

Urban Alchemy

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Urban Alchemy: A Governance and Planning Framework for Sustainable Urban Transformation in Developing Economies

BY

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Part One

Sustainable Urban Transformation in Developing Countries

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Chapter One

General Introduction

Abstract

Sustainable urban governance and planning (SUG&P) within sustainable urban transformation (SUT) emphasizes the distinctive challenges and complexities encountered in developing countries. It explores the evolution of societies from ancient civilizations to the Industrial Revolution, focusing on resultant issues like environmental degradation, infrastructural deficiencies, and the provision of essential services. In regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, the study aims to create an effective SUG&P framework, particularly tailored for SUT. This involves a thorough analysis of pivotal factors and obstacles, a comprehensive literature review, and an in-depth case study focused on urban centres in Ghana. The research is propelled by the global movement towards sustainable development, with a special emphasis on the unique challenges and opportunities in developing nations. The significance of this research lies in its detailed examination of how urban governance and planning can critically influence SUT. By assessing current sustainable urban development (SUD) policies and initiatives, the study seeks to enrich the discourse on urban transformation in emerging economies. The objectives include the development of new theories on SUG&P, an investigation into stakeholder behaviours, and the establishment of a feasible framework for SUG&P in the context of SUT. This chapter sets the stage for an in-depth analysis of SUG&P's role in driving forward SUT, with a focus on the setting of developing countries and their unique challenges and opportunities.

Keywords: Developing countries; sustainable development; sustainable infrastructure development; sustainable development goals; environmental impact

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1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the distinctive challenges and complexities of SUG&P within SUT in developing countries. It traces the evolution from ancient civilizations to the Industrial Revolution, highlighting issues like environmental degradation and infrastructural deficiencies. Focused on sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Ghana, the study aims to create an effective SUG&P framework tailored for SUT. The research examines current SUD policies, investigates stakeholder behaviours, and proposes new theories. By assessing urban centres in Ghana, the chapter enriches the discourse on urban transformation in emerging economies. This introduction outlines the study's inspiration, objectives, and importance, laying the foundation for exploring SUG&P's role in SUT.

1.2. Background of the Book

Humans generally share a common set of aspirations and a common ability to act to achieve such aspirations. Societies, however, differ by the institutions that govern economic life (Clark, 2014). Experiences, choices, decisions, and needs have, however, shaped the various institutions of societies that had propelled or retarded their growth and developments. The development of societies has been with us since the prehistoric period. This societal development process has remained progressive and unsatisfying as with the never-ending 'need' and 'wants' of human. Societal development and the rising demand for goods and services from prehistoric times to the Industrial Revolution led to significant changes in production processes, shifting from manual to increased mechanization. Clark (2014) indicates that the Industrial Revolution represents the single greatest economic historical event bringing about significant changes between industrialized and non-industrialized economies. He further explains that over 200 years, real income per capita in some industrialized countries increased 10–15 times due to higher outputs for constant input, leading to steady and sustainable per capita growth. It is, however, important to note that this industrial revolution was non-existent on the African continent and some developing countries in Asia. As many neo-Marxists have argued, industrialization in Africa did not commence in this period of global industrialization with the rest of the world. Africa was rather exploited for its human and natural resource through a century and half of slave trade, colonization, and neo-colonization. This period was characterized by a handful of manufacturing industries to produce goods for the local market and the exportation of the vast majority of the raw materials to the countries of the colonial masters (Rodney, 1989). The development of infrastructure was not futuristic in its planning effort but was mostly meant to meet the objective of transporting raw material from the hinterland to the cities and seaport centres for onward transport to the European countries (Mumo, 2010). However, the industrial revolution proceeded aggressively in the European countries. Notwithstanding the tremendous benefits those nations achieved, the period also accounts for an unprecedented rate of urbanization, high demand for raw materials, and the many challenges that come with it. Until the late 1600s and early 1700s, the production of goods was on a moderate scale with the local market-based economy

or the merchandise system of trade among local or community inhabitants being the most predominant means of doing business. With the advent of the transportation system and its subsequent improvement, there were demands for goods and services from other societies and communities requiring large-scale production. This required mechanization and more coordination in the production process, leading to industrialization to meet the demand. This period saw tremendous economic and social benefits of industrialization such as improved means of production, reduction in delivery time for goods and services, major increases in job opportunities, and improved quality of life of people. Nevertheless, there were also major challenges associated with it such as massive pollution, loss of farmlands, poor working conditions in the factories, increased child labour, and urbanization.

1.3. Problem Statement of the Book

Many cities are struggling to meet the development needs of the world's growing urban population, which is expected to reach 6.25 billion in 2050 ([United Nations Economic and Social Council Report, 2014](#)). Of that total, 73% is expected to reside in developing regions in Africa and Asia. Cities face challenges in terms of providing adequate social services, job opportunities, and security without straining the urban infrastructure and imposing unsustainable demands on local and global natural resources and systems. Common urban challenges include congestion, pollution, access to energy, provision of basic services, adequate housing, infrastructure maintenance, crime and security, environmental degradation, and natural disasters ([United Nations Economic and Social Council Report, 2014](#)). Policies, planning, and management approaches that can effectively deal with the conflicts and contradictions of modern urban living are critical to addressing these challenges in ways that allow cities to continue to thrive and grow sustainably ([McCormick et al., 2013](#)). They also enhance citizen security and promote resilience to environmental and other disasters. There should, therefore, be a deliberate effort to help maximize the socio-economic benefits of contemporary urbanization processes and reduce the threats that such processes pose to sustainable development. Doing so will be even more critical in the light of pressing urbanization trends. While current models have made some headway in this regard, issues of fragmented decision-making, conflicting policy targets, and insufficient coordination among city stakeholders continue to present obstacles to a more effective and sustainable management of rapidly changing urban areas ([United Nations Economic and Social Council Report, 2014](#)). Urban governance and planning systems that can efficiently manage these new territorial realities will need to address such issues while taking into account the specific and diverse sustainability challenges faced by cities at different stages of development.

As a result of the aforementioned issues, cities around the world have been experiencing rapid transformation. While most studies are being carried out on the national scale in understanding this trend, a more focused discussion and analysis are indispensable if the ultimate purpose is to find a solution for urban managers and urbanists who act as the fundamental players within this trend. It has been recognized during discussions and analysis that governance and

planning are pivotal to the SUT process. However, a framework is lacking to guide the governance and planning in the SUT process, especially in the context of developing countries. This knowledge gap might lead to failure in managing the SUD and SUT processes as pertaining to developing countries.

1.4. Purpose of the Book

The purpose of the book is to present an integrated governance and planning framework to guide the implementation of SUT in developing countries by identifying the critical driving forces needed for the implementation of SUG&P in the SUT implementation process, identifying the critical factors impeding the implementation of SUG&P in the SUT process and identifying the primary indicator for SUG&P in SUT implementation in developing countries. The purpose of this book will be achieved by critically examining the literature on urban governance and planning in developed and developing countries and establishing the processes they adopted to achieve SUT as well as the challenges experienced during the process at the various stages of their societal development or transformation. Furthermore, this book will stimulate further discussions on how urban governance and planning can enable the attainment of achieving SUT as well as identifying strategies needed for the implementation of effective SUT processes in developing countries. Lastly, the book will also identify the key stakeholder behaviour in the implementation of SUT in developing countries through an understanding of the responses of key stakeholders in the urban governance and planning space from urban centres in Ghana, a developing country in sub-Saharan Africa.

1.5. Motivation for the Book

After the metamorphosis of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to sustainable development goals (SDGs) with their core mandate being the creation of a sustainable future for all of humanity, several discussions on how to attain the Sustainable Development Agenda (SDA) globally, nationally, and at the regional levels has evolved. Many countries are now shifting urban centres into eco-cities, smart cities, and green cities, among others. Yet little or no knowledge of these developments can be identified in the context of developing countries, especially in the case of sub-Saharan African countries. This book contributes to this area by providing an understanding of how governance and planning can help in achieving an SUT agenda in developing countries, thereby opening up further academic discussion, motivating policy makers to develop policies and initiatives aimed at the creation of a better life for its citizens now and for future generations as well as fitting into the global agenda of sustainable development.

1.6. Significance of the Book

Notwithstanding the plethora of studies conducted and books on sustainable development, there is limited focus on how urban governance and planning can

enable the achievement of the SUT agenda, especially in the developing sub-Saharan African cities. More worrying is the acknowledgement that these cities have the fastest growing urban centres. Issues surrounding governance and planning and how to effectively plan and implement them to achieve sustainability in these cities or urban centres have been identified to account for a significant component of the challenges facing SUD (McCormick et al., 2013; UN-Habitat Report, 2008; World Cities Report, 2016). Through this book, the authors sought to understand the concept of SUT in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan African countries. Secondly, is to identify existing SUD policies and initiatives existing in these developing countries and how they are being implemented. Thirdly, indicators of SUD through governance and planning will be identified and a mechanism for measurement will be established. Lastly, to further strengthen the importance of academic and policy debate on urban governance and planning in the SUT process in developing countries through an extensive review of literature of initiatives in the developed or post-industrialized cities. Using urban centres in Ghana and understanding of how SUG&P can be achieved in developing countries through the development of a framework for SUG&P in the SUT process in Ghana.

1.7. Objectives of the Book

- *OB1*. To establish current theories on SUG&P in the implementation of SUT and the identification of gaps in the existing theories;
- *OB2*. To ascertain the behaviour of key stakeholders regarding the implementation of SUT;
- *OB3*. To identify the critical factors impeding the implementation of SUT in developing countries;
- *OB4*. To identify the driving forces of the SUT process in developing countries;
- *OB5*. To identify the primary indicators for the implementation of SUG&P in the SUT process;
- *OB6*. To identify the strategies for implementing an effective SUG&P in developing countries;
- *OB7*. To develop a framework for the implementation of SUG&P in developing countries.

1.8. Summary

This section introduces the study by emphasizing the pressing challenges faced by rapidly urbanizing cities, especially in developing regions in Africa and Asia. With a projected urban population of 6.25 billion by 2050, these cities face issues like congestion, pollution, inadequate services, and environmental degradation. The study aims to develop a framework for SUG&P to address these challenges, particularly focusing on the implementation of SUT in developing countries. This introduction sets the stage for a deeper exploration into the theories and practices of urban governance and planning, their role in sustainable development and the unique challenges faced by developing regions.

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