nigeria, as guide for what the profession is and possible threat it face since then (which may be the resultant factor of the public negative perception). Secondly, a brief account of town planning activities in Zamfara state as well as the hitherto problems encountered and how they contribute to the failure of the profession to be recognized and appreciated by the public which in turn caused adverse effects to our urban settlements. Finally, a survey was carried out in the study area to acquire information on how the

public perceived town Planning. The data acquired was presented and also analyzed.

STUDY AREA

Talata Mafara is a Local Government Area in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Its headquarter is Talata Mafara, about 15km from the Bakalori Dam on the Sokoto River, with 12 34 00N 6 04 00E/12.56667N 6.06667E as coordinates. The town lies on the southern edge of the major irrigation project fed by the dam. It has an area of 1,430km² and a population of about 215,178 at the 2006 census. It is one of ancient town existing since before the Jihad of Shehu Usumanu Danfodio. It is located on latitude 13 38E and longitude 11 56N. It share boarder with Bakura by the West, Maradun by the East, Anka by the South and Bakura in the North; all Local Governments in Zamfara state. Talata Mafara is the economic heart of Bakura and Maradun which were curve out from it. Some of the economic activities taking place include farming, retailing, fishing, trading, bakery, transportation etc. Among all, farming is the major economic activity in the area.

Town Planning in Zamfara State

Physical planning in Zamfara state dated back to the creation of the state in 1996. Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning is the ministry vested with the responsibilities of physical planning at the creation of state which led to the establishment Zamfara Urban and Regional Planning Board and Zonal Offices in Four local government head quarters, namely; Gusau, Talata Mafara, Kaura Namoda and Gummi.

All the Fourteen (14) local governments councils were declared as urban centers as it is in the Zamfara Urban and Regional Planning Board. The personnel were weak in terms of number and qualification to hand the planning activities since then to date. This also followed by the government in ability to provide necessary facilities and training which incapacitated the already weak planners in the state.

This cannot go without mentioning some of the achievements recoded which include the:

1. Provision of enabling laws for the urban board, especially on the issues related to planning permission, developments and development control,

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2. Preparation of Gusau master plan by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

3. The review of the 2010 Master Plan by

Besides, Talata Mafara zonal town planning office vested with physical planning responsibilities is located in Talata Mafara, and takes care of Bakura, Maradun and Talata Mafara, itself. It was established in 1996, immediately after the creation of Zamfara State. It has Three (3) departments, namely;

- 1) Town Planning
- 2) Estate/Lands
- 3) Survey/Cartography

Since then, it has been the responsibility of this office to initiate and monitor developmental activities in this zone as enshrined in Zamfara State Urban and regional planning gazette. Its area of jurisdiction covers Talata Mafara, Maradun and Bakura with 16km and 8km radius respectively from the center of the town.

History of Town Planning in Nigeria

Traditional Nigeria settlements are structured according to the local customs and practices, also according to the agrarian nature of the economy, and the existing mode of transportation. In the traditional setting, natural rulers or community heads like Oba, Obi, Obong or Emir are in charge of communal lands while family heads are in charge of family land. One could say that their legal status is that of trustee-beneficiary who can allocate, re-allocate and supervise land use. In effect, traditional Nigeria settlements are established around palaces of traditional rulers, thus ensuring efficient communal interaction and reducing cost of transportation. The development and control of the total environment are the joint responsibility of the entire community (Omole et al, 2012). Ebenzer, (1993), asserts that, the (then) administrators did not readily establish institutional machinery, so that wards in the traditional northern towns such as Kano, Zaria were simply urban villages to the extent that it was difficult to distinguish between what was rural and what was urban. Similarly administrators were indecisive about guiding and controlling land development within the urban areas. The consequence was that, as the traditional towns started to grow larger due to migrants or native foreigners from different parts of the country, the new arrivals were allocated cantonments outside the traditional core where they could be

separated from the local population. The cantonment were known as Sabon Gari areas. The policy of separateness stemmed from the Land and Native Rights Ordinance, initiated in 1910 by the British colonial governor. Therefore, the migrant saw themselves as different and non-permanent city dwellers without allegiance to the (city) local laws, customs and orderly planning of the cities were not willing and adequately observed.

Ebenzer (1993). also argue that, urban development and planning especially the provision of infrastructure, have always been disproportionately committed in favour of European Reserved Areas. In Nigeria, even now cities have a core area quite distinct from the European quarters and peripheral migrants areas. This dual standard for the rich and poor has undoubtedly cause problems for the public to assimilate and understand what planning is all about.

Another issue here is that, the Nigerian Town and Country Ordinance, No.4, of 1946 was directly based on the out molded planning concept of the United Kingdom. Therefore, since 1946 the planning authorities in most states except Lagos, has concentrated on building control and not city planning which normally deals with urban infrastructures and services provision, growth management, zoning, subdivision regulations, urban design and economic development among others. Hence, restricting the public from panoramic views of the concept of physical planning. Before political independence in 1960, the institution of town and country planning was very weak, largely unorganized, with limited resources, and often confused about its mission towards overall national development and modernization (Ebenzer, 1993).

At the independence, the 1946 ordinance was retained as the town and country planning law in the country (Leke, 2010). Under the provision of the ordinance Native Authorities were set up in the East, West and North as the administrative framework to effect orderly urban development. As the law was retained, so also were the problems of discriminatory legislations, inappropriate standards and ineffective administrative frameworks in the post-independence development plans. For instance, the first National Development Plan was largely concerned with economic growth per se. That is, the rise of per capital income, without regards to the actual living conditions of the people. The plan, like the colonial plans, neglected issues of urban development in its formulation and execution. For example, out of a total expenditure of 84 million Naira (Nigerian Currency) allocated to

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town and country planning including housings, only 39.2 million Naira was disbursed at the end of the plan period (Onibokun, 1985, Omole, 2012). However, emphasis was placed on the provision of infrastructure. Apart from the 13.4 % of the revenue allocation made to primary production, one could rightly say that as much as 66.6% of the total revenue, during the first national development plan period, was invested in the urban areas. The huge investment was however, largely uncoordinated, owing to lack of a comprehensive national urban development policy. The result was a chaotic pattern of urban development in the country (Nigerian Institute of Town Planners, 1991).

The Second National development Plan (1970-74) was launched immediately after the civil war in 1970 represented only a slight departure from the first development plan. The huge investments in the various sectors of urban development were still largely uncoordinated with only about seven per cent of the total revenue allocated went into town and country planning (including housing, water and sewage). Presumably the plan still considered town and country planning as social overheads and, as such, was not bothered with any machinery for promoting or planning an orderly urban development. The plan however, was a promising departure from the previous plans as it set aside N44 million for urban and regional planning and development. That was a modest beginning by the Federal Government for better urban management in the country. Some policy statements were made during the plan period on urban matters. There was a call for controlled dispersal of social overheads and infrastructural facilities.

The third National Development Plan (1975 – 1980) was the first to produce the most thoughtful and coherently conceptualized urban development policy, its five chapters dwell on urban and regional development, (water, sewage, housing, town and country planning, co-operatives and community development). The plan also came up with a better definition of national urban development strategy. It provided for integration of urban-rural development, urban infrastructure, correction of physical planning inadequacies, reformation of local government machinery for efficient management of towns and cities responsibility and better involvement of states in urban matters. The creation of a federal ministry responsible for housing and urban development and co-ordinating urban policy was also put in place.

The structure of the Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985) was not entirely different from the third national development plan. However, it noted the role of physical planning as a tool for achieving national development objectives. The plan further recognized that regional and environmental planning were not fully entrenched in the planning and management of the urban and rural areas, and that the machinery for physical planning and administration was rudimentary. Attempt to address this flaw was a thoughtful programme on land reform. There has been significant improvement in physical planning through the planning acts; which include the Town and Country act which was enacted to resolve major problems in the planning system, which include the replacement of development plan systems with new one. The 1974 act was enacted to establish the agency to undertake planning activities and scheme at the grass root. While, the 1977 Town and Country Planning (Amendment) act gave powers to the local planning authorities to serve stop notice. Significant legislative development that enhance the profession since independence includes; The Land Use Decree No.6 (1978) to curb land speculation and simplify the process of land acquisition by government. The most significant among the planning Laws in Nigeria is the Urban and Regional Planning Decree No.88 of 1992 which is the most comprehensive urban and regional law in Nigeria today. This decree ensures that physical planning in the country is the responsibility of all tiers of government. It provides for the establishment of agencies which include National Urban and Regional Planning Board, State Urban and Regional Planning Board and Local Planning Authorities.

While Town Planning in Nigeria for over three decades had essentially been a 'government tool', the formation of an Association of Town Planning Consultants (ATOPCON) in 1991 has been a milestone in planning practice in Nigeria. The increasing number of Town Planners in professional practice has enhanced the importance of the profession and increased awareness of the unlimited spheres of coverage of town planning practice in Nigeria. Planning practitioners are increasingly being consulted in technical, industrial, development studies, environmental impact assessment, recreational planning and tourism. Others areas that have received boast include; transportation, physical plan preparation, urban development, management and land use control (Omole, 2012).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the survey conducted, a total of 100 questionnaires were analyzed; this periscope the socio-economic characteristics of the residents. Findings revealed that 58% of respondents were below age 50years, while the remaining 42% of the respondents are 51years and above.

Table 1: Age Distribution Among the Respondents

Age classification (year)	No of respondents	Percentage
Less than-24	8	8
25-34	14	14
35-44	36	36
45-54	27	27
55plus	13	13
TOTAL	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Age as a factor, influence human maturity status and also impacts on behavioral patterns and decision making (K.D Aledere, 2012). This, age could significantly directly or indirectly effect the level of awareness and also determine the perception of an individual. It revealed from the age respondents that there are two main groups; the active and partially active population groups. The partial groups are those between the age of 24-34years while the active group fall between the age of 35 and above.

Table 2: Level of Public Awareness on Physical Planning

Public Awareness on Physical Planning	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	45	45
No	55	55
TOTAL	100	100
If yes, What is the source of information		
a) TV	10	10
b) Radio	15	15
c) Newspaper	5	5
d) Public lecture	2	2
e) Others (specify)	13	13
TOTAL	45	45

Source: Field Survey, 2015

When ask about their level of awareness about physical planning activities , it depict that, only 45% are aware of the physical planning activities with particular reference to development control, while 55% indicate their unawareness, with TV and Radio being the largest source of information among respondents with 10 and 15% respectively. This implies that, their

level of awareness on the magnitude of the activities of the physical planning is rather low, obviously because of lack/shortage of enlightenment which resulted to the myopic thought of physical planning as only concern with development control which is far beyond that . Mabogunje (1985), describe urban and regional planning as concerned with problems of regional inequalities and embraces resource development across the total national space. In addition, it is concerned with the transformation of the socio-economic structure and technology, and making them more responsive to the needs of rapid socio-economic growth in the region concerned. Moreover, urban and regional planning at supra urban level is concerned largely with correcting lopsided development among regions through redistribution of investment projects so as to achieve balanced development. But most of the people understand physical planning as development control and mere preparation of planning scheme only.

Table:3 Public Perception on Physical Planning

Public Perception on Physical Planning	No of Respondents (%)				
	A	SA	I	D	SD
a) Control Development	60	30	20	00	00
b) Land disputes settlers	13	40	12	19	11
c) Promote development	5	20	32	18	25
d) Guide the provision of social infrastructures	2	11	18	32	37
e) Promote illegal development	20	36	16	16	12
f) Deprive developers from their right	27	33	15	18	7
g) Corrupt officers	32	24	17	17	10

Source: Field Survey, 2015

It depicted from table3 the perception of the public about physical planning in the study area. And clearly manifest that, majority have wrong perception on the subject matter. This can be a contribution of a long time history of the physical planning and the accumulated problems it has been battling with since before independence to date, as well as the existing physical planning frame work. Olayede (2010) opined that, the existing physical planning frame work gives little attention to the citizen contributions to how the cities should be modeled from the inception, before developmental projects that are financed by individuals or by corporate bodies. This contributed significantly to the different perception

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they developed about the profession. Observation over the years point to the professional town planners being more under the influence of the ruling political elites as against other professionals in the built environment-compelling them to dance in accordance to the tune of each administration vis-à-vis given different perception to different people.

Hence, both the land and planning laws should be incorporated and integrated so that they could adequately supplement one another for the benefits of the society. Along this line, people should be more educated and enlightened on the use of laws in regulating, guiding and directing their landed properties for the benefits of all and sundry.

Table4: A Portray of Talata Mafara Town Planning Zonal Office

1) Year of establishment	1996
2) Areas covered	1) Talata Mafara 2) Bakura 3) Maradun
3) Activities	1). Development Control 2). Land acquisition 3). Assessment of acquired land
4) No of staff	Seven (7) 1 land Officer(Zonal Lands Officer) 1 Architect (Zonal Town Planning Officer) 1 Cartographer (Zonal Cartographic Officer) 3 Labourers 1 Messenger
5) No. of town Planners	1
6) Enlightenment program	Nil
7) Support from Non-Governmental organization	Nil
8) Mobility	Nil
9) Office facilities	Nil
10) Training Program	Nil

Source: Zonal Town Planning Office, Talata Mafara, (2015)

Table4 depicted how this organisation was incapable and incapacitated in executing their responsibilities. Looking at number of the staff and their profile, facilities and other needs, a conclusion can be drawn that, there is no way the profession can be explain to public to the extent that no single Town Planner with whatever level of qualification talk less been a Registered.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the historical evolution as presented above therefore, it is clear that, the country has surely passed through successive administrations which have contributed directly and indirectly to the development of planning laws and physical development in general. As the country develops, there is no doubt that more new dimension will come into the practice of land planning laws from which the country is bound to learn and improve on its physical development. Similarly, people play active roles in land and planning issues, particularly when it has to do with decision making and implementation by their co-operation, or resistance to changes on issues affecting them. Recognizing this fact, it is therefore the recommendation of this paper that an intensive public participation in land and planning matters should be put in place while the policy of handpicking a very few vocal members of the communities in representing and formulation planning laws and policies should be discouraged.

Furthermore, there is the need for a responsive physical planning approach whereby the existing gap between the public perception of how the environment should be modeled and the professional perception can be integrated. This can only be achieved through a public involvement in the planning process, involvement of individuals, voluntary organizations, pressure groups and community interest groups. However, the concept of participation could be perceived in different ways depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. It is essentially, the democratization of the planning process, which allows greater say and involvement by the beneficiaries. Chess(2000) and Oleyede(2010) noted that , community participation in program aimed at protecting the environment, provides low-cost sources of information to government agencies. It also increases acceptance of confidence in government decision while empowering community members on issues that affect them. This is in line with the findings of O'Raurke et al (2003) that, community involvement by local residents can result in a collective transition from victims of changes to agents of changes.

Community should be involved right from the process of formulation and implementation of proposals and policies on the physical development of their area. Allinnoladun et al (2000) are of the view that, 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. The major objectives of

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the citizens participation can thus be summarized to include the need to establish a good communication link with the public at the initial of the program effectively, so that there will be no frustration at any stage of program formulation. Furthermore, the objective of citizen participation should be tailored to inform and educate the public about the planning procedure in order to enable them to understand the scope and limitations and be able to select alternatives and useful policies that will be of the general interest to the community. And as well, problems identified through this process should be jointly handled.

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