



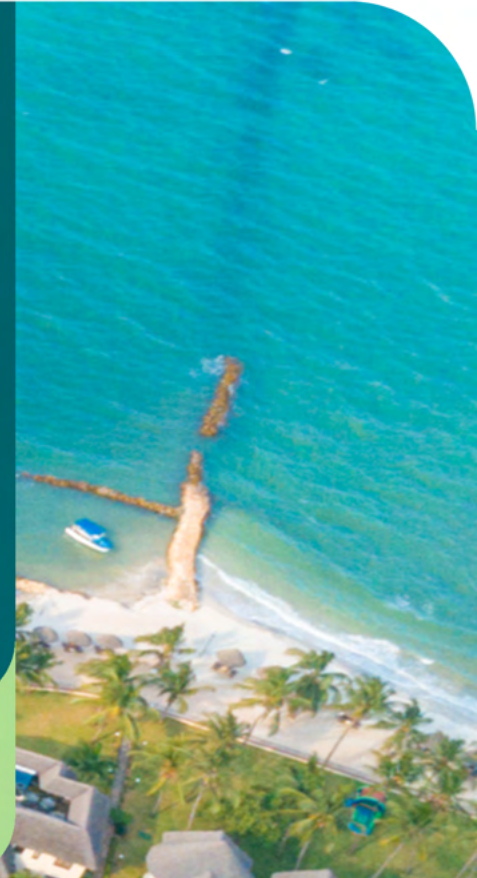
Local Governments  
for Sustainability  
AFRICA



# Urban Resilience and Local Governance

## CONCEPTUALISING POLITICS AND PLANNING IN TANZANIA

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## Urban Resilience and Local Governance in Tanzania

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## Abstract

Recently it was observed that there are conflicting interests between political actors and urban planning practices, where political actors who are the decision makers have been seen to lose interest in physical plans and other urban planning activities. This has prompted the sprouting of different views and opinions from actors responsible for urban planning practices who perceive political actors as an obstacle to the implementation of physical plans. This paper presents the conceptualisation of politics and urban planning practices in Tanzania. This work was accomplished through practical experiences and a literature review of secondary data such as the Dar es Salaam Master Plan of 2016-2036 (2020) and other published articles. However, it should be taken into consideration that studies on politics and planning have focused on the activities and experiences of planners through their engagement in the planning process, and thus identify a gap that exists between planners and political actors who are the decision makers. The study revealed that there is a loss of interest in urban planning practices by political actors as a result of many factors, among which are: political boundaries of urban plans influencing interest by political actors, urban plan preparation and review timelines conflicting with political terms/timeframes, misalignment between urban and economic plans ,

the static nature of urban plans, limitations of urban plans in addressing land conflict issues, inability of urban plans to take into account informality as a key challenges in urban development and lack of participation of multiple stakeholders during plan preparation. To address the abovementioned factors, the study proposes: to align urban planning works with political timeframes and boundaries, to enhance public participation in planning processes, to improve collaboration between political actors and planning processes, and to improve legal procedures to address land conflicts.



# 1. Introduction

Urban planning as a means of managing and coordinating land use development has become a very important part of human progress. Experience shows that, both planned and unplanned settlements have over time provided human habitation and have increased the housing stock. However, it is clear that planned settlements offer many benefits to residents, the state and environment compared to unplanned settlements. Planned settlements offer access to basic social services, security of tenure, a source of land tax for the government, environmental conservation, and resilience to urbanisation challenges and to the impacts of climate change. In trying to formalise informal settlements, the government has tried to use different approaches to reduce the rate of growth of informal settlements, but the results have not yielded the expected results (Juma, 2020). There are several reasons why the approaches have failed to yield the expected results, among which are political factors.

With reference to different authors, urban planning simply refers to the technical and political process of ordering human settlements with all necessary infrastructure facilities, while politics refers to the activities which are associated with the governance of certain geographical areas of various spatial scales which can be a ward, district, town or city, region, or country.

Politics and planning are closely related in many ways. First of all, political actors are a very important part of the government as they are attached to high positions in administration, from sub-ward to the national level, such as ward councillors, members of parliament and ministers. Through these positions, political actors are also decision makers involved in the preparation, financing and implementation of plans. Planning is a technical process requiring the technical knowledge of planners, and it is a political process because the beneficiaries of the plans are centered in decision making as they answer questions about how people will live, work and play in a given area. Landowners have the power to decide what is to be done on their land while planners only act as facilitators in the planning process. Citizens have the power to accept or reject the proposed plans for where they reside. For instance, the Ministry of Land, Housing and Human Settlements Development has experienced objections by citizens to proposed plans, such as the Kigamboni Master plan. Therefore, the whole process of planning requires negotiation with different actors for it to be successful.

## 1.1 Urban planning practices during and after the colonial period

In Tanzania, urban planning and politics have a close history and have been inextricably linked before and after independence. This closeness can be viewed through different perspectives, but history shows that during the colonial era, the government used urban planning as an instrument for economic development and state control. According to the Dar es Salaam City Master Plan of 2020, the first urban planning scheme was designed in 1891 when Dar es Salaam was declared as the capital of German East Africa. To ensure state control, Germany used the scheme to segregate residential zones for various racial groups: Europeans, Asians and Africans. This was followed by the Dar es Salaam Master Plan of 1949 which also emphasised the zoning of residential areas as it was done before (URT, 2020). Therefore, through urban planning, the colonial government managed to control state-owned resources, and even after independence the Tanzanian government continued to use physical plans to control state resources and development, for instance, operations aimed at the massive villagisation of people in 1973 (Raikes, 1978). During villagisation, the Tanzanian government managed to pull together all scattered villages to facilitate the provision of social services.

A few years after independence, the Dar es Salaam Master Plan of 1968 was

prepared to open up immediate impact regions of Dar es Salaam such as Kisarawe and Kibaha, thus reducing population pressure into the capital city of Dar es Salaam. However, in 1979 another master plan was prepared as a solution for the influx and proliferation of unplanned settlements in the capital city. Also, this master plan focused on solving the challenges of the stagnation of employment and deterioration of the city's infrastructures (URT, 2020). Moreover, the plan encouraged industrial development through the provision of many industrial areas in the capital city to reduce travel time and cost. With this background, it is evident that urban planning frameworks were a very important tool for the government in controlling state development by dictating what could be done. Furthermore, it was also a useful instrument that provided a framework for economic growth. However, urban planning processes have over time been influenced and impacted by political actors attached to high positions in administration of the government such as at the ministry level.

Recently, there are conflicting interests between political actors and urban planning practices, where political actors who are the decision makers have been seen to lose interest in the physical plans and other urban planning activities. This has prompted the sprouting of different views and opinions from actors responsible for urban planning practices who perceive political actors to be an obstacle to the





implementation of physical plans. Studies on politics and planning have focused on the activities and experiences of planners through their engagement in the planning process, and identify a gap that exists between planners and political actors who are the decision makers. This paper presents the conceptualisation of politics and urban planning practices in Tanzania.



## 2. Land policy reforms and decentralisation

During the colonial era and soon after independence, the government managed to decide on what to do and succeeded, although challenges emerged in certain processes such as the slum clearance that took place between 1967 and 1972. The method was costly and was implemented in a top-down manner which resulted in a lack of ownership and which was difficult to maintain.

With the increasing demand for housing stock in a context where the government didn't control much of the land, the state then started to acknowledge informal settlements as part of the existing housing stock (Juma, 2020). This contributed to the proliferation of informal settlements in many urban areas where unplanned settlements were seen to be affordable for many low-income earners who perceived informal settlements as an alternative way of accessing housing in urban areas. Furthermore, physical plans were separated from other development instruments such as strategic plans and five-year national development plans, which turned the focus of many political actors to short-term plans that had an element of income generation, rather than physical plans whose focus was on long-term physical development. Following the urban development trends resulting from the policy reform, the price of land

escalated while the growth rate of informal settlements increased. This has had several implications in the country socially and economically, as most physical infrastructure development depends on the physical planning status of the state.

Global reform advocated the change from traditional planning which was a top-down approach to a postmodern approach where decisions were made from the bottom up. Consequently, practices started to change after the implementation of the National Land Policy of 1995, like other reforms in the 'new wave of land reforms' which have taken place in sub-Saharan Africa. Tanzania's reform decentralised land administration and encouraged land registration and titling in both urban and rural areas, and local governments were heading the process of recognising existing rights and issuing titles (Pedersen, 2010). This led to the devolution of the power of the government to dictate land development. The devolution of power involved the inclusion of local government actors in decision making to enhance participation where landowners had the power to decide upon the plans that affected their lands.

Contrary to the previous practice where land could be taken by the government



for public interest without compensation, the reform exposed land to the free market where any process of land acquisition had to involve fair compensation as stipulated in the Land Acquisition Act of 1967. As a result, land became expensive to acquire, creating challenges in the provision of infrastructure facilities, especially in areas developed informally. Most land was privately owned, with less land controlled by the state due to limitations in compensation funds. As a result, the government lost power over the land.



### 3. Loss of political actors' interest in urban planning practices

As explained in the previous paragraphs, the land policy reform empowered citizens in the planning process. Since the government had no more power to use urban plans as tools for state control, political actors who were influential in government lost interest in urban plans. This loss of interest was also due to the reasons described below.

#### 3.1 Misalignment between physical plans and political boundaries and timeframes

Many physical plans do not align with political boundaries and timeframes, thus causing political actors to lack direct ownership in the implementation of their development agendas. This fact has prompted political actors to avoid directly referencing plans such as neighbourhood or master plans to address the prevailing challenges in their communities in their political boundaries and timeframe. Also, the lack of correlation between the coverage of physical plans and political boundaries has made political actors focus on other development projects such as roads, health and education facilities which are perceived to have immediate impacts on society. These kinds of projects can be easily recognised by community members rather than projects derived from

physical plans whose recognition is mostly dependent on the perspective of the particular society.

#### 3.2 Misalignment between urban and economic plans

Traditionally, physical plans are not income-generating instruments. As a developing country that faces several socioeconomic and infrastructure shortfalls, priority is always made to those plans which address such challenges, or which generate income for implementing other development projects. Separation of physical plans and other development instruments such as strategic plans which depict the ways through which financial flows can be generated have prompted many political actors to focus on strategic plans which are observed to have an element of increasing the income of Tanzanian institutions.

On the other hand, community members perceive the planning process as an attempt to create a mechanism for the government to collect revenue from landowners. This perception is valid since people living in planned settlements pay land taxes to the government while those living on unplanned land don't pay land tax. With the intention of being excluded from land tax payments, many people have



persisted in using their power over land without legal ownership. Furthermore, in several instances plan implementation is a big challenge due to the lack of funds to compensate landowners who would be displaced in the process.

### **3.3 Static nature of urban plans**

Cities have become less resilient to the ongoing effects of climate change where, despite having urban redevelopment schemes, several parts of Dar es Salaam still experience flooding during heavy rainfall. Added to this, the country continues to face challenges in providing social services and urban basic services to some informal settlements in the cities due to over-densification of houses where the acquisition of the land for providing such services is always difficult. This has forced a large number of people in urban areas to live in places which lack adequate social services and infrastructure, thus making those settlements vulnerable to disasters such as floods and fire outbreaks.

Physical plans have failed to make these urban areas resilient to the ongoing impacts of climate change. Inadequate capacity of physical plans to mainstream resilience to climate change impacts has brought about the perception that the planning profession has failed to protect the cities. Under normal circumstances, physical plans should act as disaster and risk management tools to protect the built environment, and failure to do so has made political actors and others see

the plans merely as paperwork with little impact on the sustainable development of the land.

### **3.4 Limitations of urban plans in addressing land conflict issues and rising informality**

Another issue is the prevalence of land conflict and informality due to the failure to interpret urban plans. Most plans are too technical for an ordinary person to interpret and implement correctly. Conflicts between pastoralists and crop growers continue to occur in the urban peripheral and rural areas. These conflicts have escalated and in some cases, people have even killed each other. At first, it was believed that having physical plans in these areas could help to solve the land conflicts between different segments of society, however, these land conflicts still exist. Thus, the failure of physical plans to address these pertinent issues has made decision makers uninterested in prioritising their preparation and implementation.

### **3.5 Lack of participation of multiple stakeholders during plan preparation**

Despite the requirements of the urban planning guidelines for a public hearing on the preparation of urban plans, there is still a culture and history of secrecy around processes of preparing urban planning documents that should be made public like Master Plans. As a result, plans remain in the hands of responsible authorities and citizens

lack any ownership. Due to this reason, implementation of the plans always faces several challenges due to lack of awareness among citizens, which normally prompts objections to those plans.

The lack of citizen participation in the preparation of urban plans has prompted political actors to lose interest in them. Public participation promotes a positive relationship between a government and the public by communicating effectively and solving conflicts in a cooperative manner. In many cases when urban planning decisions are made without public engagement, the desired results are not achieved and this normally leads to negative impacts on society, which breeds unrest. Ensuring that a wide variety of opinions are considered helps decision makers in better understanding the interlinkages and nature of problems facing the city (UN-Habitat, 2018).



## 4. Enhancing interest of political actors to urban planning practices

Planning decisions are taken by a public authority, and someone must be accountable for those plans: political influence is unavoidable in providing that accountability. From this perspective, planning is subordinated to political constraints, and at the same time, is shaped by the political system (Scott, 1972).

The conflict of interest between urban planning activities and politics is experienced in several ways. These include political interference in urban planning, which occurs when the administrative arm of the government uses its power and influence to disturb or hinder the process of urban planning that prevents the natural flow of desired outcomes. Also, political interference in urban planning can occur through political decisions that affect the activities of urban areas and the administration of those decisions through government agencies.

Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that urban planning is not an independent field, but rather the opposite. Unlike other industries such as civil engineering and architecture, urban planning is a field with transcendental repercussions in all sections of society, going beyond what is built. Urban planning is also a double-edged sword in that it can be used to

recuperate a town's economy, or it can be used to destroy a local economy by eliminating zoning diversity. Urban planning can bring communities together through safe and welcoming public spaces, or it can separate them with a six-lane highway (Caro, 1974, as cited in Teaford, 2008). Therefore, to incentivise the political interest in urban planning works, the following initiatives should be taken into consideration.

### 4.1 Alignment of urban planning with political terms and boundaries

Many urban plans require long-term implementation plans. This is because of many factors, among which is the need for large investments to facilitate implementation, such as for the Master Plan. Therefore, to ensure that planners and political actors are taking the same path in the implementation of urban planning tasks, there is a need for planners to align plans with political timeframes to give the most chance for positive results which attract politicians.

If neither master plans nor detailed plans align with political boundaries, political actors lack direct ownership of the plans. Therefore, to attract political interests there is a need to change the traditional planning approach and have physical plans created for ward level

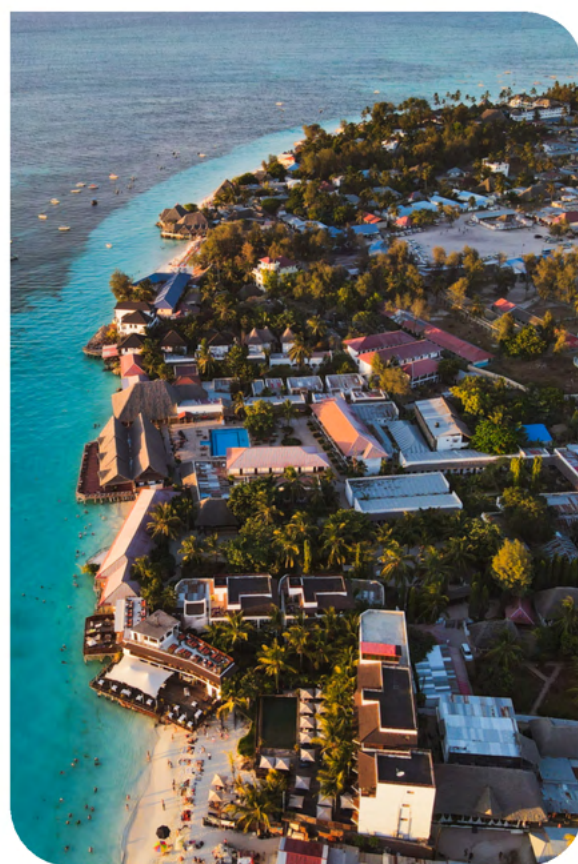
and other political levels such as constituency.

#### **4.2 Enhancement of public participation in planning processes**

Community participation is based on the principle that the built and natural environments work better if citizens are active and involved in their creation and management instead of being treated as passive consumers. Therefore, if citizens are engaged in planning and design decision-making processes, it is more likely they will work within established systems when seeking solutions to problems. Also, it provides citizens with a voice in planning and decision making in order to improve plans, decisions, service delivery, and overall quality of the environment. Community participation in urban planning promotes a sense of community by bringing together people who share a common goal. Lastly, community participation should be active and directed, leading those who become involved to experience a sense of achievement. Through community participation, efficiency in the planning practices will be improved and plans will be developed which are more resilient to ongoing urbanisation challenges and reduce land and land use conflicts.

Legal and institutional frameworks for the preparation of urban planning works, for example, the Urban Planning Act of 2007 through to the Guidelines for the Preparation of General Planning Schemes and Detailed Schemes for

New Areas, and the Urban Renewal and Regularization of 2007 require all planning processes, whether General or Detailed Planning Schemes to conduct community participation before approval of the plans. The aim of community engagement at different stages is to receive the opinions of citizens and also to create awareness on the impacts of the plans on the citizens before implementation. However, experience shows that citizen participation in planning has been different to what is directed by the guidelines. In many cases, citizens have been involved as part of fulfilling legal obligations but not as the primary stakeholders in the planning process, even though the land for which the plans are being made is their property.





## 5. Politics and planning practices: Case studies

Despite the interference of political actors in urban planning practices, there are still some best practices that can be found where politics and planning have worked together in harmony.

### 5.1 Alignment of politicians and planning authorities

There are some cases where political actors align with the decisions of planning authorities. For instance, there are conflicts that emerge when citizens establish illegal settlements on land they do not own or which is protected, e.g. a conservation area. In this kind of case, political actors usually collaborate closely with the planning authorities to evict people from those areas in various ways. A good example is the eviction of occupants who encroached on the Ranges of Mount Uluguru in the Morogoro Region. It was observed that encroachment by human activities had led to the disruption of the natural vegetation and water sources. Therefore, the planning authority, through the Morogoro Master Plan (2016-2036) proposed a new boundary to protect the mountain ranges. Through the new boundary of the conservation area all people found within the boundary were evicted and resettled to other places.

However, when citizens have invaded private, industrial or institutional areas

and established settlements, political actors usually align with the citizens. A good example of this is the conflict between citizens at Chasimba who were compensated but still refused to vacate from the area owned by Tanzania Portland Cement Company (TPCC). According to the judgement on the legal suit filed by TPCC in October 2006, the High Court labelled the sitting land occupiers as trespassers as they had been compensated but had not vacated the land. However, settlers in that area maintain that they are neither invaders nor trespassers. Many asserted that they were occupying their ancestral land; others argued that they have been legal occupiers of the disputed land since 1976 when their land holdings were registered under Boko Village, a village established under the Ujamaa Village No. 21 of 1975, with certificates No. VIJ of 1976 (Kombe, 2010).

The conflict assumed political overtones when the opposition political parties, namely, the Civic United Front (CUF) and the Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) successfully took advantage of the conflict to mobilise political capital by supporting the residents in Chasimba to stand firm and resist eviction (Kombe, 2010). Following this, the Regional Commissioner and the Commissioner for Lands intervened and suspended the decision to execute the 'court order'. As

noted, the intervention came at the height of the partisan-orchestrated changes in the Chasimba area. Wazo Hill sub-ward leaders asserted that since the government leaders stepped in to stop the execution of the court order, many people restored their trust to the ruling party CCM leaders. One of the leaders noted, “CCM is our party, we are still living here today because of the party concern and support.” (Kombe, 2010).

## 5.2 The 20,000 Plots Project in Dar es Salaam and other projects in Dodoma

Through compensation, planning authorities managed to overcome the constraints of political action in different projects in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma. This can be witnessed through several examples such as the 20,000 Plots Project that took place in the early 2000s in the city of Dar es Salaam. Through the Ministry of Land, Housing and Housing Settlement Development (MLHSD) in collaboration with the planning authorities, the government managed to acquire land through compensation and was able to plan the respective areas effectively. Similarly, after acquiring land by compensating the landowners, the planning authorities in the capital city of Dodoma managed to implement a large urban planning project at Msalato with successful results. The lesson learnt through both projects is that adequate funding to planning authorities always contributes positively to the success of projects.

Between 2017 and 2020, the city of Dodoma decided to engage community members living on the periphery of the city in the planning and servicing of the land as demonstrated by the Capital City Masterplan (2019-2039). Due to limited financial resources, responsible authorities did not intend to implement the project through compensation. Rather, the planning authorities entered into an agreement with the citizens: the planning authorities had to provide experts while citizens were required to contribute 30% of their land to cover the cost of planning and servicing it. The 30% taken by the planning authorities was used for the provision of community facilities and also to cover other planning costs such as labour charges, beacons, and plan preparations. This project was mostly successful, although challenges emerged when some of the citizens were resettled from their plots to distant plots for no apparent reason, which led to land disputes as citizens began to boycott those plots.



## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusion

Traditionally, political interference in planning has been seen as a cause of many challenges that hinder the implementation of urban planning projects. However, as explained in the literature and relevant planning guidelines, the planning profession is difficult to separate from political actors. Also, urban planning projects are dependent on political will because political actors influence decisions on the use of public resources for various activities such as urban planning projects. Therefore, it is not only the political actions that affect execution of urban planning projects, but also the lack of adequate funds to planning authorities for the implementation of planning activities that has been a main cause.

Since most of the urban planning projects involve expropriation of the land, planning authorities need to have sufficient funds to help pay a fair compensation to those whose land is affected by the intended project. If government authorities can allocate a budget for electricity and water projects, for example, then the same should be true for urban planning projects on which all other infrastructure facilities depend.

A large part of urban land in Tanzania is owned by ordinary citizens who acquired those land parcels in various ways. Private landowners have the right to initiate planning processes of their land as directed by the Urban Planning Guidelines. However, experience shows that most of the plans prepared by private landowners tend to maximise individual interests, for instance the provision of land uses for commercial purposes. For this reason, such plans have been lacking social and community facilities such as open spaces and institutional areas. This is therefore different from urban planning projects initiated and managed by planning authorities where social and community facilities are prioritised for the purposes of serving the community needs.

Moreover, if planning authorities are to be empowered effectively through budget allocation, implementation of urban planning projects will be possible without causing conflicts of interest between political actors and planning authorities. By implementing such an approach, planning authorities will have the power to manage land development and also reduce the challenge of colliding with citizen interests in the implementation of urban planning projects.

## 6.2 Recommendations

To enhance political support of urban planning practices, the following actions are recommended:

- Prepare physical plans that align with political boundaries and timeframes to ensure that political actors have direct ownership of the proposed plans.
- Prepare plans to enable Tanzanian cities to be resilient to the ongoing urbanisation challenges and natural disasters such as floods.
- Prepare plans to act as a tool for solving land conflicts which prevail in some parts of the country.
- Enhance community participation in urban planning practices to increase efficiency and acceptance of the proposed plans.
- Give consideration to how urban plans can generate revenue for the government, which would enable accumulation of the funds for implementing other development projects. This would foster political actors' interest in the plans and facilitate their implementation.



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