Town Planning Professional Practice and Networking: An Academic Perspective on the Importance, Benefits, and Challenges of Sustainable Urban Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an academic perspective on the importance, benefits, and challenges of town planning practice and networking for sustainable urban development in Nigeria. The paper examines the role of town planning practice in shaping the built environment, promoting social and economic development, and improving the quality of life of urban residents. It also discusses the benefits of networking, including knowledge exchange, collaboration, professional development, and career advancement. Focusing specifically on Nigeria, a country facing unique challenges related to rapid urbanization, informal settlements, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation, the paper provides insights into how professionals in the field can overcome these challenges and promote sustainable urban development. Drawing upon existing literature and case studies, the paper offers valuable insights for town planners, policymakers, and other stakeholders. In conclusion, this paper highlights the need for effective town planning practice and networking to address the challenges of sustainable urban development in Nigeria. It emphasizes the role of collaboration and knowledge exchange among stakeholders and provides recommendations for enhancing town planning practice and networking to achieve sustainable urban development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Town Planning, Professional Practice, Networking, Academic Perspective, Sustainable Urban Development, Importance, Benefits, Challenges.

1.0 Introduction

Urban development is a complex process that requires the input of various professionals, including town planners, architects, surveyors, engineers, environmental scientists, community development specialists, and government officials (UN, 2015). Sustainable urban development is particularly important in ensuring that urban areas are developed in a way that is socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable (UN-Habitat, 2016). Town planning practice and networking play a crucial role in shaping the built environment, promoting social and economic development, and improving the quality of life of urban residents. Town planners, architects, surveyors, engineers, and other professionals in the field collaborate to design and implement urban development projects that promote sustainable development.

In Nigeria, a rapidly growing urban population and a need for sustainable urban development present unique challenges for town planners and other professionals in the field (Egunjobi&Opawole, 2016; Oluwande, 2019). The country is experiencing rapid urbanization, which has led to informal settlements, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation. Effective town planning practice and networking are needed to address these challenges and promote sustainable urban development in Nigeria.

1.1 Aim and objectives

The aim of this paper is to provide an academic perspective on the importance, benefits, and challenges of town planning practice and networking for sustainable urban development in Nigeria. To achieve the aim of the paper, the following objectives were pursued:

  i.   To examine the role of town planning practice in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria.

 ii.   To highlight the benefits of networking for town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development in Nigeria.

iii.   To identify and analyze the challenges faced by town planners and other professionals in the field in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria.

 iv.   To provide recommendations on how to overcome these challenges and promote sustainable urban development in Nigeria through effective town planning practice and networking.

2.0 Literature Review

The literature on town planning professional practice and networking highlights the importance of collaboration and partnership in promoting sustainable urban development. Professionals in the field of town planning must work together with other professionals and stakeholders to address complex issues related to urban development. This section will delve into explanation of town planning professional practice, who engages in it, definition of networking, who town planners should network with, sustainable urban development and its challenges in Nigeria.

2.1 Town Planning Professional Practice

Town planning professional practice is a crucial aspect of sustainable urban development, and it involves a range of activities aimed at guiding the use of land and design of cities and towns. According to Mabogunje and Oluwadiya (2015), town planning practice requires interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to create sustainable communities that meet the social, economic, and environmental needs of urban residents. These activities include research and analysis, policy and plan development and implementation, stakeholder and public engagement, project and budget management, and coordination with other professionals.

In Nigeria, town planning professional practice is governed by the Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) and the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) (Olujimi and Ogundele, 2016). The profession is vital in addressing the numerous challenges faced by urban areas in Nigeria, including rapid population growth, inadequate infrastructure, informal settlements, and environmental degradation. As such, town planning practice has been identified as a critical factor in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria.

2.2 Who Engages in the Professional Practice?

Town planning involves interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to create sustainable communities that meet the social, economic, and environmental needs of residents (Paddison, 2012; Healey, 2017; Carmona, 2019). The town planning professional practice involves a variety of professionals who have been trained in town planning, architecture, geography, engineering, environmental science, and other related fields. In Nigeria, individuals who engage in town planning professional practice are typically referred to as town planners, and they are registered with the Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) and the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) (NITP, 2022).

Town planners work in a variety of settings, including public sector organizations such as local and state governments, private sector firms such as consulting companies, and non-governmental organizations, as well as consultants, researchers, or academics in universities and research institutions (Aderamo, 2012; Okupe, 2015).

In addition to town planners, other professionals such as architects, engineers, land surveyors, estate surveyors, environmental scientists, and community development specialists also play important roles in town planning professional practice, as they contribute their knowledge and skills to create sustainable communities that meet the social, economic, and environmental needs of residents (UN-Habitat, 2015). The involvement of these other professionals is also very important in town planning professional practice (Buchanan, 2018; Caves, 2019). Architects contribute to designing buildings and public spaces that are functional, attractive, and energy-efficient, while engineers ensure the safety, reliability, and efficiency of infrastructure and utilities (Buchanan, 2018). Environmental scientists offer their expertise to ensure development projects are sustainable and minimize the impact on the natural environment (Caves, 2019). Community development specialists engage with residents and communities to ensure their needs and concerns are included in planning and development processes (Aina& Adebayo, 2016).

These diverse professionals' different perspectives, skills, and knowledge make collaboration and networking crucial to the success of sustainable urban development. Effective networking and collaboration allow professionals to share ideas, best practices, and challenges, and work together to create more effective and sustainable solutions for urban development challenges (Barter, 2019; Obateru, 2020).

2.3 Networking Defined

Networking is the process of building and maintaining relationships with people who can help you in your personal or professional life. According to Baker (2000), networking involves the creation of social capital, which is the value that can be derived from relationships and networks. In the context of professional practice, networking involves connecting with other professionals in your field or related fields, with the aim of sharing knowledge and resources, creating opportunities, and building long-term relationships.

Networking can take many forms, including attending conferences, seminars, and workshops, joining professional associations or organizations (Purtell, 2007), participating in online forums or social media groups, and meeting with colleagues and peers in your industry. Effective networking can help professionals to expand their knowledge (Hansen, 1999), learn about new opportunities, and gain valuable insights into their field. It can also lead to job offers, business partnerships, and other professional opportunities (Valente &Pumpuang, 2007). Additionally, networking can help professionals to build their reputation and establish themselves as experts in their field, which can lead to increased visibility and credibility (Jansen, Van Den Bosch &Volberda, 2005). To be effective, networking requires a strategic approach (Wasko& Faraj, 2005). Professionals should identify their goals and target

the individuals and organizations that can help them achieve those goals. They should also be proactive in seeking out new connections and opportunities to expand their network (Uzzi, 1997).

2.4 Who Should a Town Planner Network with?

There are several groups of professionals with whom Town Planners can network to advance their professional practice and promote sustainable urban development. Some of the several groups will include:

a) Other town planners: Networking with other town planners allows you to share ideas, best practices, and challenges in the field. You can also collaborate on projects and initiatives that promote sustainable urban development (Heller, 2006).

b) Architects, surveyors and engineers: These professionals work closely with town planners on various projects and can provide valuable insights into the design and construction of buildings and infrastructure (Wachs, 2010).

c) Environmental scientists: As environmental issues become increasingly important in urban development, networking with environmental scientists can help you stay up to date on the latest research and practices related to environmental sustainability (Adams, 2018).

d) Community development specialists: These professionals work with communities to identify and address their needs and can provide valuable insights into community engagement and participation (Greenberg, 2010).

e) Government officials: Networking with government officials can help you understand policies and regulations related to urban development and can provide opportunities for collaboration on projects and initiatives (Eckert, 2015).

f) Business leaders: Business leaders can offer insights into the economic aspects of urban development and can provide opportunities for funding and partnership (Bartik, 2018).

2.5 Sustainable Urban Development

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines sustainable urban development as "the process of improving the quality of life in cities, towns and other urban settlements, while reducing resource consumption, pollution and poverty" (UNDP, 2018). The World Bank defines sustainable urban development as "the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in cities, while reducing negative impacts on the natural and built environment" (World Bank, 2018). The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) defines sustainable urban development as "a process by which we shape the urban fabric to create equitable, inclusive, economically viable and resilient cities and human settlements for present and future generations" (Habitat III, 2016).

In a book titled, "Sustainable Urban Development Reader", Stephen Wheeler and Timothy Beatley define sustainable urban development as "the practice of building and managing urban communities that are designed to be economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable" (Wheeler and Beatley, 2014).

These definitions all share the common goal of promoting economic, social, and environmental sustainability in urban areas, while improving the quality of life for residents.

Sustainable urban development therefore refers to the creation and maintenance of cities and urban areas that meet the needs of present and future generations, without compromising the ability of the natural environment to support life (World Bank, 2018). It involves designing and developing urban areas in a way that promotes economic, social, and environmental sustainability. This can be achieved through the integration of green infrastructure, such as parks and green spaces, and the use of sustainable building practices that reduce carbon emissions and minimize waste (Dempsey, Bramley, Power & Brown, 2011). Sustainable urban development also involves the creation of sustainable transportation systems, such as public transit, bike lanes, and walkable neighborhoods that reduce reliance on private cars and promote healthier, more active lifestyles (Gehl, 2010).

The goal of sustainable urban development is to create vibrant, livable cities that promote economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability, while minimizing the negative impact of urbanization on natural resources and ecosystems (United Nations, 2018).

2.6 Challenges to Sustainable Urban Development in Nigeria

Some of the challenges to sustainable urban development in Nigeria are stated below:

Rapid urbanization: Nigeria is experiencing rapid urbanization, with its urban population projected to grow from 48% in 2015 to 55% in 2050 (UNDP, 2018). This poses significant challenges to sustainable urban development, including inadequate infrastructure, housing shortages, and environmental degradation.

Inadequate infrastructure: Nigeria's infrastructure, including transportation, water supply, and waste management, is inadequate to meet the needs of its growing urban population (Oyedele et al., 2020). This results in poor living conditions, traffic congestion, and environmental pollution.

Land use conflicts: Land use conflicts, such as those between urban development and agriculture or conservation, are common in Nigeria and pose challenges to sustainable urban development (Oyedele et al., 2020).

Corruption and governance challenges: Corruption and governance challenges in Nigeria can hinder sustainable urban development by leading to inadequate planning, poor implementation of policies, and mismanagement of resources (Oyedele et al., 2020).

Climate change and natural disasters: Nigeria is vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, which can damage infrastructure and homes, and exacerbate poverty and social inequality (Nkwocha and Oluyede, 2018).

These challenges highlight the need for policies and strategies that address sustainable urban development in Nigeria, while taking into account the social, economic, and environmental needs of its urban population.

3.0 Methodology

The study primarily utilized a literature review approach, examining existing literature from academic journals, books, reports, and other publications related to town planning practice, networking, and sustainable urban development in Nigeria. The search for relevant literature was conducted through electronic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Science Direct, and ProQuest, using keywords such as town planning practice, sustainable urban development, networking, challenges, policy and governance, and best practices in Nigeria. The literature review was thematically organized, focusing on the paper's objectives, and the data was analyzed using content analysis to identify key themes and patterns. The findings from the analysis were utilized to develop recommendations for policymakers, town planners, and other stakeholders on how to overcome challenges to sustainable urban development in Nigeria and enhance effective networking and town planning practice.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

4.1 The Role of Town Planning Practice in Promoting Sustainable Urban Development in Nigeria

According to Oyedele, Owolabi and Ajayi (2015), the role of town planning practice in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria is crucial. Effective town planning practice can help to address the challenges of rapid urbanization, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation, and promote sustainable development in Nigerian cities.

One of the primary roles of town planning practice in Nigeria is to promote the efficient use of land and resources (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2019). This involves the development of land use plans, zoning regulations, and building codes that ensure the efficient use of land and resources. By promoting compact and mixed-use developments, town planners can help to reduce urban sprawl and promote sustainable transportation modes such as walking, cycling, and public transport (Oladapo, Amole, Alalade&Oyinloye, 2020).

Another key role of town planning practice in Nigeria is to promote the provision of basic infrastructure and services (Oyewole et al., 2020). This includes the provision of water and sanitation facilities, electricity, and waste management services. Effective town planning practice can help to ensure that infrastructure and services are provided in an equitable and sustainable manner, and that they meet the needs of all urban residents.

Environmental protection is also a significant role of town planning practice in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigerian cities (Adedeji et al., 2021). This includes the identification and protection of natural resources, such as wetlands, forests, and wildlife habitats, as well as the promotion of green spaces, such as parks and gardens.

Furthermore, town planning practice can help to reduce the risks of natural disasters, such as floods and landslides, which are becoming increasingly common in Nigerian cities (Ishaku, Ibrahim, Kaoje&Abdulrazak, 2021). This involves the development of disaster risk reduction plans, as well as the promotion of resilient infrastructure and housing.

Cultural heritage preservation is also essential in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria (Oyewole et al., 2020). This includes the preservation of historic buildings and sites, as well as the promotion of cultural activities and events.

Transportation planning is a crucial aspect of town planning practice in Nigeria (Ishaku et al., 2021). Effective transportation planning can help to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, and promote sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

Community engagement and participation in the development process is also a significant role of town planning practice (Oyewole et al., 2020). This includes the use of participatory planning methods, such as community meetings and focus groups, to ensure that the needs and aspirations of urban residents are taken into account in the planning process.

In addition to these roles, town planning practice can also promote social and economic development (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2019). This includes the provision of affordable housing, the promotion of economic activities, and the enhancement of public spaces. By promoting inclusive and sustainable development, town planners can help to reduce poverty and inequality and improve the quality of life of urban residents.

4.2 Role of Town Planning Practice and Networking in Promoting Sustainable Urban Development

The promotion of sustainable urban development in Nigeria relies on the crucial role of town planning practice and networking. Olubunmi and Omoba (2019) assert that integrated and participatory planning approaches that consider the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of urban

development are necessary in the face of rapid urbanization and population growth. Networking and collaboration among urban development professionals can facilitate knowledge sharing, capacity building, and resource mobilization, as argued by Ibem and Egbinola (2018). Oloke and Akanmu (2017) highlight the benefits of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in leveraging private sector resources and expertise for more efficient and effective urban development outcomes. Community participation and engagement, as emphasized by Olukoshi (2016), can help ensure that urban development is responsive to the needs and aspirations of local residents and can build trust and social cohesion. Adeola and Oyedele (2015) discuss the challenges and opportunities of urban regeneration, emphasizing that it requires careful planning and collaboration among stakeholders. Adisa and Oladipo (2014) stress the importance of planning and regulation in managing urban growth and protecting the environment, while Alagbe and Aina (2013) explore the benefits of networking for professionals in the built environment sector in Nigeria. Avwunudiogba and Akpoghomeh (2012) argue that town planning practice is vital for managing urban growth, promoting environmental sustainability, and improving the quality of life for urban residents. Ariyo and Popoola (2011) discuss the importance of town planning education in preparing professionals for the challenges of urban development in Nigeria, calling for greater alignment between academic training and professional practice. Finally, Onifade and Oyebanji (2010) provide a comprehensive overview of town planning practice in Nigeria, stressing the need for a more coordinated and integrated approach to planning and management at all levels of government.

4.3 Benefits of Networking for Town Planners and Other Professionals

Networking can bring several benefits to town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development in Nigeria, including:

i. Collaboration and knowledge sharing: Networking can provide opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing among town planners and other professionals. By working together and sharing ideas and best practices, professionals can develop more effective solutions to urban development challenges. Adebayo and Olatunji (2019) noted that collaboration is a critical aspect of town planning practice in Nigeria. By working together with other professionals, town planners can create effective solutions to urban development challenges. Ishaku et al. (2021) also found that networking can facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among urban planners, which can lead to better outcomes in urban development.

ii. Professional development: Networking can also provide opportunities for professional development, such as attending workshops, seminars, and conferences. These events can provide valuable insights into emerging trends and practices in the field of urban development, as well as opportunities to learn from experts and peers. Oyewole et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of attending professional development events such as workshops and conferences for town planners in Nigeria. These events provide opportunities for professionals to stay up to date with emerging trends and best practices in urban development.

iii. Access to resources: Networking can also provide access to resources such as funding, data, and expertise. By tapping into a wider network of professionals, town planners can access a broader range of resources to support their work. Oladapo et al. (2020) noted that networking can help town planners in Nigeria access a wider range of resources. By connecting with other professionals and organizations, town planners can tap into funding opportunities, access data and information, and seek expert advice and assistance.

iv. Increased visibility: Networking can help to increase the visibility of town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development. By participating in professional organizations and attending industry events, professionals can raise their profile and build their reputation in the field. Oyedele et al. (2020) noted that networking can help professionals in the field of urban development build their personal brand and increase their visibility. By participating in professional organizations and attending industry events, professionals can build their reputation and increase their chances of being recognized for their work.

v. Influence on policy: Networking can also provide opportunities for professionals to influence policy and decision-making in the field of urban development. By working together and presenting a united voice, professionals can advocate for policies and practices that promote sustainable and inclusive urban development. Ishaku et al. (2021) found that networking can provide opportunities for town planners to influence policy and decision-making in Nigeria. By presenting a united voice and advocating for policies and practices that promote sustainable and inclusive urban development, town planners can influence policy at the local and national levels.

vi. Opportunities for mentorship: Networking can provide opportunities for mentorship and career development, particularly for early-career professionals. By connecting with experienced professionals in the field, young town planners can gain valuable insights into the industry and develop their skills and knowledge. Adebayo and Olatunji (2019) noted that networking can provide opportunities for mentorship and career development for town planners in Nigeria. By connecting with experienced professionals in the field, young town planners can learn from their expertise and develop their skills and knowledge.

vii. Access to new perspectives: Networking can also expose town planners and other professionals to new perspectives and ideas. By engaging with professionals from different backgrounds, disciplines, and regions, professionals can broaden their understanding of urban development and develop new approaches to their work. Oyewole et al. (2020) found that networking can expose town planners to new perspectives and ideas. By engaging with professionals from different backgrounds and regions, town planners can broaden their understanding of urban development and gain new insights into their work.

viii. Business opportunities: Networking can also lead to business opportunities, such as new contracts and partnerships. By building relationships with potential clients and collaborators, town planners and other professionals can expand their business and generate new

revenue streams. According to Oyewole et al. (2020), networking can provide opportunities for town planners to connect with real estate developers, investors, and other potential clients, which can lead to new business opportunities.

ix.   Increased job prospects: Networking can also increase job prospects for town planners and other professionals. By building relationships with potential employers and industry contacts, professionals can learn about new job opportunities and connect with hiring managers. Oladapo et al. (2020) note that networking can facilitate the identification of job openings and create opportunities for professionals to learn about job requirements and expectations.

x.   Advocacy for the profession: Finally, networking can help to advocate for the profession of town planning in Nigeria. By working together and presenting a united voice, professionals can raise awareness of the importance of urban development and promote the value of their work to policymakers, investors, and the general public. As highlighted by Adebayo and Olatunji (2019), networking can create opportunities for town planners to engage with policymakers and other stakeholders and advocate for policies and practices that support sustainable urban development.

4.4 Case Study (NITP and ATOPCON)

Examples of professional organizations in the field of urban planning in Nigeria include the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) and the Association of Town Planning Consultants of Nigeria (ATOPCON). These organizations provide networking opportunities through events such as conferences, seminars, and workshops. In terms of professional development, the NITP offers a range of training programs and workshops aimed at developing the skills and knowledge of town planners in Nigeria. For example, they offer a professional development program that covers topics such as project management, land use planning, and environmental impact assessment. Similarly, ATOPCON provides opportunities for its members to attend training and capacity-building workshops. Networking can also provide access to resources such as funding and expertise. For example, the African Development Bank (AfDB) provides funding for infrastructure and urban development projects in Nigeria. By networking with AfDB officials and other development finance institutions, town planners and other professionals can access funding for their projects. In terms of expertise, networking can provide opportunities to connect with other professionals who have specialized knowledge or skills. For example, a town planner working on a transportation project may benefit from networking with a traffic engineer or a transportation planner. Increased visibility can be achieved through networking by participating in conferences, speaking at events or getting involved with industry publications. These opportunities provide exposure and help build the professional profile of town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development. The NITP's Annual Conference and General Meeting, for example, is a platform for town planners to showcase their work and exchange ideas with their peers. Networking can also help town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development to influence policy and decision-making. For example, by working with organizations such as the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), town planners can advocate for policies and practices that promote sustainable and inclusive urban development. UN-Habitat's Global Urban Lectures program, for example, offers online lectures on various aspects of urban development and is open to all interested professionals. Mentorship and career development opportunities can be facilitated through networking. Professional organizations such as the NITP and ATOPCON offer mentorship programs for early-career professionals. These programs provide opportunities for young town planners to connect with experienced professionals and gain insights into the industry. Networking can also expose town planners and other professionals to new perspectives and ideas. For example, attending conferences and workshops can expose professionals to new research and best practices in the field of urban development. In addition, networking with professionals from different regions or backgrounds can broaden their understanding of the challenges and opportunities of urban development in Nigeria. Business opportunities can also arise from networking, such as new contracts and partnerships. For example, town planners can network with representatives of private sector companies to identify potential project opportunities or to partner on projects. In addition, town planners can network with representatives of other government agencies to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Networking can help to advocate for the profession of town planning in Nigeria. By working together and presenting a united voice, professionals can raise awareness of the importance of urban development and promote the value of their work to policymakers, investors, and the general public. For example, the NITP and ATOPCON have been involved in advocating for the recognition and registration of town planning as a profession in Nigeria (Olatubara, 2019).

4.5 Challenges Faced by Town Planners and Other Professionals in the Field in Promoting Sustainable Urban Development in Nigeria

In promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria, town planners and other professionals in the field face a range of challenges. These include inadequate funding for urban development projects, weak regulatory frameworks, limited data and information, limited public participation, political interference, corruption, inadequate capacity and skills, rapid population growth, poor infrastructure, climate change and environmental degradation, limited collaboration and coordination, and cultural and social factors.

One of the main challenges is the lack of adequate funding for urban development projects. This makes it difficult to implement sustainable development strategies and to address the infrastructure needs of growing cities (Okorie & Okeke, 2019). Additionally, there is a need for a stronger regulatory framework for urban development in Nigeria, as many urban areas are characterized by haphazard development and inadequate infrastructure, which can lead to environmental degradation, social inequality, and other negative outcomes (Obioha, 2019).

There is also a lack of reliable and up-to-date data and information on urban development in Nigeria, which makes it difficult to plan and implement effective strategies for sustainable development (Adelekan&Alao, 2017). This is further compounded by limited public participation in the planning and decision-making process for urban development projects in Nigeria, which can lead to a lack of transparency and accountability, and can result in projects that do not reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities (Olufemi, 2018).

Political interference and corruption are also significant challenges in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria. These can undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of urban development projects, and can lead to the mismanagement of resources and the awarding of contracts to unqualified or unsuitable firms (Mgbemena, 2017).

Inadequate capacity and skills among town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development is another challenge. This includes a lack of training in areas such as sustainable development, project management, and stakeholder engagement (Anifowose& Adeyemo, 2018).

Rapid population growth, poor infrastructure, climate change and environmental degradation, limited collaboration and coordination, and cultural and social factors also present significant challenges for sustainable urban development in Nigeria (Oguntoyinbo& Ibrahim, 2020).

The challenges facing town planners and other allied professionals in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. Addressing these challenges will require a holistic and collaborative approach, involving a wide range of stakeholders and taking into account the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

5.0 Recommendations

To overcome the challenges faced by town planners and other professionals in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria, the following recommendations are significant:

i. Increased funding: The government and private sector should increase funding for urban development projects and ensure that funds are properly allocated to support sustainable development.

ii. Strengthened regulatory framework: The government should strengthen the regulatory framework for urban development and ensure that regulations are enforced effectively. This will help to prevent haphazard development and ensure that development is sustainable.

iii. Improved data and information systems: The government should invest in improving data and information systems for urban development, including data collection and analysis, and dissemination of information to stakeholders. This will help to inform decision-making and ensure that development is evidence-based.

iv. Increased public participation: There is a need to increase public participation in the planning and decision-making process for urban development projects. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as town hall meetings, public hearings, and online consultations.

v. Reduced political interference: The government should ensure that urban development projects are not subject to political interference, and that decisions are made based on technical and professional considerations.

vi. Addressing corruption: The government should take steps to address corruption in the urban development sector, including strengthening anti-corruption measures and promoting transparency and accountability in project management.

vii. Capacity building and skills development: The government and private sector should invest in capacity building and skills development for town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development. This should include training in areas such as sustainable development, project management, and stakeholder engagement.

viii. Improved infrastructure: The government and private sector should work together to improve basic infrastructure in urban areas, including water supply, sanitation, and electricity. This will support economic development and social progress, and help to promote sustainable urban development.

ix. Climate change adaptation and mitigation: The government should prioritize climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in urban development planning and implementation. This should include measures such as flood management, green infrastructure, and renewable energy.

x. Increased collaboration and coordination: There is a need for increased collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders involved in urban development. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as inter-agency coordination, public-private partnerships, and multi-stakeholder platforms.

xi. Integration of technology: The use of technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Building Information Modelling (BIM) can aid town planners and other professionals in making better decisions, reducing errors, and increasing efficiency in project delivery.

xii. Encouraging sustainable transport modes: Encouraging sustainable transport modes such as cycling, walking, and public transportation can reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, which are major challenges in urban areas. The government should invest in infrastructure to support these modes of transportation.

xiii. Engaging with informal settlements: In Nigeria, informal settlements are a significant challenge in urban areas. Town planners and other professionals should engage with informal settlement residents to understand their needs and priorities and involve them in the decision-making process.

xiv. Adopting a holistic approach: Sustainable urban development cannot be achieved by focusing on a single aspect of development. A holistic approach that considers economic, social, and environmental factors is necessary for promoting sustainable development.

xv. Promoting green spaces: Green spaces such as parks and gardens have numerous benefits for urban areas, including improving air quality, providing recreational opportunities, and reducing the urban heat island effect. The government should prioritize the creation of green spaces in urban areas.

By adopting these recommendations, town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development in Nigeria can further enhance the promotion of sustainable urban development in the country.

6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has highlighted the importance of town planning practice and networking in promoting sustainable urban development in Nigeria. The paper has discussed the roles of town planners and other professionals in the field in achieving sustainable development, as well as the benefits of networking for professionals in the field. However, the paper also identified the numerous challenges that hinder the promotion of sustainable urban development in Nigeria, including lack of funding, weak regulatory frameworks, corruption, and political interference. To overcome these challenges, the paper recommended increased funding, strengthened regulatory frameworks, improved data and information systems, increased public participation, reduced political interference, addressing corruption, capacity building, improved infrastructure, climate change adaptation and mitigation, increased collaboration and coordination, integration of technology, encouraging sustainable transport modes, engaging with informal settlements, adopting a holistic approach, and promoting green spaces.

By implementing these recommendations, town planners and other professionals in the field of urban development in Nigeria can promote sustainable urban development and address the challenges faced in the sector.

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