



Planning for sustainability in Malawian cities: A conceptual analysis of the missing links

James Gondwe¹
Gu Guo Feng²
Kossi Ayenagbo³

Abstract

Planning for sustainability has become a major challenge for urban planners in cities of the developing world where those with low economic base are often unable to cope with the high rate of urbanization. The differences in poverty levels between rural and urban spaces has not only deepened socio-economic problems but also led to an increase in environmental degradation in the city's peripheral and catchment areas. This paper argues that there is need to rethink the role of urban planning theory and practice if urban sustainability is to be practical in Malawian cities. It observes that activities and initiatives taken by the urban poor that lead to growth of informal settlement and the informal sector are not viewed positively by urban planners. Specifically, the paper examines issues as such as the symbiotic relationship between the rural and the urban, lack of proper plans for non motorized transport, availability of a closed loop model of solid waste management and a rekindled participatory planning regime through the formalization of town chiefs are very critical elements of the contemporary urban planning theory and practice if building sustainable cities is to move beyond a vague idealism in Malawi. It follows then that any ambitious attempt to plan for sustainability should recognize the role which the urban poor play in building cities of developing countries Malawi inclusive. The paper calls upon the urban planners to change their attitude towards the urban poor. In so doing, however, the author is not trying to romanticize the existence of informal settlements and informal sector but to highlight their inevitable existence to the urban landscape.

Key words: Planning for sustainability; rural and urban symbiosis; informal settlements; informal sector; participatory planning; non motorized transport

¹[M.A Candidate, College of Urban and Environmental Sciences, Northeast Normal University, Jilin, China, jamgondwe@yahoo.co.uk]

²[Associate Professor, College of Urban and Environmental Sciences, Northeast Normal University, Jilin, China, gugf@nenu.edu.cn]

³[PhD Candidate, College of Urban and Environmental Sciences, Northeast Normal University, Jilin, China, ayenagbo@yahoo.fr]

Introduction

Planning for sustainability has become a major challenge for 21st century urban planners and urban managers in both cities of developing and developed countries. Given the high ecological footprint of cities of the developed countries and high levels of urbanization in cities of the developing countries, urban planners are faced with the problem of balancing the green agenda for long term environmental sustainability and the brown agenda for high economic growth rate. In most cities of the developing world where the phenomenon of urbanization of poverty is high, a weak mode of urban sustainability that favours economic growth is an attractive agenda for urban planners and managers. In Malawian cities, there is a mismatch between the rate of urbanization which is one of the highest in the world and the level of economic development which is one of the lowest. For instance, the growth of informal settlements and urban poverty has become the ‘cancer’ of urban landscapes in Malawi. Urban planners are wrestling with urban poverty which is a threat to urban sustainability. Unless urban planners recognize the synergetic linkages between rural and urban spaces, regards the poor as a resource not a nuisance and also appreciates the role of informal economy as a conduit for poverty, planning for sustainability in Malawi’s cities remains a rhetoric concept. Malawi’s major cities cannot be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable unless spatially planned. Okapala (2009) argues that spatial planning is a major tool that shapes growth and change in cities. An attempt to harmonize the green and brown agenda of development would take place if spatial and strategic planning is implemented. Akhmat et al (2011) argue that strategic planning results in different stakeholders participating in an interactive process in which they are involved at critical steps of the plan in order to address critical environmental and developmental issues. It should be stated that currently Malawi’s urban planning process cannot address urban sustainability issues unless urbanization of poverty is taken as a symptom of the complex inequalities between rural and urban spaces. In addition, the urban poor should be recognized as partners not as “dissidents” in an attempt to build a sustainable city. Coping mechanism of the urban poor such as the informal sector and use of non motorized transport by the urban poor should lay the foundation for building sustainable cities. If 63.5% of Africa’s populations are poor (World Bank, 2001, UNICEF, 2006 cited in Olufemi and Oluseyi (2007), then it is justified that any effort meant to build sustainable cities in developing countries should include the coping mechanism of the urban poor as starting points.

Urban sustainability in perspectives

The term urban sustainability is derived from the broader term which is sustainable development. The term sustainable development is defined from different angles. However, it has been defined by the Brundtland Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (UN General Assembly 1987, in Luka 2010). Sustainable development is not only about environmental sustainability it is also about social and economic processes of a society. Within the broad definition of sustainable development there is a realization that social equity and economic development are also core functions of the framework. The sustainable development framework has three interlocking spheres which are environmental sustainability, economic development and social equity. The main aim is to create a win-win situation based on a sound economic base of an area which in turn anchors social and environmental gains. In addition there is need for the present generation to protect and conserve the present status quo of resources for the use by the future generation. Although current thinking identifies three interlocking spheres of sustainable development, Pacione (2004) argues that sustainable development has five interlocking spheres. The five spheres according to Pacione (2004) are economic sustainability, social sustainability, natural sustainability, physical sustainability and political sustainability. A realization of the existence of the five spheres in urban environments is very crucial if urban sustainability is to be achieved. For example in Malawian cities much as the state and local governments attempt to improve the quality of life of the residents of the cities, social sustainability and political sustainability have been taken as peripheral issues. This has been vindicated by the absence of local government elections since 2000 and an increase in urban poverty which has increased income inequality between the rich and the poor. In this light the five spheres of sustainable development provides a shift in paradigm from a narrow definition of urban development basing on environmental , social and economic activities to a broader definition which includes governance as a cardinal point. Though it can be argued that the three sphere model of sustainable development(environment, social and economic) also include governance issues, it is in a five sphere model of sustainability that urban governance come out as one of the core issues of sustainability. In an environment where urban poverty is high, the need for participatory urban planning is as equally important as the need for environmental

Gondwe, J., Feng, G.G., Ayenagbo, K. (2011). Planning for sustainability in Malawian cities: A conceptual analysis of the missing links. *International Journal of Human Sciences* [Online]. 8:2. Available: <http://www.insanbilimleri.com/en>

sustainability. It follows then that a complete urban planning should guarantee the social needs as well as the political and environmental crisis (Mohebbi and Mohebbi, 2010).

There is no difference between the principles of sustainable development and that of urban sustainability. However, urban sustainability is about applying the broader principles of sustainable development to a defined local area. Atkson et al (2007) argue that the local setting is a fertile ground for the sustainable agenda. Urban sustainability is about applying the principles of sustainable development on an urban setting. It is about cities which “ensure well being and good quality of life for citizens, environmentally friendly and socially integrated and just.” (Jetanks, 2000). Cities are the hub of the nation’s development therefore should ensure that sustainable development is taking place. It should be noted that the applicability of urban sustainability varies in space. Urban sustainability in cities of developed countries does not have the same emphasis agenda and direction as the cities of developing countries. Pacione (2004) argues that priorities for each city in relation to sustainability and development vary. Most cities are in dilemma whether to prioritise sustainability over development or vice versa. The third option is to ensure that both development and sustainability are taking place. While urban planners from cities of developed countries are grappling with problems of climate change and global warming, urban planners from cities of developing countries are wrestling with problems of urbanization of poverty. Urban spaces which are dominated by high levels of urban poverty will definitely opt to develop first then sustain the environment later. This does not mean that the urban poor are in conflict with the goals of sustainability but rather poverty and vulnerability compel them to “survive as best as they can, leaving the environment to look after itself (Potter et al 2004). For example the growth and spread of informal settlements in most cities of the developing world is a copying mechanism by the urban poor in an environment in which through market economy there is a shift in responsibility from the state to the residents in terms of economic development. (Potter, et al, 2004) In such urban spaces there is a deep dissonance between the aspirations of the residents of the city and the need to sustain the resources within and outside the cities. Furthermore cities of developing countries are slates on which a series of western oriented principles and concepts of urban sustainability are written. For example issues of climate change and global warming are western agendas of development and sustainability. (Potter et al, 2004). It has been observed that such western dominated urban sustainability principles do not respond to concerns and priorities of the residents in cities of developing world (Potter et al, 2004). It should therefore be stated that the concept of urban sustainability should be built around the needs of the local people. Local areas are suitable spaces for the implementation of sustainability because they represent the adage of thinking globally and acting locally. Though cities are globally connected, every city has its own problems which need to be prescribed and treated by local urban planners and urban managers using locally

Gondwe, J., Feng, G.G., Ayenagbo, K. (2011). Planning for sustainability in Malawian cities: A conceptual analysis of the missing links. *International Journal of Human Sciences* [Online]. 8:2. Available: <http://www.insanbilimleri.com/en>

available solutions and alternatives. The urban planning theory and practice should therefore be flexible enough to accommodate the change in social and economic fabric of the cities of developing countries.

A brief history of urbanization in Malawi

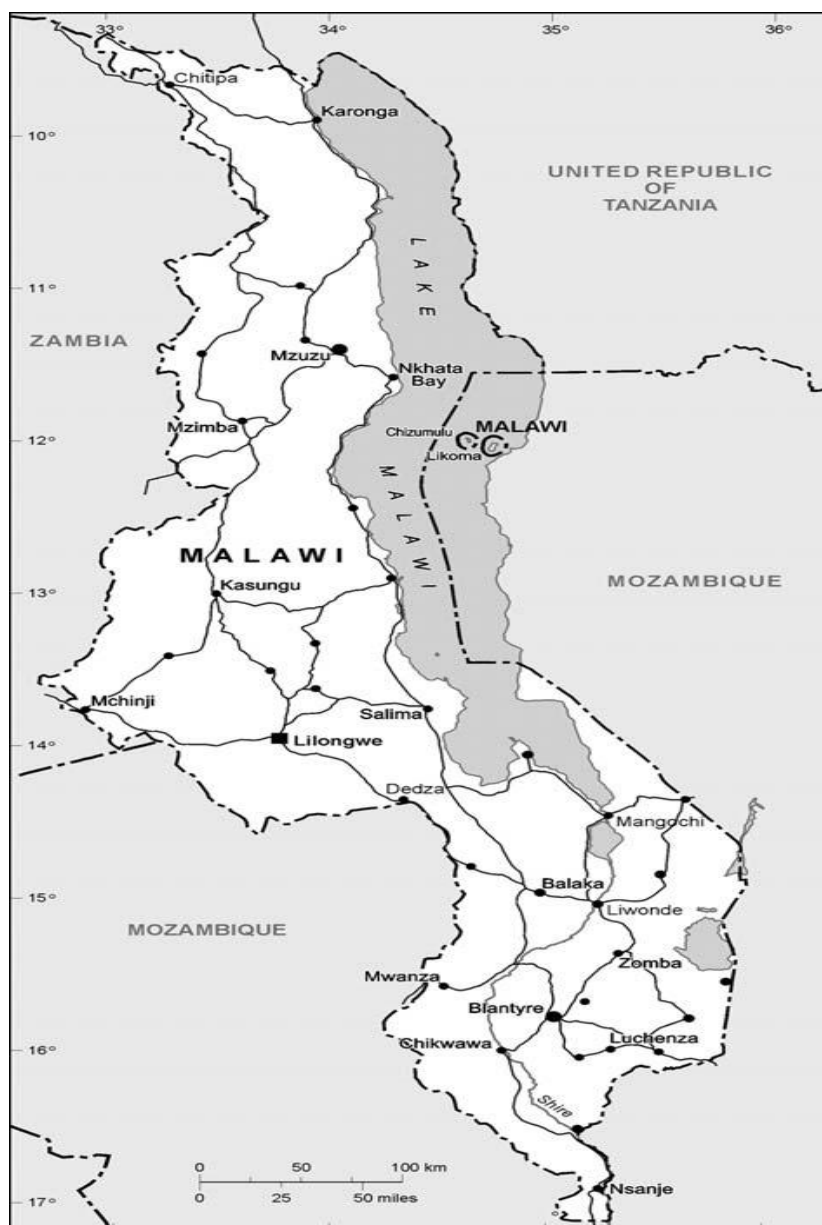


Figure 1. Map of Malawi showing cities and towns (Luka, 2010).

It has been noted that urbanization in Malawi has been growing in recent years (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2009). The majority of Malawi's urbanites are in cities of Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba. Although the level of urbanization is low in Malawi, it has been noted that the rate of urbanization is one of the highest in Africa (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2009).

Gondwe, J., Feng, G.G., Ayenagbo, K. (2011). Planning for sustainability in Malawian cities: A conceptual analysis of the missing links. *International Journal of Human Sciences* [Online]. 8:2. Available: <http://www.insanbilimleri.com/en>

Malawi is rated as the fastest urbanizing country in the world and by 2015, it is estimated that about 44% of the country's population will be living in urban centers" (IRN News 7th July 2004). Before independence the rate of urbanization was very low. According to Malawi Housing Report 2009, only 15, 3% of the population was classified as urban. There is a historical explanation to this low base of urbanization. During the colonial period (1891-1964) the indigenes were restricted from migrating to major cities. After independence, such restrictions were removed and the influx of people into urban areas was very high (Chrome, 2000). Since 1966, urban population grew from 260 000 to 2,003,309 people as indicated by Table 1. It is now estimated that by 2015 about half of the Malawi's population will be residing in urban areas (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2005) (Figure1)

Year	Total national population	Total urban population	Intercensal population increase	Proportion of urban population
1966	4,039 583	260 000	n/a	6.4%
1977	5,547 460	559 000	115%	10.1%
1987	7,988 507	851 391	53.4%	10.7%
1998	9, 933 866	1 435 436	67.4%	14.4%
2008	13,077 160	2 003 309	39.5%	15.3%

Table 1. Urban areas in Malawi (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2005).

Rapid urbanization in Malawi has not been followed by economic growth rate and effective redistributive measures aimed at poverty reduction (Luka 2010). The country is one of the poorest in the world with 2007 GDP per capita of \$800 (UN-HABITAT, 2010) and is ranked 153 out of 169 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index (Nyasa Times 2010). A high rate of urbanization in the absence of economic development has led to the urbanization of poverty. Many commentators have observed the phenomenon of urbanization of poverty in cities of developing countries Vanessa, (2009), UN-HABITAT (2009) and Luka (2009). Urbanization of poverty in Malawian cities is enhanced by the change in locus of poverty from rural to urban spaces which is compounded by lack of economic development in major urban centers. It is the main factor for the rise of informal settlements, lack of land, housing shortages and environmental degradation in peripheral areas of the cities. It has also created pressure on natural resources (Chikhwenda 2002 in Kayuin and Tambulasi 2009). The rate of urbanization is a threat to urban sustainability therefore there is need to mitigate its effects before the lives of the future generations are

threatened. Although it is argued that urbanization in Malawi cannot be stopped by law or policy or development projects targeting the poor, urban sustainability can be achieved if urban planning tools accommodate the coping mechanism of the urban poor and also when the complexity of rural-urban spaces are understood by urban planners. Furthermore, in the absence of assemblies and councillors town chiefs should be formalized if participatory planning is to take place.

The missing links within urban planning theory and practice

Planning theory and practice is shaped by and influenced by the needs of the residents of the city. It should not be narrowly equated to physical planning but it should broadly define economic and social planning. Eugenie (2009) argues that physical planning is not synonymous to city planning. An effective planning theory and practice should have all the five dimensions of urban sustainability which are social sustainability, environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, political sustainability and physical sustainability. The main goal of urban planning should be to create harmony between social needs and environmental limitations (Mohebbi and Mohebbi, 2010). It has been observed that since independence Malawi's major cities have experienced some of the following changes, continuing high rate of urban population growth, urban sprawl as evidenced by the existence of informal settlements in peri-urban areas, urbanization of poverty and the inability of urban areas to absorb and accommodate rural-urban migrants. Despite reforming the 1947 Country and Town Act to the present 1988 Country and Town Act, urban theory and practice in Malawi has failed to accommodate social, economic, political, environmental and physical changes which are taking place within the urban landscape. The Integrated Development Strategy(IDS) and the National Physical Development Plan(NPDP) are still underpinned by presumption in favor of physical planning which contradict with the principles of urban sustainability that recognize the need for social., economic, environmental and political planning. In short urban planners, managers, politicians and the civil society have failed to create necessary conditions for the generation of agglomeration of economies of scale that would reduce urban poverty. Programs meant to reverse the issue of informal settlements such as slum clearing and chasing vendors off the streets have aggravated urban poverty because the livelihoods of the poor are also uprooted. The urban poor into unsustainable life styles like selling charcoal and opening new farms on per-urban areas. In addition the urban

planning practice does not address the needs of the poor because participatory planning process was curtailed by lack of local government elections since 2000. It is through local government elections that councilors are elected in office and they work hand in hand with the local people. In the absence of councilors, grassroots participation in social and economic planning is no longer effective. In other words effective planning requires not merely a public awareness and understanding of the planning process but also actual citizen participation (Mohebbi and Mohebbi, 2010). It can be argued that unless further reformation takes place within the urban planning theory and practice, the current thinking is at conflict with changes which taking place in Malawi's cities. Mohebbi and Mohebbi (2010) argue that planning is essentially a process of understanding human needs and influencing and shaping future policy to satisfy those needs effectively. It follows then that the following gray areas should become part of the planning theory and practice if urban sustainability is to move beyond its theoretical framework.

Rural-urban linkages

Urban planners are so preoccupied by city centric development issues that they have forgotten urban connectivity, permeability and integration. They have forgotten that "countless problems encountered in urban expansion require joint rural-urban planning" (Putnan et al, 2007). Though urban centers in Malawi and other cities in the developing world are islands of economic development, they are not self contained. Urban areas also depend on rural areas in many ways. It should be realized that "strong and complex interactions occur between urban and rural areas and that these underpin many aspects of the development equation," Potter et al, 2004).

Planning for urban sustainability remains a theory if the symbiotic relationship between rural and urban spaces is not explicitly identified and its role to the development equation is not appreciated. For example, environmental sustainability cannot take place unless it is realized that cities draw their raw materials from the rural areas and the waste which are generated in urban areas are deposited in rural areas. Most urban dwellers draw their energy resources from the rural areas. In Malawi, the dependence on rural areas for fuel wood by the urban dwellers is high. Kalipeni and Zulu (2002) observe that the urban poor are hard hit by fuel wood shortages. Urban dwellers in most African countries will rely on fuel wood into unforeseeable future (Kalipeni and Zulu, 2002). The overreliance on fuel

wood by the urban dwellers is compounded by intermittent electrical supply in urban centers. Charcoal and fuel wood despite being sources of energy are also sources of income for the urban and rural poor. One of the reasons why the Blantyre fuel wood project failed to materialize was the needs of the rural dwellers were not taken into consideration. For example loss of land by rural dwellers created land pressure which resulted in high rates of deforestation. Furthermore management of the project was regarded as an urban based activity only. In other words membership was not drawn from both rural and urban spaces. The Blantyre Fuel Wood Project confirmed that deforestation cannot be reduced if the environmental linkages between rural and urban spaces are not explicitly reflected in policies meant to ensure urban sustainability. Pacione (2004) concludes that any solution to urban problems especially associated with rural –urban migration must take into account of the conditions found in rural areas.

Urban poverty or urbanization of poverty is a major threat to urban sustainability yet planners treat the phenomenon separate from rural poverty. The recent increase in urban poverty in Malawi's major cities is a result of the shift in locus of poverty from rural to urban areas. Most rural residents are migrating to urban areas because socio-economic conditions in rural are perceived to be poor. Englund (2002) argues that migration is a phenomenon that would not exist if socio-economic conditions in rural areas were perceived to be right. Accepting that rural-urban migration and urban poverty are irreversible is rubber stamping the perception that conditions in rural areas cannot be improved. Previous attempts to reverse rapid urbanization such as the secondary centers development projects and contained urban growth through integrated rural development did not yield the intended objective of decentralized urbanization. In fact the projects succeeded in developing infrastructure though urban centers were more favoured than rural counterparts. Consequently, growth points which were supposed to act as growth poles in rural areas have been reduced to rural services centers where services such as post offices, health centers and others are offered. Small scale industries did not take off. In short rural areas are still lagging behind in terms of development. For urban poverty to be curtailed joint rural-urban planning should take place. Putnan et al (2007) observes that planning is needed on a coordinated rural-urban basis to contend with the growing list of mutual rural-urban problems. Though it is highly assumed that rural poor depend on urban dwellers on remittance, it has been observed that the urban poor also depend on rural dwellers in many ways especially during the economic crisis. As

an economic safety measure some urban dwellers have multiresidential homes (National Academy of Science, 2003). Some members of the family leave in an urban center and others live in a rural area. While urban dwellers remit financial resources to rural areas, rural dwellers supply the urban dwellers with food stuffs. It should be noted that both the rural and urban poor have 'rural' and 'urban' components in their livelihood strategies. Tacoli (2003) observes that rural–urban migration reduces poverty for both rural and urban areas. Development planning and practice should take into consideration the myriad linkages between the rural and urban poor. In fact urbanization of poverty is a symptom of the imbalance in development between rural and urban spaces where the poor are forced to migrate to urban areas in search of perceived better life. If sustainability is to become a realistic concept then it follows that rural and urban spaces should not be regarded as separate spaces each with its distinctive problems but should be viewed as a contiguous region with similar problems. Rural and urban spaces are intimately linked therefore the planning practice should reflect the flows that take places between them

The informal economy in major cities

It is paradoxical to note that urban planners and urban managers still regard the informal economy as illegal yet city governments have not created much employment opportunities for urban dwellers and new rural-urban migrants. It follows then that the positive contribution of the informal sector to urban sustainability has been ignored by urban planners and managers. Madziakapita (2003) in Kayuni and Tambulasi (2009) argues that without the existence of the informal sector is likely that social –economic crisis can emerge hence destabilize the whole society in general. Indeed the attempt to exterminate the street vendors from the streets and other public spaces by the Munthalika's government in 2006 led to the destruction of the indispensable livelihoods of the urban dwellers as observed by Kayuni and Tambulasi (2009). The informal sector is so visible in Malawi's urban landscape that it can be emphatically concluded that it is not only a survival strategy for the new rural-urban migrants but it is an indispensable livelihood strategy for urban dwellers. For example Richards et al (2003) in Kayuni and Tambala's (2009) estimates that 12% of the total workforce in Malawi is in the formal sector. The rest are either in the agricultural sector or in the informal sector.

The major problem is urban planners and managers do not separate informal sector from poverty and squatting problems. The resilience of street vending despite an attempt to eradicate it from public spaces indicates that street vending is a ‘cancer’ of the urban landscape that could not be healed by use of force but by appropriate policies that recognize the urban poor as a resource not as a nuisance. At the center of the configuration of the five dimensions of urban sustainability is poverty. Poverty can be reduced if initiatives and coping mechanisms of the urban poor are recognized and appreciated by the urban planners and managers. Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1989), in Kamete (2002) argue that “in fact some commentators have become convinced that it is the urban poor who are the real builders of cities and towns of the developing world.” The poor have managed to create self-employment and even the booming forms of informal transport like bicycle transport in Mzuzu City and the growth of informal settlements in all cities of Malawi are coping mechanisms of the urban poor. It should be noted that recognizing and appreciating the role being played by the urban poor in building cities in Malawi will result in reducing social inequality. Environmental sustainability, political sustainability, and the other dimensions cannot take place if urban poverty is not reduced. In an attempt to plan cities for sustainability there is need to be rational and rationality in planning is seen as breaking rigidity in the urban planning theory and practice and make it follow the dynamism of urban social and economic fabric. The problem with the current urban planning theory and practice is, it is out of date. Despite reforming it, the current urban planning theory and practice is dominated by neo colonial planning laws that scorn at the existence and importance of the informal sector as a survival strategy of the urban poor. Simply put, planning for urban sustainability should follow the social and economic contours of urban poor rather than it imposing alien and outdated policies on the urban poor. Urban planners in developing countries, Malawi inclusive, should be aware that if the informal sector is well organized according to the needs of the urban poor, it has the potential for becoming a conduit for poverty reduction. In Malawi there is need for the provision of infrastructure and policies for the organization and management of the informal sector. Though infrastructure such as flea markets were built in some cities in Malawi, most vendors have complained that urban spaces like streets and verandas are conducive places for vending because customers buy on impulse.

Participatory urban planning process

If the goal of urban planning is to shape future policies to meet human needs, then it can be concluded that in town and city governments of Malawi the needs of the urban poor are barely being met. The poor have been heavily marginalized by the planning practice that excludes their voices. Mohebbi and Mohebbi (2010) argue that urban planning is a public process by itself; it is a kind of participation in building the future. Participatory urban planning practice in which the needs of the urban poor are prioritised first is a requisite condition to urban sustainability. A balance of the five dimensions of urban sustainability cannot take place if the voices of the poor are not heard. “Yet the poorest members of the society are left out. Land use decisions are rarely made with interests in mind.” (Kapla et al, 2004). In Malawi the mechanism for participatory planning was hindered by an absence of local government elections since 2000. It has been observed that while there is an effort to involve grassroots participation in planning and development issues, local people and other stakeholders have been sidelined (UN-HABITAT, 2010 in Luka 2010). This discrepancy has led to further marginalization of the urban poor, pushing them to the fringes of the city where environmental degradation continue to take place. The planning committee that lacks the presence of councilors is incomplete because its agenda is likely to sideline the needs of the poor. It follows then that the presence of councilors in planning and development committees is vital if the agenda is to accommodate the needs of the urban poor who are the majority in most cities in Malawi.

Lack of participatory planning has been aggravated by the Chief Act which does not recognize the role played by town chiefs in planning and development committees in absence of councilors. Town chiefs are traditional chiefs who are located in areas designated as town or city planned areas. Most of them are not hereditary chiefs but are chosen by the local people basing on their capacity to lead them. Town chiefs are not recognized by town and city assemblies yet “in an event in urban environments town chiefs fill the void regard to community development and relief.” (Cammack et al, 2009). Cammack et al (2009) further argue that town chiefs help to produce developmental outputs in communities that are otherwise poorly served. In the absence of councilors, town chiefs play a major role in development activities in unplanned settlements. It follows then that in the absence of a mechanism that ensures democratic planning process, town chiefs are a favorable replacement. This paper therefore suggests that town chiefs should be formally recognized

by town and city governments. Cammack et al (2009) argue that” in the absence of assemblies and councilors and the weakness of grassroots political and development planning structures, officials seem to recognize the value town chiefs.” No sensible and practical urban sustainability can take place in the absence of participatory planning. Planning is a public good therefore it belongs to the local people only when it starts at grassroots level.

Management of solid waste in cities and towns

Most cities in Malawi generate much waste because they have a linear urban metabolism. Linear urban metabolism is based on input, through and out processes. For example, fossil fuels are extracted, refined and burned. The gases are discharged into the atmosphere as waste product (Pacione, 2004). An urban metabolism that is linear discourages sustainability of the city and promotes the generation of waste. Solid waste management is a major problem especially in major cities. Some cities in Malawi do not even have a sewage system. Furthermore the collection of solid waste especially in areas designated as informal settlements is not effective. Urban planners, managers and other stakeholders need to adopt a closed loop system in which resources are recycled and reused. Ecological concepts such as niches representing people from different background, lifestyles, activities, diversity and different kinds of dependence (parasitism and symbiosis) can assist in studying urban metabolism. In addition, solid waste management should also be linked to livelihoods of the urban poor and the rural poor. Both the urban and rural poor would enhance their livelihoods through the collection of waste products which are readily reused and recycled and later sold. In such a closed loop system, little waste is generated and also the community is involved in solid waste management. In addition high density areas of the city such as slums, markets and schools have the potential for the provision of clean energy through toilet biogas plants. Provision of clean energy to the urban dwellers will reduce high dependence on fuel wood energy by both the rural and urban dwellers. Unless a systematic and ecological conceptual framework is designed, it is difficult to sustain resources in Malawi’s urban environments where waste is poorly managed. The urban planning theory and practice should advocate for a solid waste management framework that is linked to the livelihoods of the poor and a closed loop model that generates little wastes.

Planning for non-motorized transport

Mobility is an indispensable activity of all cities. It is intimately connected to the livelihoods of the urban dwellers especially the urban poor. It is further connected to the three spheres of sustainable development which are social, economic and environmental. Olufemi and Oluseyi (2007) argue that improved mobility is a crucial factor in alleviating poverty in developing countries because it allows the urban poor to be involved in development issues. In cities of Malawi walking and cycling are the major non motorized forms of transport. Cycling is becoming a noticeable feature of transport in Mzuzu and peri-urban areas of Lilongwe and some in small towns such as Balaka, Liwonde and Karonga. Cycling and walking are coping mechanisms for the urban poor who cannot afford private motorized transport. It should be noted that despite that the majority use non-motorized transport, infrastructure for cycling and walking is conspicuously lacking in most urban environments. Rastagi and Chandra (2010) observe that due to inadequate exclusive facilities available for movement, there is a conflict between pedestrians and vehicle in sharing space available for road use. The conflict results in traffic accidents in which the urban poor are the victims. In addition, lack of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists reduce mobility therefore the poor are inconvenienced in many ways. Restagi (2010) argues that the inherent shortcoming of walking should be compensated by user friendly infrastructure which addresses social concerns and implement promotional policies. It follows that facilities like footpaths and cycling lanes are crucial for the provision of comfort to pedestrians and cyclists. It is imperative that planning for transport in Malawian cities should not only focus on building new roads and maintaining the existing ones but should also focus on provision of facilities for non motorized transport. Walking and cycling are not only efficient modes of transport in terms of their demand on fossil fuels but are also compatible with the social-economic characteristics of the urban poor. In other words walking and cycling reduce expenditure on transport fares and are also linked to the livelihood strategies of the urban poor. For example bicycle taxes are becoming a major source of income for the urban poor in Mzuzu city and other small towns.

Developing countries should learn from developed countries regarding the social, economic and environmental problems associated with a high dependence on private motorized transport. A high dependence on private motorized transport has some of the following problems: global warming, traffic congestion and a high demand on fossil fuels.

Already there is an increase in registration of private cars in Malawi as a result of increased wealth, an increased market penetration of used cars from Japan and other developed countries. In addition, private car ownership is becoming a symbol of elitism. Furthermore, mass transit transport which is dominated by buses is being replaced by car taxes whose fares are too demanding on already inadequate monthly incomes. Policies for planning for sustainability should reflect the social-economic diversity of the urban dwellers in particular the urban poor. Furthermore a mixed land use form of urban structure should be deliberately developed and encouraged because it is efficient in terms of energy use. In other words mobility is reduced in a mixed land use and the urban poor reduce their hard earned money on transport fares.

Conclusion

The article has critically analyzed the gray areas within the urban planning theory and practice as it applies to Malawian cities. The analysis reveals that unless the urban planning theory and practice become flexible enough to accommodate some major social and economic changes in Malawian cities, the concept of urban sustainability will not move beyond a vague idealism. Emerging issues like the growth of informal sector, informal settlements and the development of non-motorized transport should be viewed positively as an attempt by the urban poor to step their feet in the urban jungle. In addition, the complex synergetic rural-urban linkages should be well understood because they form a potential conduit for poverty alleviation for both the urban and rural poor. The article further highlighted the need to rekindle participatory planning by formalizing the role of town chiefs in local development issues. The void which was created by the absence of councilors since 2000 should be filled by town chiefs who are already mimicking the role of councilors in local development. Urban sustainability can move beyond theory if the needs of the poor become part and parcel of the planning theory and practice. It is difficult to design and implement plans at grassroots level in the absence of councilors who play a middleman role between the urban poor and urban planners. Without the views of the poor included in plans the concept of stakeholdership is incomplete. Akhmat et al (2011) argue that for a city in the developing world to achieve sustainability, “it needs to reset the basis for articulation of initiatives of all relevant stakeholders to seek synergies for its development.” Lastly cities can reduce the generation of waste by adopting a closed loop model of solid waste

Gondwe, J., Feng, G.G., Ayenagbo, K. (2011). Planning for sustainability in Malawian cities: A conceptual analysis of the missing links. *International Journal of Human Sciences* [Online]. 8:2. Available: <http://www.insanbilimleri.com/en>

management. The model should be part of the rural and urban livelihood strategies. Simply put the community is motivated to become major actors in the issues of sustainability if their livelihood strategies are enhanced and improved.

References

- Akhmat, G., Khan, M.M., Ali, M., 2011, Sustainability in South Asian City, *International Journal of Human Sciences* vol:8 Issue:1 <http://www.insanbilimleri.com/en>.
- Diertz, S., Newmayer, E., 2007, *Handbook of Sustainable Development*, Edward Elgar Limited, Cheltenham.
- Cammack, D., Kanyongolo, E., and O'Neil, 2009, *Town Chiefs in Malawi*, Overseas Development Institute, London. Case study of Blantyre city
- Chome, J., 2002, Behavioural and spatial impacts of title registration in informal settlement the case study of Blantyre City. Institute Of Geo Information science and earth Observation, Enschede, Unpublished M.A thesis.
- Englund, D., 2009, The Village in the city, the city in the village: Migrants in Lilongwe *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol28: number 1. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/825370>.
- Eugiene, L.B., 2009 *The urban and Regional Planning Reader*, Routledge, Abiydon.
- Jetkans, M., and Burges, R., 2000, *Compact Cities. Sustainable Urban forms for Developing Countries*, Spar Press, London.
- Kalipeni, E., and Zulu L., 2002 From Top Down up: Difficult. Case study of the Blantyre Fuel Wood project *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol:28, number 1.
- Kamete, A.Y, 2002, *Governing the poor in Harare, Zimbabwe. Shifting perspectives and Changing Responses*. Research paper number 22
- Kapla, H., and Wheeler, J.O., 2004, *Urban Geography*, John Wiley and Sons Inc, New York
- Kayuni, H.M., and Tambulasi, R.T.C, 2009, Political Transitions and Vulnerability of Street Vending in Malawi. *Theoretical Researchers in Urban Management* Number 3(12).
- Kayuni H.M and Tambulasi R.T.C, 2005 What does a commitment to environment and development imply for urban centers in Malawi. *Urbanization, Environment and Development Seminar 25th -28th February 2005*, Stellenbosch.
- Luka, L., 2010, The case of improved governance as a tool for sustainable urban Development in Malawi. *Improved Governance as a Tool for Sustainable Urban Development in Malawi*, 46th ISOCARP Congress 2010, Nairobi, Kenya. Mohebbi, M., and Mohebbi, Z., 2010, Simplest Way to reach the Most Complicated Goal: 'In the Urban planning, Questions are ours and Answers are Native's. *Journals Department ASCE*, Alexander Bell.
- National Academy of Science, 2003, *Cities Transformed. Demographic Change and Its Implications in the Developing world*. The National Academies Press, Washington, D.C.
- Nyasa Times online www.nyasatimes.com/.malawi-runks-153 on human development-index.htm/

Gondwe, J., Feng, G.G., Ayenagbo, K. (2011). Planning for sustainability in Malawian cities: A conceptual analysis of the missing links. *International Journal of Human Sciences* [Online]. 8:2. Available: <http://www.insanbilimleri.com/en>

Okpala, D., 2009, Regional Overview of the Status of Urban planning and planning Practice in Anglophone(Sub-Saharan) African Countries. [http:// www. unhabitat. Org /grhs/2009](http://www.unhabitat.org/grhs/2009).

Olufemi, O.B.,and Oluseyi, M.S., 2007, The Urban poor and Mobility Stress in Nigerian Cities. *Environment Research Journal* 1(1-4): 1-8 Medwell Journals.

Pacione, M., 2004, 2nd ed Urban Geography:- A Global Perspective .Milton Park, Rutledge.

Potter, R.B., Binns, Elliott, J.T., and Smith, D, 2004 *Geography of Development* Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh.

Putnan, R. G, Taylor, J, and Kettle, G.K., 2007 *A Geography of Urban Spaces*. Routledge, Abiydon.

Rastagi, R., and Chandra, S., 2010, Pedestrian Flows Characteristics in Mixed Conditions. Kotker. *Journal of Urban Planning and Development*, Vol.: 136. Number: 1, Alexander Bell, ASCE.

Rastagi, R., 2010, Willingness to shift to Walking or Bicycling to Access Suburban rail: A study of Mumbai, India. *A Journal of Urban Planning* Volume 136, Number 1, Alexander Bell, ASCE.

UN-HABITAT 2009, *Planning for Sustainable Cities. A global Report on Human Settelements 2009*. London, Earthscan.

UN-HABITAT 2010, *The of State Africa Cites 2010. Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets*. United Nations Settlement Programme, Nairobi.

Vanessa, W., 2009, The planned city sweeps the poor. *Urban planning and 21st century Progress in Planning* 72(2009- 157-193.