Introduction

“The planner has become the victim of planning; his own creation has overwhelmed him. Planning has become so large that the planner cannot encompass its dimensions. Planning has become so complex planners cannot keep up with it. Planning protrudes in so many directions, the planner can no longer discern the shape. He may be economist, political scientist, sociologist, architect or scientist. Yet the essence of his calling - planning - escapes him. He finds it everywhere in general and nowhere in particular. Why is planning so elusive?” (Wildavsky, 1973).

The above quotation gets to the crux of today’s lecture. Before I get into detail, however, let me start by acknowledging the opportunity and privilege to speak to this esteemed audience on this topic of crucial importance to the built environment. To me, it is a rare privilege knowing fully well that I am not coming to propound a new theory in the field of urban and regional planning, for many erudite scholars have expended much ink. On enquiry, I was made to understand that the talk will dwell more on planning practice rather than theoretical expositions. That is not to say that this talk will be completely baseless, without theoretical and conceptual underpinnings. This is probably because of my over thirty years of experience in the practice of urban planning in the Lagos State public service, private sector and a little in the academia. The nature of today’s talk is also informed by my active participation in the activities of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), where members have been promoting the practice of urban planning in Nigeria in the last fifty years.

For record, I started my career in the practice of urban planning in the public service in 1987 in the Lagos State New Towns Development Authority (NTDA), an Agency of the Lagos State Government established to open up and redirect urban growth from the central business district with a view to decongesting the metropolitan Lagos. The creation of NTDA was a direct implementation of one of the several recommendations of the Lagos Metropolitan Master Plan.
prepared to guide physical development of the Lagos metropolis between 1980 and 2000. My sojourn in NTDA, at the early stage of my career, gave me an overview of urban development policies and strategies, with respect to spatial planning of Lagos. In 1998, after twelve years of interesting work experience in NTDA, I transferred my service to the main stream of the Lagos State public service, from where I garnered further experience and insight into urban planning practice at policy making level. In the public service, I rose to the level of a Permanent Secretary before I retired in August 2015. By virtue of my various positions, at different stages of my career, in the public sector, I have had the opportunity to interact with different private firms on strategic development planning-related matters. I have also had the privilege, though very briefly, to be an associate lecturer in this Department and adjunct lecturer and examiner at Lagos State University (LASU). Currently, I work as a private practitioner and consultant, with a special interest in employing smart solutions to urban development planning challenges. I also offer smart ideas for cities of the future.

My presence here today is, therefore, to dialogue and share my experiences with this distinguished audience on issues, challenges, perceptions and misconceptions, by many people, about town planning. This is with a view to resolving areas of conflict and misunderstanding in spatial planning as a practice, activity and/or public policy. This will also afford us opportunity to build consensus on issues affecting sustainable settlements in Nigeria.

In today’s talk, I will delve into conceptualizing and theorizing dialectics on urban planning. I will examine the evolution of town planning from being an art and science of organizing the use of land for efficient and functional human activities into ideological movement for the protection of the environment, as well as the evolution of urban planning from being a technical activity into political process and social contract. In the course of this historical evolution, and being a dynamic process, I highlight that, there have been various shades of opinions ranging from classical theories to normative perspectives and from idealism to realism. Based on this understanding and my varied experiences, I discuss the prevailing dialectics in urban planning practice, ideology and pedagogy in Nigeria. While many view planning as tool of public service control in the use of land contrary to the inherent universal human rights, another school of thought propounds planning as collective activity of which all indices of living environment should be considered. Beyond the dialectics, I look at the unique opportunities present to us by the innovative power of technology to address
these challenges. I am optimistic that this talk will achieve it main objective of highlighting dialectics of urban planning and negative perception of planning and planners with a view to generating a discourse around these issues and proposing strategies for addressing them.

The significance of this discourse can be gleaned from the New Urban Agenda recently adopted by the world leaders in Quito, Equador (17th-20th October, 2016) at the United Nations Habitat III. The Agenda is an “action-oriented document which set global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage and live in cities”. The Quito Declaration on sustainable cities and human settlement is aimed at building on the achievements of the United Nations conferences on Human Settlements in 1976 and in Istanbul in 1996 and adoption of Millennium Development Goals in 2000. The Agenda, which was adopted in 2015, is comprised of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 Targets.

“The New Urban Agenda is committed to an urban paradigm shift that will:

(a) Re-address the way we plan, finance, develop, govern and manage cities and human developments, recognizing sustainable urban and territorial development as essential to the achievement of sustainable development and prosperity of all.

(b) Recognize the important role of governments in the definition and implementation of inclusive and effective urban policies and legislation for sustainable urban development and the important contributions of sub-national and Local Governments, as well as civil society and other relevant stakeholders in a transparent and accountable manner.

(c) Adopt sustainable, people-centred age and gender responsive and integrated approaches to urban and territorial development by implementing policies, strategies, capacity development and action at all levels, based on fundamental drivers of change including.

i. Developing and implementing National urban policies or strategies within Local National systems of cities and human settlements, towards the achievement of National development targets.

ii. Strengthening urban governance, with sound institutions and mechanisms that empower and include state holders as well as appropriate checks and balances, providing predictability and coherence in the urban development plans to enable social inclusion, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and environmental protection.
iii. Re-invigorating long term and integrated urban and territorial planning and design in order to optimize the spatial dimension of the urban form and to deliver the positive outcomes of urbanization.

iv. Supporting effective, innovative and sustainable financing framework and instruments enabling strengthened municipal finance and local fiscal systems in order to create, sustain and share the value generated by the sustainable urban development in an inclusive manner. (UN Habitat III, 2016)

Domesticating this agenda requires consensus among the stakeholders in urban planning.

**Conceptualizing and Theorizing Dialectics of Urban Planning**

Dialectics considers all the opposite sides in unity. In contrast to formal thinking, for dialectics, things could be contradictory in appearance as well as in essence. Dialectics is a way of thinking which seeks to understand things dynamically in their transience through the occurring changes and exchanges, and through ways in which things connect to each other (Apostol, 2007). Merriam Webster dictionary defines dialectic “as discussion and reasoning, exposition or argument that juxtaposes opposed ideas and usually seeks to resolve their conflicts. It is an art of investigating or discussing the truth of opinions; an inquiry into metaphysical contradictions and their solution. It is a method of intellectual investigation and specifically the Socratic techniques of exposing false beliefs and eliciting truth”. From this definition, the term “dialectic” has the following characteristics:

- Discussion and reasoning by dialogue;
- Method of intellectual investigation;
- Juxtaposing opposing or contradicting ideas; and
- Seeking truth to resolve conflicts.

Aristotle started what later become a perennial controversy and dialectic in urban planning, when he criticized Hippodamus of Miletus who has been acclaimed as the father of urban planning for his zoning principle, which he thought was discriminatory. Hippodamus of Miletus was an ancient Greek architect, urban planner, physician, mathematician, meteorologist and philosopher considered to be the father of urban planning. His plans of Greek cities were characterised by order
and regularity in contrast to the complexity and confusion common to cities of their period, he is seen as the originator of the idea that a town plan might embody and clarify a rational social order.

In today’s complex world, dialectics is occupying a center stage in urban planning issues, which is actually encouraging planners to emotionally take sides and permanently locked into dialectical reasoning and unable to collectively think out of the box. My choice of dialectic approach in this talk, on the one hand, is not necessarily to take sides as to what is true or false or right or wrong approaches in planning practice but to reflect on my professional experience and foster critical thinking in urban planning, a profession that has become so wide in scope such that the practitioners struggle to justify its relevance to the beneficiaries, struggle as to what its core areas of competence are and struggle to create enough opportunities and jobs to retain the practitioner within.

On the other hand, to show that planning is an activity and profession often misunderstood thereby attracting negative perception from the public. Its broad, inter-disciplinary and complex process makes it subject of controversy and criticism even among the planners. While the decision makers and administrators formulate policies based on their visions and promises to the citizen, the professionals are left to balance the conflicting interests in the community using the technical tools and applicable legislation for sustainable human settlement. The decision of the professional planners may not meet the expected outcome for the city dwellers. This is apart from the rapid transformation occasioned by urbanization and continually changing concepts in planning process. The situation, therefore, calls for reconciliation of conflicting ideas and opinions for the good of the profession, the public and the environment.

**Urban Planning**

*Planning is an extremely ambiguous and difficult word to define. Planners of all kinds think that they know what it means; it refers to the work they do. The difficulty is that they do all sorts of different things, and so they mean different things by the word; planning seems to be all things to all people* (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011).

The above quote point to the fact that the meanings or definitions of urban planning, also called town planning, urban and regional planning, physical planning or spatial planning, are many
and vary among professionals. I wish to note that these terms will be used interchangeable in the course of this talk.

Planning can be seen as a product (a physical representation of something – a drawing or map), a process (a method for doing something), an outcome of a process (an orderly arrangement) or a profession (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011). Now coming to a few examples of how planning has been defined, Hall and Tewdwr-Jones (2011) see planning as an orderly sequence of events to achieve a predetermined goal. Spatial planning deals with designing and managing institutions that affect the future quality of urban places. Urban planning is the process by which a community shapes its environment to meet its needs and realize its aspirations. Suffice to say, planning is the profession of those who facilitate this process, who are generally referred to as Town Planners. The definition of planning by Webster’s dictionary aligns with this perspective, as it defines urban planning as the study or profession dealing with the growth and functioning of cities and towns, including environmental concerns, zoning and the infrastructure. My definition of planning will not be complete without making a reference to Lewis Keeble definition, which is probably regarded as the fundamental planning definitions and which I grew up to know as a planning student. Keeble (1969) defines Town Planning as the art and science of ordering the use of land and siting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty. Today, urban planning has gone beyond just being an art and science to include technical and political process concerned with the welfare of people, control of the use of land, design of the urban environment including transportation and communication networks, and protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment.

Having established the varying meanings of planning, at this point, I will like to delve a little into, what I considered as more generic, history of planning (informal and formal) and planning as a profession. Drawing from various definitions above, the defining objective of town planning is to forecast and regulate growth, to nullify the bad effects of past growth, to improve the transportation facilities, to optimize resource utilization, to balance population and economic activities, to promote social integration among different categories of people and to promote a convenient, comfortable, beautiful and healthy environment (Bamidele, 2016). If you agree with me on these, then, Town Planning is as old as humanity. Humanity has always been in charge of
his environment, determining where he lives, work and play while commuting between the places. Ancient history revealed the existence of great civilizations driven by men and women, kings, queens, heroes and nation builders giving rise to human settlements of great significance. These settlements were built to meet the contemporary needs of the people. These include housing, transportation, security, industry, commerce and recreation. Men were inspired to design and build palaces, city centres, defence walls and gates, communication routes and recreational parks.

While the practice of planning is as old as the human settlements themselves, dating back to the periods of Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations, and the ancient Roman Empire, the urban planning as a profession is only about a century old. Urban planning evolved into a profession in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of the negative consequences of industrial revolution. During this period, with the formation of the Town and Country Planning Association in 1899 in Great Britain, architects, landscape architects, engineers, government reformers, lawyers, public health specialists, and others joined forces to tackle the serious social and environmental problems associated with industrial cities. They created new techniques and institutions to improve living conditions and decision-making processes, with an eye to improving cities in terms of health, safety, efficiency, equity, beauty, identity.

By 1920s, the notions of modernism and uniformity have become entrenched in urban planning. Though the notion of modernism was promoted with the intention of improving the living condition of the people, it has been argued by some planners that the idea actually created increased environmental and socio-economic challenges (Morris, 1997).

In the real sense, planning is about developing polices and projects and managing resources efficiently to meet the needs and aspirations of everybody irrespective of status. However, because planning is a dynamic and complex set of activities, the outcomes of planning policies and projects may contradict the whole essence of planning, thereby introducing conflicts and crisis into planning practice. This often results in contradictory opinions, as to the role of planning, among those who practice planning and even the public who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of planning products. This is similar to Hegel’s dialectic thinking.

Town planning as a profession, in Nigeria, is relatively a young profession compared with other professions like medicine, engineering, law, accountancy, surveying and architecture. The profession was organized by members about fifty years ago in order to advance town and country planning education, training, research and for purposes of exposing and disseminating planning information and knowledge. Being a profession, planners are expected to be experts and, at all times, be above board in the theory and practice of urban and regional planning.

Town planning was officially recognized in Nigeria as a profession by the promulgation of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning (Town Planners Registration) Act Cap TL7 2004 (Decree 3 of 1988). The Law established Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) as the regulatory body for the profession. As at 2016, with many more joining each year, 302 members have been registered by TOPREC to practice the profession in Nigerian (NITP @ 50: Wahab and Atebije 2016). The Law makes provision for registration of Town Planners, their education, code of conduct and practice and defines what town planning is. Town Planners (Registrations, etc.) Act, CAP T7 LFN 2004 defines town planning as “the ordering and control of the siting and erecting of buildings and other structures and the provision of open spaces and similar use of land, as the case may be, for the improvement of the human environment”. As such planning involves balancing the needs of the community with those of individuals. It is an activity which predetermines the management and control of land.

Today, people who enter the profession come from diverse backgrounds, including the design professions, engineering and applied sciences, environmental and social studies, and other fields. Their challenge is to reinvent tools and procedures to meet new challenges in making cities socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. A key feature of planning education is learning to view issues in a multidisciplinary way, to manage processes of collaboration and of conflict, and to generate equitable and efficient solutions with the ultimate goal of creating a decent living environment. However, practicality of achieving this goal varied markedly among professionals because of their varied interests. Abukhater (2009) aptly captured this as he stated:

*Planning is unique and its uniqueness stems partially from the inability to be defined in a single, narrow definition that fits it all. This is because planners are not a single*
entity that could fit into one category, nor can they fully agree on what planning really is. Rather, planners can vary across a continuum of interests, ranging from environmentalists and advocates, to even developers. These aspects of planning appear to differ, or even contradict each other, a great deal. For instance, environmentalists often clash with developers regarding issues pertinent to preserving the integrity of the environment. Although both sides theoretically agree on the principle of environmental protection, practical application almost always suggests otherwise (p.65).

However, being the conscience of the society, a professional town planner should conduct himself with integrity, honesty, probity, objectivity and avoid conflict of interest in the discharge of his duty of creating a decent living environment. The flash points for conflicts often manifest as urban planning professionals make efforts to create a decent living environment for the public through development project, but at the same time, such projects also have implications on the livelihoods of the people (Watson, 2003). As such planners are often entangled in the dialectics of rationalities as they struggle to justify their relevance to the public who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of development projects and the policy makers who probably have an idea of what they want the society to look like. The existence of fundamentally different worldviews and different value-systems coupled with the fact that planners need to satisfy varying and often conflicting needs and aspirations of multiple actors further complicate how they situate themselves ethically and professionally among these various actors and conflicting interests.

**Dialectics of Urban Planning: Experience from Practice.**

Conflicts in planning practice often manifest in different forms from the core areas of planning practices to allied practices. Land rights, land use, planning control, development control, development planning, planning regulations and sustainable development are common drivers of dialectics in urban planning. I will try to match some of these terms, where possible or as necessary, to explain some of the urban planning dialectics I have observed in the course of my professional practice thus far.

**Land Rights vs Planning Control**

The common law and the 2011 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) guarantees the property rights of the citizens. Section 44(1) provides that “no movable property or
any interest in immovable property shall be taken possession of compulsorily and no right over or interest such property shall be acquired compulsorily in any part of Nigeria, except in the manner and for purposes prescribed by a law that, among other things.” In essence, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria protects the property rights of Nigerians. Subject to some subsections of the Constitutions abridging the rights, the holder of real property is free to use, misuse or abuse his land. Planning activities, however, constitute one of the tools that limit the extent to which one can exercise his property rights. To achieve the objectives of planning, planning laws and regulations are enacted along other statutes such as environmental laws to fulfil the overall needs of the people. In essence, while fundamental rights of the citizen guarantee right to property, movable or immovable, planning control remains a major activity contending with this right by limiting the use through legislations in form of zoning. This is justified because the planning authority is to act in the overall best interest of the public while balancing individual rights.

Planning laws in Nigeria evolved with the adoption of the received English laws by the colonial administration before independence. The first set of statutes on planning came as a result of concern for health in the colony. Public health provided the justification for urban racial segregation and establishment of new settlements. According to Utuama (1999), from its very beginning in 1917, when the Township Ordinance was promulgated planning administration was centralised and the direct power and responsibility for carrying out the day-to-day administration of land use control went to the Governor-General. Section 3 of Township Ordinance gave the Governor-General direct power for carrying out day-to-day land use control of the amalgamated Northern and Southern Protectorates including power to declare any town or place as township. The Ordinance authorised the Governor-General to zone a township into European Reservation Area, Non-European Reservation Area and open space (Utuama, 1999). The Lagos Town Planning Ordinance 1928 was enacted as the first general intervention of statute in land use control and development in Lagos under the colonial administration. The statute was aimed at addressing the outbreak of bubonic plague due to congestion and overpopulation in Lagos. It provided a permanent and centralised approach to planning matters as opposed to ad hoc and discriminatory 1917 Township Ordinance Amokaye (2016). The law established the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB) as the first Planning Authority in Nigeria with power to demolish unsanitary buildings and to declare an area a planning area. It also empowers the Board to undertake the control of land use in any part of Lagos through planning schemes with sole objective.
of putting amenities and conveniences in place. An important feature of the law was that it introduced the concept of licenced development. Thus, once an area has been declared a planning area and there was an approved planning scheme, no development was to take place without the approval of LEDB. Part of the challenge in our contemporary planning and development control in Nigeria today is that planning authorities have been unable to provide detailed planning schemes, yet they provide general regulations and standards upon which applicants were expected to comply.

In 1946, the Town and Country Planning Act was promulgated to have a nationwide effect with the objective of “re-planning, improvement and development” of Nigeria. The Act established planning authorities. The planning authority was charged with responsibility of framing an appropriate planning scheme over any area where it thought desirable to re-plan, improve or develop with the objective of putting in place amenities and conveniences subject to the approval of the Governor-General. The 1946 Act became regional statutes in 1954 when Nigeria adopted the federal system of government. Thus, we had the Town and Country Planning Law of Western Region of 1956 (Cap. 133, Laws of Western Nigeria 1956), the Town and Country Planning Law of Eastern Region of 1957 (Cap. 126, of Eastern Nigeria) and the Town and Country Planning Law of Northern Region of 1963 (Cap. 130, Laws of Northern Nigeria 1963.

This remained the applicable planning statute in the country except for Lagos which had witnessed series of enactment of planning laws starting with 1917 Township Ordinance and 1928 the Lagos Town Planning Ordinance culminating in the Town Planning (Miscellaneous)Act of 1967 introducing concept of master planning in Lagos shortly before the creation of the State. The 1946 Act remained the principal legislation across Nigeria until 1992 when the Federal Military Government promulgated Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act, Cap. N138 LFN 2004 (popularly referred to as Decree 88 of 1992). The purpose of the Act, as contained in the explanatory note, is to, among other things, provide for a new urban and regional planning enactment for Nigeria with the establishment of Federal, State and Local Government authorities to oversee the implementation of a more realistic and purposeful planning of the country (Section 1 NURP Act). The constitutionality of some provisions of the Act was successfully challenged by the Lagos State Government in the celebrated case of Attorney-General of Lagos State v. Attorney-General of the Federation. (2003) 12 N. W. L. R PT 833.
The position of the Lagos State Government was that since Nigeria is now operating a democratic
government at all levels, a system of governance that is sustained by strict adherence to
constitutional guarantee of distribution of powers and principles of federalism. Therefore, town
and country planning, being a legislative matter not listed in either the Executive or Concurrent
Lists of the Constitution, is a residual matter upon which the State can legislate. It was, therefore,
asserted that the Federal Government lacked the legislative competence to enact a uniform
planning system for State and Local Governments. The Supreme Court held that urban and
regional planning is a residual matter for the State and all provisions in the Act that seek to impose
planning responsibilities on the State are unconstitutional, null and void. This landmark decision
on the Act was passed eleven years after its promulgation. It is an irony the Lagos State was the
first State to domesticate the Law for implementation in 1998 as Lagos State Urban and Regional
Planning and Board Law.

The major concern on the legislation is the fact that Law has not been implemented at the national
level 24 years after its enactment while most State Governments are still operating under the 1946
version of the Town and Country Planning Act. Upon what basis is urban planning carried out
nationwide? The absence of National Urban and Regional Planning Commission at the federal
level to formulate urban planning policies and give general direction on urban development is a
major challenge to our cities and national development. The cities and the nation have been
deprived of the statutory functions of the Commission which include preparation of national
physical development plan, regional plan and sub-regional plans, the technical support to the State
and formulation of urban and regional planning standards for Nigeria as provided in Sections 2
and 7 of the Act. Most of the confusion and conflicts in the planning practice in Nigeria today take
their roots in the absence of clear legislative framework.

The situation on planning laws in the States is not different. Many of the States in Nigeria still
operate the 1946 Town and Country Planning Law as domesticated in the respective States. Most
of the States are pre-occupied with the development control activities which are being carried out
without clear planning standards. Lagos State which is a flag ship and pace setter in innovative
planning legislation has reviewed its planning laws several times since its creation in 1967. The
latest of such is the Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law 2010. One of the reforms
embedded in the law is the establishment of the Building Control Agency. The objective of this is
to ensure quality construction and safety in buildings. Effective implementation of this Law is aimed at reducing the incessant collapse of building in the State. It is however regrettable that seven years after the enactment of the Law, the Agency is yet to be properly established and there are no Regulations to drive the implementation of the building control activities. In the absence of effective structure and regulations, one can hardly blame the untrained field officers extorting members of the public in the name of building control enforcement.

A major obstacle to the implementation of the building control system in Lagos State is the unwarranted subjugation to planning control. The policy of making building control an enforcement arm of planning office is unconventional and inconsistent with global best practices. Building control should either come as subsidiary legislation to Housing Act (as practiced in United Kingdom), or under Construction Act (as in Singapore) or independently adopting the National Building Code (as in United States of America).

While the urban planners will continue to take responsibility for orderliness or otherwise of our built environment, it is high time the government be made to provide the enabling legislations for urban planning and enforcement of the laws. As at now the country is carrying out urban planning and development on weak legislative framework which is inimical good planning and urban development.

**Land as a key component in Urban Planning**

Most activities of man take place on the land. Land is not just the physical structure but equally a factor of production. The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act in Section 91 defines land to “include any building and any other thing attached to the earth or permanently fastened to anything so attached, but does not including minerals”. This definition is derived from the restrictive Interpretation Act (See Laws of Lagos State 1994). Land is also referred to as real property as distinguished from personal property. Sometimes referred to as dry land, it is the solid surface of the earth that is not permanently covered by waters. Land mass is the total surface area of the land of a geographical region or country. The earth’s total land mass is about 29.2% of its total surface while 70.8% is in form of ocean and ice formation. Lagos State has a total area of about 3577 sq km of which about 17% is water and swamps.
The concept of land in planning focuses more on the surface of the earth for purposes of management of use. According to Amokaye, (2016), land is obviously the core component and subject-matter of planning. The planning authorities are usually confronted with issues of ownership which may have far reaching effect on land use, the core jurisdiction of planning profession. For instance, family or community land if not properly acquired under the appropriate legislations could be an obstacle to planning.

Prior to the promulgation of Land Use Act by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1978, the system of landholding was fairly straightforward and predictable. Land tenure then was regulated by customary and received English legal system. Under the customary land tenure, land was either vested in the community or family. In the communal or family land tenure system, the management and use of land is vested in the headship of the community or family. Absolute individual landholding is only possible where the land is partitioned and allotted to individuals in the family. In Nigeria today, land use allocation and management is governed by the Land Use Act Cap 202 LFN 2004. The section 1 of the Act vests land comprised in the territory of each State in the Federation in the Governor of the State and that such land shall be held in trust for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians. However, as stated in section 2 (2) of the Act, the control and management of land in rural areas is vested in the Local Government within the area of the jurisdiction where the land is situated. The main purpose of the Act is “to make land available to all including individuals, corporate bodies, institutions and government for economic, social and physical development. This lecture is not in any way aimed at assessing whether the Act is fulfilling its purpose or not, but to highlight its effect on planning practice.

A critical look at the provisions of the Act revealed that the Act creates more obstacles for planning practice. Hitherto, families or communities prepared layouts for their lands which allowed for orderliness and functional settlements. The promulgation of the Land Use Act, however, stopped the process of layout preparation by private individuals thereby resulting in haphazard developments in the urban areas of the country. The Act makes it illegal for any individual or corporate body to hold a parcel of land in excess of half hectare in area not to talk of preparing a layout for the land. Meanwhile the land holding families or communities continue to alienate their lands by selling and fraudulently backdating purchase receipt to beat the law. It is also not uncommon to see families successfully challenging the State Governments on the ownership of
land as can be seen in the cases of Ojomu, Oniru and Ojora Chieftaincy Families in Lagos. Families which were not able to follow this judicial process continue to sell lands contrary to the provisions of the Land Use Act. This results in illegal developments and high incidence of informal settlements without basic amenities necessary for sustainable human settlements.

**Land Acquisition, Compensation, Regularisation and Urban Planning**

Compulsory acquisition of land is described as an aspect of positive planning whereby government, in order to meet various public interests, compulsorily acquires lands. The government usually exercises the power under the principle of eminent domain or social contract to justify the action. Notwithstanding the powers, the private property right of every citizen is guaranteed in common law and under the 1999 Constitution (as amended). Revocation of rights of occupancy and compensation are provided for in the Land Use Act (Sections 28-33, 35). The major challenge to urban planning in this matter is the problem associated with compensation. Where compensation is paid at all, its adequacy has always been issue of conflict and obstacle to development.

It is not uncommon to hear of “global acquisition” in respect of large hectares of land covering even large ancient settlements, for example Badagry Global Acquisition in Lagos State and Agbado Global Acquisition in Ogun State. The intractable challenges associated with compulsory acquisition are obstacles to effective urban planning and development control in Nigeria. The unresolved issues in compulsory acquisition and conflicts arising from inequitable compensation have compelled Lagos and Ogun State Governments to develop remedial policies such as ratification or regularisation of land and village excision to assuage the customary land owners.

Upon the enactment of the Lagos State Land Use Law, the State adopted the policy of ratification with a view to rectifying the defects in the title of the occupier in any revocation area. In processing of ratification, the applicant is expected to establish his customary ownership in addition to evidence of development improvement on the land. Apart from the cumbersome process involved in the policy, the endless and multiple stages involved usually forced applicants to abandon the applications after long delays. The confusion created by these policies manifests in unplanned settlements in the urban and peri-urban areas of the State, where many developers embarked on developments before seeking approval for such developments.
Village excision policy which is meant to acknowledge indigenous settlements within government “global acquisitions” with grant of additional extension to the existing human settlements has become an unending process in which non-existing indigenous settlements are “promoted or sponsored” for excision. Since 1991, when the policy started under the administration of Raji Rasaki, to date over 300 villages have been excised. Though preparation of an approved layout is a condition precedent for excision, only about 30 of the excised villages have approved layout plans or development guides. Lack of approved layout plans has contributed to the emergence of slums in many of the excised areas. The fact is that the developments in the excised villages do not get approval for lack of development guides or layout plans. This, at times, constitutes double jeopardy for buyers of land in the areas who may face challenges of proper title and planning approval while the physical environment is left degraded by the lack of development plans. The expected orderly and sustainable development of the settlements is yet to be fulfilled. This is because Planning Authorities refuse to grant development permits in the affected areas. The result is the growth of slums and lack of basic community amenities in the excised villages. Urban planners often receive the blames for the unsustainable development emanating from inefficient land policies like the regularisation and village excision. However, in fairness to planning profession, planners are neither in charge of land allocation nor determine land ownership. These blames, which I considered in a way not totally deserving, became exacerbated when planners suddenly wake up, after so much tolerating illegal development, to exercise its development control functions. It is important to mention that part of why development permit are difficult to obtain is the stringent application of planning regulations in these mostly informal settlements.

**Development Control vs Building Control.**

Challenges arising from the rapid and unplanned urbanisation and inefficient land policies across the Nigerian cities include unsanitary and degrading environment, incidence of slums and informal settlements, fire and flood disaster, traffic grid lock and building collapses. No doubt, our cities are becoming vulnerable and unsustainable. Consequently, some scholars have questioned the need for continuous urban expansion. However, if well planned and managed, cities have the opportunity to foster social and economic advancement and improved quality of life for dwellers.
Needless to say, that Nigeria’s current economic recession could also be addressed by urban planning as tool of development.

It is, however, sad to note that urban planning practice, particularly development control, is usually perceived negatively and misunderstood even by the government and those who supposed to be the beneficiaries of good planning – the public. Urban planners are much vilified and needlessly blamed sometimes. The planners themselves are overwhelmed by the rapid changes in the demographic and physical environment which make them to be trailing behind in guiding and controlling development. The conflict of opinions requires discussion and reconciliation in order to enjoy the partnership of the citizen, government and planners in planning process.

According to Adediran (2007), for the built environment to be liveable, there must be enforcement of and compliance with environmental, building and development control regulations as provided in the extant laws. These are essential ingredients for planning in addition to the social equity of inclusion and participation. Neglecting these areas of controls has cost many cities in Nigeria loss of lives and properties. For example, in recent times, the incidence of building collapse is increasingly becoming rampant in Lagos (Lagos State Building Control Agency, 2016).

**Figure 1: Interdependence of Controls in Urban Development**

![Figure 1: Interdependence of Controls in Urban Development](source)

Upon the creation of the State in 1967, Lagos State adopted a system of development control which subsumed building control. The 1972 and subsequent planning laws in Lagos State put emphasis on concept and principle of licensed development which required any developer in the state to obtain planning permit before any development. This regime of development control placed less emphasis on building control until the enactment of the 2010 Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law, which distinguishes development control from building control. This law was as a result of the recommendations of the Gen Reis Technical Committee on Physical Planning and Building Control established by the administration of Governor Raji Fashola in 2008, with a view of reducing incidence of illegal development and building collapse in the state.

The Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law 2010 establishes Lagos State Physical Planning Permit Authority to carry out development control activities. Development control is described as the process of securing compliance with the proposal by developers, both public and private, to bring harmony to the built environment. In essence, it is a planning activity of enforcing compliance of proposed development with the planning laws and regulations which may be inclusive of series of planning permission for layout approval, change of use and special developments. Development control is also the tool employed by planners to ensure compliance with the development plans in terms of zoning, density and proposed basic amenities in a given area. This is achieved through the laws, regulations, approval orders, administrative guidelines and directives of the Minister or Commissioner in charge of planning. In essence, the Lagos State Physical Planning Permit Authority is empowered to process and issue planning permits, monitor and ensure compliance with the provisions of the approved and operative development plans, approval orders and regulations made under the Law (Sections 24 and 26).

The 2010 Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law distinguishes development control from building control. Other major provision of the 2010 Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law was the establishment of the Lagos State Building Control Agency. The agency’s functions include:

a. Enforcement of building control regulations;

b. Regulations and inspection of building works and certification of various stages of building construction and keeping of such records;
c. Removal of illegal and non-conforming building;
d. Identification and removal of distressed buildings to prevent collapse;
e. Issuance of certificate of completion and fitness for habitation;
f. Administration of building control in all its ramification.

The aim of building control is to secure safety and quality in construction by imposing continuous requirements on the developers, owners and occupiers of building. As revolutionary as the intention of the Law seems, the implementation leaves much to be desired, as the Law does not provide much for operations of the Agency and there are no subsidiary legislations to throw more light on the implementation. The question is whether the existing situation in the building construction industry justifies the efforts of the framers of the Law. All we see nowadays are construction X-marked with LABSCA label which has neither cured the mischief the Law was out to address nor reduced the spate of building collapse in the State.

**Building Collapse: An albatross in urban planning**

The recent spate of collapse of buildings in Lagos has once again challenged the planners and stakeholders in the building industry to find lasting solutions. While we are finding solutions, let us accept that buildings will continue to collapse for some time. The categories of collapse are two; old distressed structures and new, mostly under-construction structures which are defective structurally due to many reasons. This forum is not meant to apportion blames but truth must be told that our professionals in the building industry are culpable. We have collectively failed to discharge our duties in conceiving and implementing acceptable policies and regulations for quality and safety in building construction. We are more concerned about advancing self-interest rather than defending public interest, which throws up a most urgent dialectic for the entire built environment professional sector. At national level, it took professionals in building industry twenty (20) years (1986-2006) to produce the National Building Code. Ten years after, the Building Code are yet to be used in Nigeria! In Lagos State Government embarked on reform of Planning regulation and Building Control courtesy of Gen. Reis Technical Committee in 2008. The Report of the Committee yielded the existing Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law in 2010. Till date we are yet to produce the subsidiary Regulations (Planning and Building Controls) meant for implementation or enforcement of the Law.
One very critical mistake in the 2010 Law is the impression or interpretation that building control is an enforcement legislation for planning. This is contrary to global best practice. Building control is a set of activities aimed at ensuring quality and safety in construction. Building Regulations are made pursuant of Housing Act in United Kingdom while same are subsidiaries of Construction Act in Singapore. The unresolved issues among the professionals will remain as long as the confusion created by 2010 law remains. Unfortunately, planning profession is often blamed, though ignorantly, for the spate of building collapse which is not actually under its control. When there is a building collapse, the first and the major blames go to planners. Questions such as – are there no Town Planners again? Who approved this building? – are commonly asked by the members of public and even some other professionals in the built environment who should know better. This is not to completely exonerate town planners from the incidence of building collapse but to educate the public on the limit of planning profession. Unknow to the majority of the public, planners grant planning permit (approval) based on what the Architects designed on paper. Obviously, building will not collapse on paper. Planners are principally trained to check functionality of buildings and compliance with planning regulations and building standards such as height, air spaces, ventilation, setbacks to utilities and existing approved or operative development plans. Structural stability of buildings is completely out of the jurisdiction of planners. In the approval process, an approving officer – planner – often relies on the judgement of a structural engineer, environmental experts who certify the structural stability and safety of such building, to grant approval. Also, testing of construction materials and actual supervision of the construction are completely outside the jurisdiction of planning profession.

This sharing of responsibilities is clearly stated in the National Building Codes and the 2010 Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law. It is, however, sad to note that seven years after the enactment of the Law in 2010, the appropriate Regulations to drive the building control system in the State are yet to be passed. The implication of this is that the operations of the Building Control Agency as at today are not backed by proper regulations. The recent recommendations of the Bunmi Ajayi Committee on Restructuring of Building Control in Lagos that the Agency should be transferred to Ministry of Works instead of Ministry of Physical planning and Urban Development (or Ministry of Housing) may further compound the problems. The proposed transfer of supervision is against any known global practice in other places like Britain, Singapore, Australia
and other similar jurisdictions where building control is closely related to planning permission for harmony in the built environment.

Development and building control practises attract the attention of the public and the interest of the professionals than the aspect of planning which deals with the preparation of strategic development plans. The public often see development and building control as anti-development agenda and a deliberate attempt by planners to frustrate the developmental efforts of the public, particularly the low-income groups. It is not uncommon for public officers to see their posting to development or building control department as a blessing, while those saddled with the responsibilities of preparing strategic development plans and formulation of polices see themselves as engaging in unrewarding endeavours. Probably the public, who generally tag planners as corrupt, ‘X-men’, ‘wole-wole’ (demolition squads) instead of ‘Atuniluto’ (Town Planner), are somehow justified.

The development control activities mirror the planning professionals in the country. The physical developments in the built environment are the outcomes of decisions made in the offices. The land use, the height, density, setbacks/air spaces and environmental impacts of development are considered in accordance with the provision of the extant Laws and Regulations. Development control in Lagos State, however, is a major area of concern not only to the public but also the government. The process has been a subject of criticism for delay in processing of permits and corrupt practices.

The issue of delay is better shown in the World Bank Statistics on Ease of Doing Business. The World Bank in 2016 used the ease of dealing with construction permit and registering property as some of the indicators to rank 189 nations on ease of doing business. Nigeria ranked 175th and 181st on these indicators respectively.

The Report also assesses the transparency and quality of building regulations, quality control before, during and after construction and professional certification among others. Among the main findings is that 68 per cent of the countries assessed have their building regulations available online. In Nigeria, we can hardly access hard copies of the development and building control regulations and standards let alone get them online.
The question then is that, what is the state of planning regulations and standards in Nigeria? Well, I may not be able to provide a comprehensive answer, but the truth is that they are either not relevant to the reality of our time or ambiguous to the extent of giving the planning officers the discretionary power of approval or disapproval. This encouraged sharp practices in the system.

Apart from the opaque nature of development and building controls, there is serious issue of safety due to poor standards in the construction industry. World Bank (2016) notes that, “construction regulations can help protect the public from faulty building practices. But to do so, they need to be clear as well as thorough. Where regulations lack clarity, there is risk of confusion among both the builders and the authorities, which can lead to unnecessary delay, dispute and uncertainty”. We cannot agree less.

Of equal importance is the rigid nature of the planning regulations which make granting of planning permits very difficult and bureaucratic. The general application of the regulations across the States creates problems for applicants where the planning officers are not obliged to consider merit of application on a case by case basis. Besides the above, the stakeholders and citizens to be affected by the development are excluded from decision on the planning applications. This is contrary to global best practice in which the public are invited to comment on planning applications. In such cases, planning permit is treated at the local government level. This extant process has concentrated powers to planners and the government they represent to the detriment of the developers/applicants.

Another area of concern in the planning permit processing is the appeal system. Part VII, Sections 79-89 of the Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law 2010 deal with the Appeals in the building and development control systems. According to Amokaye (2016) right of appeal is an attribute of right of property and needs to be distinguished from right of public at large to have a voice in influencing the affairs of government concerning the operation of the planning system. The right of appeal in planning law is therefore only available to a developer or an applicant affected by a policy or decision and not to the general public. The Law established the Physical planning and Building Control Agency Appeals Committee for “investigation of petitions sent to it on physical planning, regeneration and building control matters; consideration of appeals from members of the public on decisions of the relevant agency and investigation of complaints
concerning officials on matters relating to grant of planning permit”. In spite of this provision of the Law, it is a matter of concern that no Appeal Committee has been set up on building and planning permits in the State. It is worrisome because this is the only avenue available for applicants to seek redress on their applications. The process gives the public officer unquestionable power at the expense of the applicants. Often, the applicants are made to appeal to the senior officer in the public service who referred the matter to the subordinates who had rejected the application at the first instance. It is very important that the government constitute this Committee as a matter of urgency to give all applicants the opportunity to appeal on their applications when rejected.

**Planning Standards**

It is also imperative to mention that these systems of controls rest on clear regulations and standards. Nigeria is still in search of sustainable national planning standards as against what is obtainable globally. It is however noteworthy that Ghana has succeeded in formulating National Spatial Development Planning Framework (NSDF) (2015-2025). This is a feat our Housing and Urban Development Policy is yet to achieve in spite of the periodic rituals of National Council on Housing and Urban Development. The Framework is funded and supported by International Development Agency (IDA) is divided into three parts including: space efficiency and growth; overall spatial development strategy and executive summary. The content among others, examine spatial development challenges and opportunities, objectives and pillars of spatial strategy, place based framework and important national initiatives and NSDF phasing and costing. It is aimed at achieving orderly spatial development across the country and provides guidance for implementation of the plans.

Ghana, through the Department of Town and Country Planning in the Ministry of Science and Technology, has produced a national “Zoning Guidelines and planning Standards” in 2011. The document is the first since it adopted the British Town and Country Planning Ordinance Cap 84 of 1945. The objective of the new zoning guidelines and planning standards is to “provide clarifications on the permissible uses of land and space requirements that must be taken into account by anyone or any organization preparing plans or seeking planning permission or development permit.” The document will also provide legal basis for reviewing development
proposals which will be binding on all persons or organizations in the development of land as defined by law.

*Decentralization vs Centralization of Planning*

The role of local governments in planning cannot be underestimated being the closest level of governance. In recognition of this, the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act creates Local Planning Authority at local government level. It is important to mention that the law provides clear procedure for preparation of development plans by the respective bodies. The intention of the framers of the law is to ensure the accessibility of the developers or applicant to planning offices with adequate representation. Though certain provisions of national law have been declared null and void for their inconsistency with the provisions of the 1999 Constitution, it is very strange that State Governments in Nigeria are not recognizing the Local Planning Authority at the Local Government level. The Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law (2010) only create Planning Offices at State level. The best that can be inferred from the Law is the creation of “Local Planning Permit Offices in cooperation with the Local Governments and Local Development Areas for the discharge of its functions at the Local Government level with the approval of the Governor on recommendation of the Commissioner”. This is strange because it has taken away the participation of Local Government and indeed the grass root planning. Besides, the role of the Local Planning Offices is restricted to development control activities. Fully fledged Local Planning Authorities will facilitate the operations of the Local Government Councils as provided in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The rationale for this action is not clear. However, the Law seems not to recognize the fact that the Local Government system is a creation of the Constitution with clear functions and provisions for statutory allocation to perform the functions (See Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution as amended for details). Some of the functions of Local Government listed in Fourth Schedule of Section 4 of the Constitution like establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds, homes for the destitute, slaughter houses, markets, motor parks, public conveniences, construction and maintenance of community amenities and infrastructure and control and regulation of out-door advertising, shops etc presupposes that Planning Authorities would be established to coordinate the physical planning and development in the areas. It is not surprising that the State Planning
Authorities or Agencies are overwhelmed and unable to address the needs of the people. The notion of looking at Planning Authorities as internally generated revenue centres for the State is a reality but not an ideal, because negligence in planning is costlier than whatever revenue the government may realize from it now. The huge amount being expended on our slums are results of neglect of planning in the past.

Lagos mega city with a population of over 20 million would be expected to prepare different levels of strategic development plans for policy formulation. These may come broadly as master plans and or structure plans, which must be followed by action area plans with appropriate zoning regulations. The action plan will address, in detail, planning challenges at the community level. The preparation of the local and action area plans should be the responsibility of the Local Governments which could be supported technically and financially by the State Government. To do otherwise is to make planning ineffective against its primary purpose. The current policy of concentrating planning power on the State without the Local Government Council playing any major role is contrary to the global best practice and principle of participatory planning. Planning activity is aimed at shaping a future for the community. By involving the community in the planning process and implementation, the planner will get the buy-in of the people.

The Dialectics of Strategic Development Planning

The 1946 Town and Country Planning Act, with concept of planning schemes, continued to apply in many States of the Federation until the promulgation of the 1992 Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act. The Act provides for different types of development plans to include national physical development plan; regional plan; sub-regional plan; an urban plan; town plan; local plan and subject plan and allocates power to the three tiers of government to prepare the plans. Though the Act does not define any of the plans, it provides for the uniform procedure to follow in preparation of these development plans as stated in Sections 13-22 of the Act.

Similar to the provision of the 1992 Act, the Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning Law 2010 list a different hierarchical form of strategic development plans to include regional plan; sub-
regional plan; district plan; model city plan; urban/town plan; urban regeneration plan; development guide and local plans (layout and subdivision plans). The Law in first, second and third schedules lists the functions and contents of the various strategic development plans. The plans are distinguished by the scale and extent of details contained in each of them.

One major area of concern in the strategic development planning system in Nigeria is the interpretation of the content of each level of plans. Apart from listing the categories of the development plans, the Nigerian Urban and Region Planning Act fail to define or distinguish the development plans. What constitutes national physical development plan at national level is not really defined. The relationships of the regional plan at national and regional levels are also not distinguishable. The conclusion to be drawn from the legislation is that the regional and master plans of the urban centres at state levels will be aggregated and integrated into the nation physical development plan. Unfortunately, this is not the case. I challenge us as professionals to continually mount pressure on the Federal Government to formulate a detailed National Spatial Planning Policy Framework from which each State of the Federation could derive guidelines and standards for urban and regional planning. My appeal will go a step further to our colleagues in the academia to co-design and co-produced evidence-based research that details what we stand to lose by not following this inevitable path.

Another area is that the concept of development planning has been widely criticized because of its perception by the public. Only few people understand the various types of development plans even among the planners in Nigeria. The challenges facing this concept include the long period of its preparation and cumbersome procedure of approval as demanded by the Law. A strategic master plan can take between two to five years to be finalised. One of the reasons for lack of understanding of the development plans is the technical complexity and obscurity of the documents which make up the plan (Davies, 1999). The dearth of development plans in our planning system in Nigeria makes it difficult to carry out proper evaluation on its effectiveness. Only few State Governments like Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Ogun States and Federal Capital Development Authority have prepared strategic development plans. Except FCTA and Lagos State where attempts have been made to prepare structure and action area plans, other States of the Federation are yet to adopt development planning concept. The failure on the part of the Federal government and the confusion created by
the Supreme Court judgment in respect of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act also contribute to the challenge.

The conclusion is that the Federal Government will still be solely responsible for preparation of National Physical Development Plan, structure and action area plans for Federal Capital Territory Abuja for implementation and enforcement. However, respective States of the federation are expected to enact appropriate planning laws to empower them to prepare strategic and comprehensive development plans, structure and action area plans for the States. There is need to review the existing legislations to empower the local planning authorities to actively participate in the preparation of development plans particularly with respect to local plans. These plans may still go through the proper process of approval by the appropriate legislative body. The local plans need to be complemented by statutory planning guidance for details guidelines on implementation.

Irrespective of the problems associated with development plans, they play two functions. It is strategic in time and space. It also serves regulatory purpose. In Nigeria, the instrument has helped in the land use management and development control. Classic examples of the plan can be found in the Lagos State Metropolitan Master Plan (1980-2000) and Abuja Master Plan each prepared in the 1970s to guide physical development in both Lagos and Federal Capital Territory. The two strategic physical development plans, in spite of their abuse, went a long way to guide development in the cities. A major constraint to the implementation of the plans was the inability of the planning authorities to follow up with the preparation of the structure plans or district plans being the next stage for effective implementation. For instance, the Lagos Metropolitan Master Plan (1980-2000) zoned the metropolitan Lagos into 35 Districts for purposes of preparing structure plans for them. This was never carried out throughout the twenty years’ life span of the master plan, thus making implementation very difficult. Structure plans are required to fulfill the strategic functions of the master plan while the local plans will be needed to fulfill the statutory functions. Attempts to carry out development control without structure and local plans have been very frustrating in cities like Lagos and Abuja. In lieu, a form of long range, non-statutory policy plan for the local area, such as an outline development plan, would give the clear sense of direction. However, the development plan remains an imperfect but essential tool of planning so far.
The Planning Professionals are not to be blamed? The Political Economy of urban planning as driver of Urban Planning Dialectics

One of the very many ways by which citizens can enjoy the dividend of good governance and effective political economic system is through urban planning, which delivers livable and economically viable places for all in an inclusive, sustainable and affordable manner. At the core of the inability of planning profession to achieve these goals, in Nigeria, is bad governance and inefficient political economy system which struggle with professionals who are technically trained to deliver on such goals.

I draw on political economy analysis in this talk as it helps to position planning practice within the context of the prevailing political and economic processes in Nigeria, especially the inducements, relationships, distribution and contestation of power between different groups and individuals, all of which greatly impacts on planning practice and development planning outcomes (Mcloughlin 2014).

Urban planning, in Nigeria, is practiced within the context of what I called very confused and uncoordinated political economy system and inefficient governance system. Urban planning vision and agenda are often set by the politicians, particularly those with executive power. Planning system is often manipulated and used as tool, by the political system, to fulfill their agenda, which is often lading with ulterior motives and may not align with the needs and realities of the majority. Urban planning professionals are well equipped with technical skills but there seems to be less attention on the political and economic processes which interplay with planning processes and subsequently determine the outcomes. There is an obvious gap between planners’ technical skills and political participation, on the one hand, by urban planning professionals. On the other hand, there is a gap between planning process and the participation of the public, particularly the poor and the low-income groups of the society.

Becky (2015:2), based on experiences in developing countries, identifies political economy constraints to promoting inclusive and economically viable human settlements. These constraints, as shown in box 1, include:
• **Wider political economy context**: constraints include when “the growth, complexity and density of urban areas outpaces the development of governance and institutional structures to manage them” (expert comment); combined pressures such as the rate of urbanisation and environmental changes; the relationship with the country’s broader political settlement; and national contexts of conflict and fragility.

• **Governance framework**: constraints include policy incoherence and institutional fragmentation, incomplete decentralisation, and the proliferation of service providers; effects of city politics; the role of informal political incentives.

• **Urban poor people’s political agency**: constraints include electoral dynamics; clientelism; and elite capture of services and decision-making processes.

• **Collective action**: constraints include social and political polarisation; transient poor populations living in informality; and exploitation by community organisations.

• **Service delivery dynamics**: significant research on political economy constraints of the water and sanitation sector, as well as some analysis on housing and transport sectors.

• **Conflict and violence**: risk factors include the rapidity of urban growth, social and income inequalities, and legacies of armed conflict, political authoritarianism and repressive policing impacts include the effect of insecurity and violence on urban social capital and social cohesion; and analysis of the political economy of “fragile” cities.

• **Vulnerable groups**: how processes of exclusion and adverse incorporation in cities are differently experienced by, in particular, women and girls, youth, rural migrants, foreign immigrants and slum dwellers.

One of the challenges of urban planning, which has actually painted the profession black in the eyes of the public, is the bureaucratic urban planning process in which the democratisation and participation, which should be embedded into planning process, are not known to the public. Planning is generally not known to the public as a democratic process, except may be until very recently as being demonstrated in some of the ongoing model city plans in Lagos. Before now, the formulation of planning policies and regulations and allocation of spaces for various uses, through the strategic development plan, is often not public. Only at the implementation stage people usually get to know about such plans and regulations. This often results in general violation of city plan and planning regulations and dialectics of formal and informal, authorised and unauthorised and legal and illegal developments.

One of the very important ways through which people can achieve improved socio-economic condition and get engaged with the community is through urban planning, if it is practiced as the
process by which a community shapes its environment to meet its needs and realize its aspirations. Unfortunately, the benefits of adequate planning have for long eluded Nigeria. Nigeria is rapidly urbanising, resulting in expansion of many cities and urban agglomerations. Many of these cities, like Lagos, are largely expanding through a process of informality without the efforts of urban planning professionals (Gandy, 2005).

In this context, planning practice is now largely dominated by development control and urban regeneration activities, with the hope of righting the wrong. This often leads to contested cities and conflicts between planning professionals and the public and between professionals who are idealist and realist planners. One of the dialectics which is increasingly becoming very prominent in planning practice, policy, theory and pedagogy in Nigeria’s cities today lies in the tensions between two schools of urban development thought which I refer to as idealist and realist.

The idealists are perfectionists and generally embrace neo-liberalism and urban modernity patterned on the Western or Global North planning ideologies and principles. This group of planners often promote utopian ideas without due considerations to the socio-economic realities of the majority. The realities are that the majority of the population is poor or at least fall within low-income groups of the society and are mostly accommodated in informal settlements. They generally have a different set of priorities and needs different from utopian and neoliberal development ideas. Thus, throwing up another dialectic of planning profession.

Neoliberal urban development projects, across the African cities, have been referred to as fantasies by some African scholars (Watson, 2013). In recent times, the overall development agenda of Lagos has been focused on neoliberal development agenda, with conscious drive to compete with global cities. This overall development agenda, as some scholars and professionals have argued, only benefits the interest of minority, particularly the elites and the political class. This seems to be a result of the government deliberately ignoring the needs and aspirations of the low-income groups and slum residents, who are the majority, and using urban planning mechanisms as useful and legal tools to punish the poor. For examples, in recent times, there have been rampant cases of evictions, demolitions and displacements which have actually set the public against urban planning profession.

Most of the cases of forced evictions and demolitions that have occurred in Lagos were carried out under the disguise of safeguarding the environment and protecting the lives and properties of the individuals from impending dangers. May be planners are right, as government has the
constitutional responsibility of protecting individuals lives and properties. However, as logical as this argument may be, some critical role of urban planning and aspects of human existence and survival are left out of consideration. This borders on the livelihoods and the right of individuals to cities’ opportunities. The realists, who adopt humanitarian approach, find inspiration in this to promote their theoretical argument as relate to urban development planning. The questions therefore that arise are:

1. Should we leave cities to continue to degenerate and prime land under-utilised and people to lose their lives in the name of protecting the unsustainable living of the poor?
2. Should we allow our professionals to be used, by politicians who often set urban planning vision and agenda, as a tool to victimize the vulnerable groups of the society, who are victims of inefficient political economic system?

As urban planning professionals, we are professionally and ethically bound to adjudicate on the conflicts between environmental, social and economic concerns of development. In order words, urban planning professionals are duty bound to deliver human settlements that are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable even in the context of manipulative political economic system.

Planning Profession and Practice: Town Planner vs Town Planning Professional Dialectics

To achieve this nature of society stated above, the town planners and town planning professionals need to work together. However, the argumentative question will be can we really distinguish between town planner and town planning professional? In distinguishing the town planners and town planning professionals, Bamidele (2016) describes the town planners as, “decision makers, local, state and national leaders, policy actors and public administrators who are often involved in the management and development of cities, towns and communities of varying size.” He goes further to state that town planners are not necessarily trained or skilled in the science and art of town planning. Rather they are public administrators, nation builders, national heroes and visionary leaders, whose passion for their community or country make them envision, plan and build the physical environment of the community based on their informed perception of what the society should look like. His opinion is that many of the leaders are appointed or elected to deliver
on change in their community development. Urban planning is therefore a valuable pre-occupation of the city leaders in order to achieve sustainable development. On the other hand, town planning professionals are professionals who undergo skilled training and specialized in developing strategies and designing the communities in which we live, work and play. “Given their highly intellectual vocation which involves much critical and strategic thinking, they are always at the centre of complex debates about the right ways and manners to shape cities, towns and regions with a view to ensuring effective and efficient management of development, infrastructure and services.” (Bamidele, 2016). In his opinion, while “town planners” are visionary leaders at the helm of affairs in any society with perspective of how a society should be physically designed and developed, town planning professionals are experts who translate these laudable dreams and visions into reality through the deployment of their skills and expertise, to ensure the right use of resources for the purpose to create and promote healthy conditions of environment for all the people.

This attempt to distinguish a “town planner” from a “town planning professional” probably is a welcome approach safe for the statutory contradiction of TOPREC Act ascribing Town Planner as prefix to the Town Planning Professional. The distinction is apt and necessary to let the public appreciate the collaborative nature of planning. It also underscores the scope and interdisciplinary features of planning. In the first instance, it is not feasible to say the town planning professionals should be absolutely responsible for designing, planning and managing our cities for sustainable development. Apart from their capacity in terms of numerical strength, they are limited by the lack of resources which are controlled by the leaders of the communities. Acknowledging the inter-relationship of the key players in urban planning will assist us in achieving the goals of making the city liveable and sustainable.

The professional planner, in collaboration with the government and other stakeholders, continues to muddle through the process of planning. The professional planner is occupying a position where he has to balance the interest of the administrator and policy makers with that of citizens operating under the limitation or constraint of legislations and resources available. There is therefore an urgent need for the planners to work closely with the community leaders and decision makers with a view to creating sustainable settlements. Thus, when the complex situation in which the planner found himself is critically assessed, the society and many planning philosophers may need to
rethink the various theories and concepts of planning in our contemporary cities. We should also bear in mind often conflicting needs of the various interest groups in the society making planning process a complex assignment.

The Dialectics of Practice, Theory and academic Research

Most professional disciplines, with no exception of urban planning, reveal tension between theory and practice (Krizek, Forysth and Slotterback, 2009). Just as planners cannot totally agree on what planning really is, so also there are divergent opinions on planning theories and their relevance in everyday planning practice. Planning professional in the academia are generally persuaded to heavily deploy planning theories, even if they cannot justify their practical benefits, and as such see theories as an essential component of planning profession. On the contrary, practitioner planners (essentially in the public sector and private practice) often generally avoid theories as they believe that theories are abstract and, therefore, not useful for practice, even when the practical benefits are obvious. This is a major contributing factor to the current gap and lack of synergy between theory and practice and by extension planners in the academia and planners in the public and private practice.

Practicing planners requires information from evidence-based research, which is the core jurisdiction of planners in the academia, to formulate efficient planning policies and regulations capable of delivering liveable and sustainable human settlements. However, it is observed that academic research is often too abstract and heavily theoretical with focus on defining problems than solving them, identify issues, accumulate knowledge, and build theory (Krizek, Forysth and Slotterback, 2009; Hopkins, 2001). Research evidence are often either provided in ways that are difficult to grasp with or in ways that are inapplicable to real planning problems and as such fail to find their ways into everyday planning decisions and practices.

At the core of the gap between theory and practice is the clear differences in the way that both communities approach planning issues. Krizek, Forysth and Slotterback (2009) draws on various literature, including Forsyth (2007), Forsyth & Crewe (2006), Lawson (2006) and Rowe (1987), to develop major differences in approaches of practice and research to planning problems (see table 1).
### Table 1: Research and Practice in Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals and background</td>
<td>Responds to a question with general interest related to gaps in knowledge or key intellectual problems</td>
<td>Responds to a specific, concrete question meeting a need or solving a concrete problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Conforms to research protocols, using data that has been systematically collected and analysed, and that is capable of answering a core question</td>
<td>Application of existing knowledge and techniques at a professional level of skill; may involve investigations of topics; adds political problem-solving skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to earlier work</td>
<td>Builds on, and is usually placed in the context of, previous research efforts on the subject</td>
<td>May use standard techniques or best practices; tends to be part of an ongoing series of projects and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Makes an argument that, at least implicitly, counters reasonable objections</td>
<td>Makes an argument that, at least implicitly, answers the need or question at hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation and evaluation</td>
<td>Documents and evaluates its methods and findings, so that both can be replicated by others</td>
<td>May be documented and made public for evaluation; not essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>Is subject to peer review</td>
<td>Peer review may occur through awards or job evaluations, not essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/dissemination</td>
<td>Is made public though mainly accessible to other researchers</td>
<td>Not essential to disseminate or make public; practice is done in relation to a public good, and the needs of multiple publics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>Contributes to knowledge in a field</td>
<td>Solves a problem; may contribute to the body of planning tools or practices.</td>
</tr>
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Although theories may seem not useful on their own or they may not speak the languages of the practice, they are essential in providing the necessary frame of reference to planning practice (Abukhater, 2009). In the real sense, there are two-way directions between planning practice and theory. Planning theory could theorize from practice and vice-versa. In addition to the differences in the approaches of theory and practice, there remain struggle between the two communities for supremacy of knowledge. As such, planning profession has long been denied the benefits of synergy and collaboration, which generally non-existing until very recently where the two
communities are seen the need for co-designing and co-producing solutions to urban planning challenges.

To promote this inevitable relationship, professionals in the academia are encouraged to engage more in action-oriented and practice-oriented problem solving research, grounded in the real environments. Forester (1999) has long before now advised planning academia to seek to fully understand what practising planners do and to learn from practice. Similarly, planning practitioners have been strongly encouraged to look to academic research for inspiration and as a source of innovation, particularly as we struggle to cope with urban sustainability and contemporary urban development challenges posed by rapid urbanisation and global environmental change.

Sustainable Development as a Driver of New Dialectic in Urban Planning

In the coming years planners face tough decisions about where they stand on protecting the green city, promoting the economically growing city, and advocating social justice. Conflicts among these goals are not superficial ones arising simply from personal preferences. Nor are they merely conceptual, among the abstract notions of ecological, economic, and political logic, nor a temporary problem caused by the untimely confluence of environmental awareness and economic recession. Rather, these conflicts go to the historic core of planning, and are a leitmotif in the contemporary battles in both our cities and rural areas... And though sustainable development aspires to offer an alluring, holistic way of evading these conflicts, they cannot be shaken off so easily (Campbell, 1996, p. 296).

Human settlements are increasingly witnessing serious environmental problems and climate change-related challenges, with devastating effects on all aspects of human lives. The need to balance development with the ecosystem prompted the principles of sustainable development in the 1980s at global level. Sustainable development has become the bedrock of the contemporary environmental protection. Sustainable development, according to Brundtland (1987), is a development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In reality, “sustainable development consists of (a) conservation and recovery of adequate natural capital to support a quality development policy and (b) inclusion of environmental, cultural, social and economic criteria in the planning and implementation of developmental policies in both public and private sectors”

In essence, planning is no more strictly technical process but comprehensive activity to balance the ecosystem with the social and economic needs of the people. Campbell (1996) notes that
sustainability presents difficult challenges for planning profession as planners will need to reconcile three conflicting interests of growing the economy, distribute the growth equally and at the same time not degrade the ecosystem. The professionals are, however, deeply divided on which aspect of sustainability – environment, economic and social – to promote. These three goals of sustainability result in three different perspectives on how planners view the city. For example, as noted by Campbell (1996), the economic development biased planners view city as a place of economic production, distribution, consumption, and innovation, where city is constantly in competition with other cities. The environmentally biased planners view the city as a consumer of resources and a producer of wastes. The city is in competition with nature for scarce resources and land, and always poses a threat to nature. The socially biased planners view the city as a location of conflict over the distribution of resources, of services, and of opportunities. The competition is within the city itself, among different social groups. The need to balance environmental concern, social equity and economic prosperity is driving the development of various ecological-derived design concepts and philosophies such as smart growth, eco-city, resilient city, green infrastructure. These design principles are being promoted as the new paradigm and future of cities’ planning and design. At the same time, they are creating new dialectics for the Nigerian urban planning professionals. It is not my intention to get engaged with the discussion of all of these design ideas, but I will like to focus on one of them – smart growth – for two main reasons. Firstly, as I noted earlier, my private practice focuses on providing smart solutions to urban development planning practice. Secondly, there is an increasing realization that technology is the key to future cities.

**Urban Planning and Smart City Dialectics**

Recently, Lagos State signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a group from Dubai to build a Smart City. Hitherto, the Federal Government announced its intention to build a Smart City in Abuja Federal Capital Territory. Expectedly, the proposed adoption of smart city principles in Lagos strategic development plans is generating what I called unnecessary dialectics. On the one hand, there is a school of thought who believes that the idea of Lagos smart city is a fantasy, idealistic and utopian planning ideology which completely ignores the overwhelming reality of high incidence of informal development, poverty and low level of infrastructure and technological advancement. The arguments are that the Nigerian cities, including Lagos, generally
lack the level of infrastructural sophistication required to drive a smart city. It has also been argued that the idea is to further deepen already established spatial and social inequality in Lagos, by creating an island of smart cities at the expense of existing cities which currently lack adequate basic services.

On the other hand, the second school of thought is of the opinion that the principles of smart city are factored into contemporary spatial planning process in line with sustainable development. It is advocated that the planning laws should be reviewed to include the various standards and guidelines embedded in the smart growth principles in the preparation of strategic development plans and enforcement of the laws. The fact is that the current Planning Regulations in Nigeria are outdated and rigid. There are no Building Regulations for building control system not to talk of using same for sustainable development. For example, the National Building Code which took the built environment professionals twenty years to approve could not be implemented by the stakeholders after ten years of preparation. The outcome of these is the confusion in the physical planning and development processes in Nigeria. How can we bring sanity into our city in this kind of situation? How can planners catch up in the face of emerging and dynamic planning process embedded in smart cities principles? The starting point, I think, will be that planners are clear about what exactly is smart city. What then is a Smart City?

A Smart City is described as “an urban development vision to integrate multiple Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions in a secure fashion to manage a city’s assets.” Deakin defines smart city as one that utilizes ICT to meet the demands of the market (the citizens of the city) and that community involvement in the process is necessary for a smart city. A smart city would, therefore, be a city that not only employs ICT in particular areas, but also implements this technology in a manner that impacts the local community.

Smart City Council defines smart city as one that has digital technology embedded across all city functions. In essence, the functions or activities of the city are IT driven. According to Caraglin and Nijkamp (2009), a city can be defined as smart when investment in human and social capital and traditional (transport) and modern (ICT) communication infrastructure fuel sustainable physical and economic development and a high quality of life, with efficient management of natural resources, through participatory action and engagement. Frost & Sullivan (2014) highlight some components of smart city to include smart governance, smart energy, smart building, smart mobility, smart infrastructure, smart technologies, smart healthcare and smart citizen.
Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers describes it as a mix of technology, government and society to produce smart cities, a smart economy, smart mobility, a smart environment, smart people, smart living, smart governance. Each of these definitions acknowledges the central role of information and communication technology as the drivers of the city.

Figure 2: Smart City Model
On the other hand, smart city can be explained from sustainability perspective as defined by Business Dictionary which looks at it as a developed urban area that creates sustainable economic development and high quality of life by excelling in multiple key areas: economy, mobility,
environment, people, living and government. Similarly, Indian Government defines smart cities as one which offer sustainability in terms of economic activities and employment opportunities to a wide range section of its residents, regardless of their level of education, skills or income levels. Department for business, innovation and skills UK (2013) views it as a concept that is not static, there is no absolute definition of a smart city, no end point, but rather a process or series of steps by which cities become more liveable and resilient and hence able to respond quicker to new challenges.

The goal of building a smart city is to improve quality of life by using urban informatics and technology to improve the efficiency of services and meet residents’ needs. The application of ICT in the city allows the city officials to interact directly with the community and the city infrastructure and also enable them to monitor events in the city, its activities and how to ensure better quality of life. It also aimed at reducing costs and resource consumption with improved interaction between citizens and government. The urban sectors that have been using the smart city technology include transport and traffic management, energy, water, health care, government services and waste management. They are obviously geared towards addressing urban challenges such as climate change, economic restructuring, public finance and urban growth among others. A classic example is Milton Keynes in United Kingdom. Others include Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, Berlin in Germany, New York City in USA, and emerging smart cities like Songdo, Republic of Korea.

From the above definitions, though not exhaustive, one can conclude that smart city, among others, uses ICT to:

- Make more efficient use of physical infrastructure (roads, other physical assets etc.) through artificial intelligence and data analysis to support a strong and healthy economic, social and cultural development.
- Engage effectively with local people in local governance and decision making by use of open innovation processes and e-participation improving the collective intelligence of the city’s institutions through E-Government with emphasis placed on citizen participation and co-design.
- Learn, adapt and innovate and thereby respond more effectively and promptly to changing circumstances by improving the intelligence of the city.
These innovative approaches to sustainable development needs to be adopted in planning of our cities. Using ICT and with the active participation and interaction of the people with the government, smart city has become the modern tool of city planning. According to Fashola (2014), the need to deploy innovative approaches that address civic challenges has never been greater, and technology is the key to the future. Smart city will afford the planners the opportunity to employ ICT in planning process from data gathering, analysis, visioning and preparation and implementation of sustainable development plans. The principle of citizen participation and artificial intelligence will address socio-cultural and economic expectations of the people in transparent manner. The use of information technology will also make city more efficient and liveable.

The good side of this concept is that it is applicable for both the old cities (including slums) and the new settlements. The application of the concept may, however, vary from one city to the other. The basic ingredients are ICT/internet of things, the government and the citizens with the aim of improved quality of life for all. Globally, smart city is increasingly being adopted for cities development and management. Thus, we have regional bodies like European Union and many countries like United States of America, India, Dubai, Singapore, Brazil and China investing huge amount of resources in development of smart cities. Each of these countries has designated some settlements for implementation of smart city projects with the policy framework for making cities liveable.

The policy framework is aimed at promoting smart cities as a practicable approach to tackling complex and multifaceted challenges of the cities, such as flooding, traffic congestion among others. For instance, if an area suddenly got flooded, sensors and social media traffic could quickly alert managers, who would in turn issue public announcement (again through social media), re-route the traffic and public buses and dispatch worker to resolve the problem. A leading example of this kind of connected and data-driven urban management is Rio de Janeiro Operation Centre, set up by IBM in 2010. The center integrates and coordinates information from 30 municipal and other State agencies. It is a citywide data integrating system being used to manage challenges of security, traffic and emergencies from natural disaster even in the vulnerable areas like the favelas similar to our slums.

Smart city, just like issue of climate change has become a global affair with national and local authorities formulating policies and strategies on its adoption and implementation. Almost every
nation of the developed world is adopting the concept for sustainable development of the cities. Going by the unfolding events in urban development in Nigeria, it is doubtful if the governments at federal and state levels are taking it serious. Till date, there is no national policy on smart city. However, there seems to be some sorts of initiative from the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) sensitizing other stakeholders on the emerging concept of smart city as a tool for achieving sustainable and liveable human settlements.

The understanding of the Nigerian policy makers of what smart city is about is generally parochial. Smart city is generally conceived as the development of a new city primarily driven by ICT rather than holistic approach to make cities, old or new, smarter in terms of efficient management of cities. This plays out from the fact that only new areas designated for estates development are classed as smart cities. In 2014, the Federal Government named a new district in Abuja – Centenary City – a smart city, expected to be developed on the principles of smart city. The Centenary City is to be built on about 2000 hectares of land. At State level, Lagos State upon series of overtures from multi-national IT giants like Google and IBM recently signed a memorandum with Dubai Smart City to develop Lagos Smart City in Lekki sub-region. Similarly, some private real estates are springing up tagged as “smart cities”. These include the Atlantic City by South Energyx Nigeria Limited near the Bar Beach in Victoria Island, being developed as a model smart city and mitigating the ocean erosion threatening the Victoria Island and Lekki Smart City Innovation Hub.

It is gratifying to note that the Federal Government recently take the bull by the horn by setting up an inter-ministerial committee to develop a framework for developing smart city policy. This was an outcome of the seminar coordinated by Federal Ministry of Communications where an inter-ministerial committee comprising Federal Ministry of Communications, Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing and Federal Ministry of Environment was set up to among others, to:

- organize smart cities sustainable summit Nigeria;
- develop framework for emergence of smart cities;
- provide the guidelines for the formation of National Consortium on a PPP model for the implementation of smart cities initiatives in Nigeria.

It is important to note that, though, the implementation and application of smart city projects go beyond planning profession alone, the concept is surely going to influence future of contemporary spatial planning process. Urban planners should, therefore, look beyond the current dialectics and
see how the principles can be leveraged upon for the benefits of all and for the attainment of urban sustainability. For this to happen there is a need to revisit planning regulations and standards, which are often considered too rigid, to accommodate new innovation embedded in smart city principles. There is also an opportunity to embed innovation and technology into the emergent national urban policy.

**Conclusion and the Way Forward: Remained Locked into Dialectical Thinking?**

I must say, the practice of urban and regional planning is a herculean task not only in developing countries like Nigeria, but globally. The concept of planning stands between the planners and the societies and it conditions the way they perceive planning problems which guides their choice of solutions. It is obvious that the subject matter of urban planning is wide in scope, multi-disciplinary in nature, dynamic and mutative. The practitioners and beneficiaries of planning are equally diverse and heterogeneous in perception and expectation of what should be the process and outcome of planning.

Urban planning professionals start by attempting to transform their environment and end up by being absorbed into it. Arising from this are various ideologies and approaches of planning which have left urban planning professionals more confused in their practice. The Nigerian experience of urban planning practice is far from yielding the expected outcomes. Many years of negligence in planning Nigerian cities coupled with rapid urbanisation have resulted in the perennial problems: congestion in housing; traffic and transportation; environment degradation; infrastructure decay; growth of slums; urban crime and poverty among others. The negligence can partly be traced to the ignorance of the decision makers at all levels which viewed planning as intangible activity thereby attracting least resources. Another factor for poor physical planning could also be traced to the rapid changes in the metamorphosis of cities and paradigm shift in approaches. These, together with weak policies, have put urban planning practice and the professionals in bad image.

The pattern of failure of planning is evident in Nigeria’s cities, where planning practice, regulations and standards have been reduced to subject of manipulation based on professionals varied biases and conflicting ideological dispositions, societal levels of economic development and temperamental attitude of government (at all levels) to development. Yet planning is meant to be
rational in nature, seeking to avoid future problems by anticipating them. The success of planning is tied to the future outcome. It may be wrong to always look at planning from the formal public documents alone. Often than not decision taken outside of the formal plan determine the outcome in future.

In this country, planning practice is onerous task. Planners are confronted with myriads of challenges which make their practice challenging. The confusion in planning practice begins with the planners’ understanding of the planning activities. This is affected by the definition ascribed to the profession. The perception of the public about planning is that it is owned by government. The decisions may at times run counter to the view and expectation of the private sector. In Nigeria, the town planners may not necessarily be the registered professionals (who are less than 4000) but expanded to include many other stakeholders who contribute to the shaping of human settlements for orderly and functional development with a view to achieve better quality of life.

As planning professionals, people will define us not based on how we struggled within ourselves for supremacy of ideologies, but based on the outcomes and impacts of our products, be it policies, regulations, plans, education and urban development projects, on the society at large. We need to realise what we stand to lose if we are permanently locked into dialectical thinking without collectively reasoning a common agenda that benefits the majority of the society. Certainly, if we are locked into dialectical thinking, we cannot see out of the box.

When I look at planning profession, I am of the opinion that our job is simple and straight forward – to deliver liveable places that accommodate everybody’s interests, aspirations and needs, and that respects our socio-economic, cultural and our level of technological advancement realities. I personally do not think these are unattainable, I think being able to create a platform that brings all actors together, where all actors recognise that we have a common responsibility of improving the living condition of human settlements, will be the challenge. Large part of this challenge comes from our individuals’ orientation, biases, and understanding of what development connotes. I will like to conclude that we need to realise that the best legacy we can leave is to build a sustainable, resilience and inclusive society. It is our collective responsibility to find answer to what this might mean in our society.

The following suggestions are however, put together for consideration as we search the best way to plan our cities
1. The legislative instrument recognizing the professional town planners should be reviewed to acknowledge the city or community leaders who envision the future of the cities as the leaders and accord the key role as planners.

2. There is need for National Spatial Planning Policy Framework to comprehensively provide for guidelines, standards and technical support in urban planning process.

3. The governments at all levels should embark on preparation of appropriate development plans to guide the growth of urban settlements in Nigeria.

4. Planning statutes should be reviewed with sustainable subsidiary legislations to implement the plans.

5. The system of local planning should be revisited by creating independent Local Planning Authorities under the Local Government to ensure community participation in planning.

6. Contemporary issues such as climate change, smart development, smart city concept, public participation and inclusive planning approaches should be considered in planning regulations for sustainable and resilient cities.

7. There should be reforms in the institutional framework adopting ICT for transparent processing of planning applications.

8. The land use law and land rights in the States should be reformed to ensure positive planning and effective development control.

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