

Physical Planning Activities in the Newly Created City of Hoima, Uganda: Opportunities and Challenges

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How to cite this paper: Kweezi, R., & Barakagira, A. (2023). Physical Planning Activities in the Newly Created City of Hoima, Uganda: Opportunities and Challenges. *Current Urban Studies*, 11, 1-23.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/cus.2023.111001>

Received: November 28, 2022

Accepted: February 17, 2023

Published: February 20, 2023

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Abstract

Recently some African cities have been scenes of high profile eviction campaigns. These campaigns have elicited heavy criticism from various quarters, domestic and international. Between half and three quarters of all new housing in sub-Saharan African cities is built on land that has been supplied through processes that, in one way or another, do not comply with formal legal requirements related to subdivision, transfer and development control. Such urban development processes are undoubtedly problematic, both for the authorities and for the residents of the areas developed through these processes: unplanned development results in sprawl, hindering the cost-effective extension of infrastructure and services; some developments are built in areas topographically unsuitable for residential use such as steep slopes and flood-prone sites; unrecognized areas do not generate revenue for local councils; residents experience varying degrees of insecurity; access by public transport and emergency services may be difficult or impossible; and the services and utilities available to residents may fall far short of what is desirable. However, in many respects these channels of land supply are highly successful: they continue to make a much larger contribution to urban development than formal channels, accommodating almost all new low-income and many middle-income households; many of the residential areas have regular layouts; there appear to be relatively few conflicts between actors involved in informal land delivery; and many house owners enjoy considerable defacto tenure security. Nevertheless, governments continue to regard informal processes of urban development as undesirable aberrations and persist in attempts to implement formal tenure, subdivision and development control policies and procedures despite their ineffectiveness. Often the laws and policies on which land administration practices are based are colonial imports. The extent to which indigenous tenure systems were understood, recognized and incorporated va-

ried from colony to colony, but it was generally believed that only a formal system based on a European model could provide a framework for urban development and protect the rights of urban property owners (who at that time were mostly expatriates). Embedded in the model were culturally constructed ideas about the desirable form and appearance of cities and assumptions about appropriate roles for the state in regulating urban growth and development. These land administration systems, which were inherited at independence, are governed by formal rules, set out in legislation and administrative procedures. The legislative provisions and the administrative systems that were established to implement them proved quite unable to cope with the rapid urban growth that occurred after independence, but this did not lead policy makers and many analysts to abandon their view that states had both an obligation and the capacity to intervene comprehensively in land management. As a result, research has often focused on documenting and explaining the failures (and, more rarely, successes) of state intervention, thereby privileging formal state law over other socially embedded rules on which actors draw to regulate transactions in land.

Keywords

Physical Planning, Activities, Newly Created Cities, Challenges and Opportunities, Uganda

1. Introduction

Physical planning involves a number of activities which take place on natural resources like land, lakes, rivers, and rocks. These resources must be conserved while implementing physical planning activities sustainably. The state of the physical environment particularly the urban centers, today is a major source of global concern. This is evident from the fact that the urban environment is greatly of man's making. The safeguarding of the urban areas from human injurious physical, social, economic and political activities should be man's paramount responsibility. Physical planning is essential for development and that the benefits of physical planning in the city can only be achieved when plans are effectively and efficiently implemented.

1.1. Background to the Study

The fact that physical planning involves a number of activities which take place on natural resources like land, lakes, rivers, and rocks. These resources must be conserved while implementing physical planning activities sustainably. The state of the physical environment particularly the urban centers, today is a major source of global concern. This is evident from the fact that the urban environment is greatly of man's making. The safeguarding of the urban areas from human injurious physical, social, economic and political activities should be man's

paramount responsibility.

The United Nations recorded that currently 55% of the world population lives in urban areas, and this is expected to increase to 68% by the year 2050; this trend makes urbanization the most transformative process in the century (United Nations, 2018). This trajectory has caused cities and urban areas to be concentration points for environmental, economic, social, and cultural interactions, challenging the sustainability of housing, infrastructure, basic services, and food security, among others (UN Habitat, 2016). The New Urban Agenda, which contains the trajectory for urban development adopted by the United Nations, highlights the need for a new look at the way cities are planned, designed, financed, developed, and governed, and reaffirms the global commitment to sustainable urban development (Watson, 2016).

In this study, the author focused on the implementation of physical planning in the cities of Uganda, based on an assessment of physical planning activities in the newly created cities in Uganda with the main focus on Hoima City's challenges and opportunities: City physical planning is essential for development and that the benefits of physical planning in the city can only be achieved when plans are effectively and efficiently implemented. In this study, the author set out to locate challenges to implementation in the laws that govern city physical planning and the relationships inherent in the institutional setup. A better understanding of the hindrances to plan implementation may be useful to policymakers and city managers in developing appropriate policies to enhance implementation.

The social change anticipated from the findings of this study could have far-reaching implications, particularly during this time in my country of Uganda, which is engaged in much activity to formulate laws required under the Uganda Constitution of 2010. In addition, study findings enhanced the understanding of impediments to plan implementation and create greater awareness among actors charged with preparation, approval, and implementation of physical planning in the cities about the importance of implementation.

It was against this backgrounds that this study aim at assessing the physical planning activities in the newly created cities in Uganda with the main focus on Hoima City's challenges and opportunities.

1.2. Physical Planning and Development in Uganda

The narrative of physical planning in Uganda often focuses on multiple issues especially the increasing incidence of adverse urban environmental outcomes and the inability of urban planning to address the underlying causes. Similar to the majority of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, the often-cited challenges of Uganda's urban environment include rising levels of urban poverty and inequality, inadequate access to formal lands for development, proliferation of informal settlements, and the lack of basic infrastructure and services (Ogbazi, 2013). However, consensus within the growing body of literature identifies the

core link of the problem to the weaknesses of physical planning and governance system in the country (Egbu et al., 2008; Ogbazi, 2013). For example, according to the World Bank (2014, 2017), Uganda is one of the lowly ranked countries across the globe in terms of delays and financial cost relating to processing of construction permits and registration of land rights. Such delays and cost partly account for non-compliance with physical planning and urban development regulations, which ultimately lead to adverse environmental outcomes (Egbu et al., 2008).

The debate on the exceptional failings of Uganda's physical planning and governance system often reflects a number of imperatives as critical causes. These are tensions between traditional and formal sector actors, and among national, state and local governments in particular, mismatch between political jurisdiction of state and local governments in relation to city or regional economies. The remainder is resource curse and corruption, as well as other factors, such as inadequate resources both human and material. Formal urban planning and land administration practices were introduced in the country during the colonial epoch. Successive post-colonial administrations have virtually not departed from the colonial planning and land administration provisions, and in some cases have even entrenched them. There have been two major laws relating to land administration and urban planning since the colonial planning legislation. However, the philosophy of the colonial planning ordinance still drives these laws. In particular, these laws continue to enjoin planning to follow the centralized technocratic and bureaucratic processes and procedures, as well as the restrictive demands of the colonial ordinance. Commentators like Ogbazi (2013) note that these processes and procedures do not promote inclusion, and tend to exclude the majority of the urban sector stakeholders from the physical planning processes. Therefore, the formal urban planning and land administration practices over the years have largely been divorced from the culture and traditions of the country (Ogbazi, 2013).

Urban and Regional Planning Act have made state and quasi-state institutions like local governments responsible for survey, planning and provision of infrastructure, as they have to ensure that urban lands are properly surveyed, planned and serviced. However, as noted previously the institutions are constrained by complicated processes (Egbu et al., 2008) and are required to deal with a contradictory legal framework. In addition, Uganda's on-going urbanization is not limited to major urban centres, but they are also occurring across small towns (UN-Habitat, 2010). A prominent feature of the growth is the expansion of urban centres to encompass adjoining rural or peri-urban settlements thereby creating a problem as to the body, state or local government that has the jurisdiction by way of planning over such transitional areas.

Corollary to the above is physical planning and land administration institutions lack of capacity to fully execute their functions resulting in problems, such as out of date city plans (Aribigbola, 2007) and paucity of data. This ham-

pers land development activities including land acquisition and formalization processes because adequate surveys and demarcation of urban lands have not been undertaken on a widespread basis. The literature further identifies other challenges including: the lack of coordination among planning institutions (Ogbazi, 2013); widespread apathy to adopt modern planning theories and models (Ogbazi, 2013); the absence of strategic plans; failure to implement and enforce detailed land use plans and the lack of large scale utilization of modern digital technology to facilitate planning and land administration processes.

1.3. Forms of Urban Physical Planning and Development

The inadequacies of Uganda's urban physical planning and governance system have culminated in several problems. The reliance on manual processes and procedures has led to further delays with processing of relevant documentations, and ultimately high cost of compliance with development regulations and low compliance rate (Egbu et al., 2008; World Bank, 2014). Also, the system's exclusion of urban sector stakeholders in planning processes has contributed to a lack of awareness of the urban development regulations, processes, transparency and legitimacy, and partly the low compliance rate with development regulations (Aribigbola, 2007). Consequently, urban planning authorities are often seen as "alien" authorities by these communities rendering the communities at times unreceptive to modern planning arrangements, such as re-development or renewal proposals. Coupled with a fourfold increase in population since the 1950s, Uganda's urban planning challenges have further culminated in a complex urban situation with a number of urban ills. However, a prominent outcome from the challenges is the emergence of two forms of developments namely formal and informal. Formal developments are developments produced through the formal urban development processes. Conversely, informal developments are alternative forms of developments. They emerged from the informal urban development and governance system. This is often equated to the customary land delivery and development system, which predates the formal urban development system (Ikejiofor, 2006). Unlike formal developments often described as adequate and suitable, the traditional notion of informal developments is one of being illegal developments characterized by poor quality construction materials and often located in places of poor environmental quality (Wekesa et al., 2013). However, there are many higher quality developments in better neighbourhoods that could be classified as informal because they do not comply with formal processes. Like other SSA cities, the incidences of informal developments in Ugandan cities continue to increase (Rakodi, 2007). However, these developments are often criticized as nuisance particularly by authorities and the elite. Whilst the physical environments delivered through the formal urban development channels are mostly planned and provided with infrastructure and services, informal developments are perceived to be unplanned and not provided with

infrastructure and services. Consequently, there is often a lack of development control resulting in breach of development regulations, connection to substandard infrastructure, and losses in government revenues (Rakodi, 2006). Also, activities under the informal land delivery and development system are often not documented (Rakodi, 2007). This sometimes leads to multiple sales of the same parcels of land, a potential threat to security of title to lands and developments. However, some analysts (Rakodi, 2007; UN-Habitat, 2010, 2014) suggest that these developments constitute the largest proportion of all urban developments in Uganda and are the main source of accommodation for housing and other activities for the majority of urban residents. For example, smaller scale infilling within urban centres and small to medium scale development at the expanding edges of the cities are often realised through informal means and outside the formal planning system. The proliferation of these developments is driven mainly by the inadequacies of the formal development system and the benefits of the informal development system.

Unlike formal development system, the informal development system is more flexible. This potentially makes it more responsive to the needs of the majority of the urban population in terms of expeditious provision of developable lands, document processing and land developments. For example, the Hoima City physical planner reported that the number of residential layouts approved in the city of Hoima under the informal development system was 641 compared to those approved by public institutions, which were 20. However, the problem with some of the planning schemes prepared for informal developments is their inability to incorporate the broad socio-economic development vision of urban areas and their regions. Also, there may always be the likelihood for customary or informal land owners to overlook some ancillary land uses, such as community parks and green belts due to profit considerations or perceptions of their irrelevance.

The urban growth in Uganda demonstrates that considerable resources channeled largely through informal processes lead to increased wealth for some sectors of society. Also, despite the limitations of the informal development system, it appears to offer a great deal of benefit to the majority of the Ugandan urban population. Experts have proposed pluralistic urban planning, development and governance paradigms that emphasize multi-level processes and procedures based on engaging community level action, civic leaders, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to deliver sustainable solutions (Ogbazi, 2013; UN-Habitat, 2014). However, in spite of investment by NGOs and development agencies in city planning and development strategies, for example, the introduction of new policy initiatives and programmes, such as the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP), the integration of such stakeholders in formal processes is poor and continues to generate tension (Ogbazi, 2013). This implies a need for a further understanding of opportunities and challenges under the existing arrangement(s) to capitalize on the strengths and weaknesses of formal and infor-

mal systems for far reaching policy solutions.

The aim of this study was to assess the physical planning activities in the newly created cities mainly on Hoima City's challenges and opportunities. Information generated shall be used to provide decision-making and actions that shall address the physical planning challenges and improve on physical planning opportunities in Hoima city. This shall contribute to reduction in physical planning challenges associated with budgetary constraints, inadequate physical planning and development control personnel, inadequate logistics, land tenure systems and conflicting land management procedures in Hoima city.

2. Methodology

A literature review of Uganda's physical planning and governance arrangements was conducted. This provided background insights for systematic implementation of the study. The review also identified key urban sector stakeholders in Uganda's urban development processes. Based on this information and data obtained from some key informants, such as Hoima City's physical planner and local government officials, stakeholder mapping and analysis were undertaken to determine the research participants. The literature review, thus, helped to contextualize and direct the implementation of the research, as well as the design of the data collection instruments.

2.1. Research Design

The study adopted a cross sectional research design with mixed methods approach (Both Quantitative and Qualitative methods) so as to assess the physical planning activities in the newly created cities in Uganda with a case study of Hoima City's challenges and opportunities by conducting an in depth study of conditions obtaining in Hoima city. The major advantage of the case study was that it provided to the researcher an opportunity to intensively analyze many specific details often disregarded by other methods.

The qualitative method was used on respondents that were sampled purposively to assess the ideas and perceptions concerning the physical planning challenges and opportunities in Hoima City. Whereas quantitative research method was used inform of mathematical numbers that were assigned to variables that were not measured using statements during research.

2.2. Area of Study

The study was conducted in Hoima City Mid-western Uganda at Coordinates: 01°24N, 31°18E. Hoima City is bordered by Buliisa District to the north, Masindi District to the northeast, Kyankwanzi District in the east, Kibaale District to the south, Ntoroko District to the southwest and the Democratic Republic of the Congo across Lake Albert to the west. The main area of interest in this city is oil business which has attracted the construction of an airport and the pipeline (**Figure 1**).

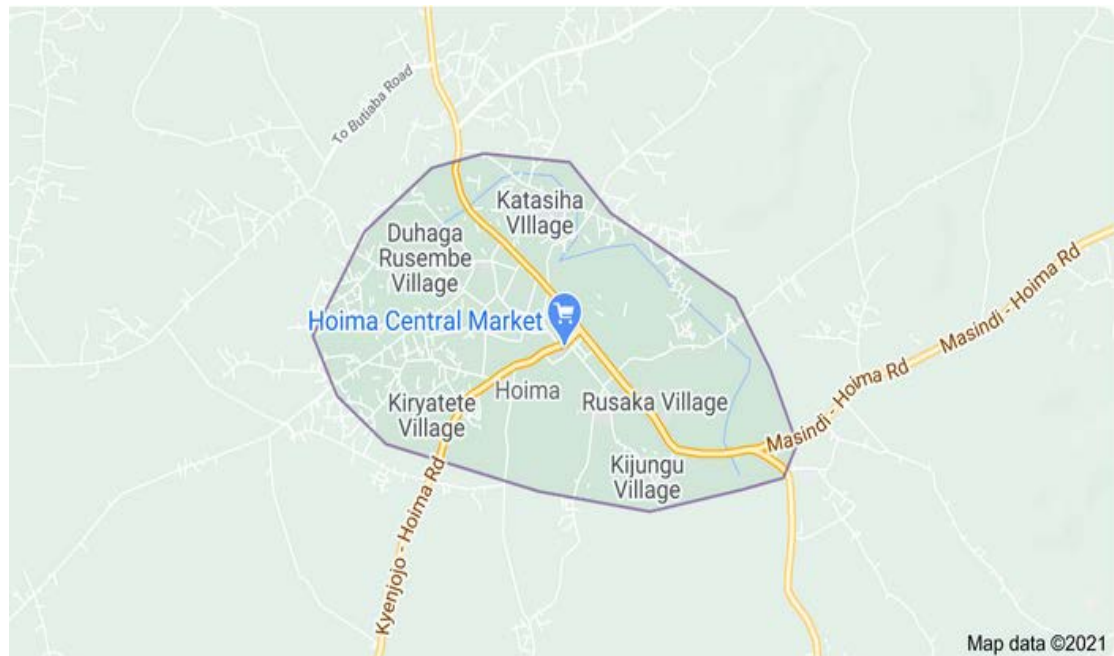


Figure 1. Map of Hoima City.

2.3. Study Population

Hoima City has a population of 11,575 households (UBOS, 2014). From these, a sample size of 387 respondents was determined to participate in the study. The study population comprised of a total population of 11,575 households. From the study population, using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a total number of 387 respondents were determined to participate in the study. The study population included; Hoima City planner, Hoima city Administrators, Hoima City Mayor, and the City chairperson. The study also involved City residents.

2.4. Sample Size

The sample was used in this study because of the inability of the researcher to test all the individuals in the population. The sample was representative of the population from which it was drawn and it had a good size to warrant statistical analysis because a scientific approach by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size table was used to determine the sample to participate in this study.

The study utilized a descriptive study design. 380 household respondents were selected utilizing Krejcie's sample determination formula as shown below;

n (sample size)

N (Total population)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

$$n = \frac{11575}{1 + 11575 \times 0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{11575}{1 + 11575 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{11575}{1 + 28.93}$$

$$n = \frac{11575}{29.93}$$

$$n = 387$$

NB: 380 household respondents were available for the study as shown in the table below;

Pre-testing was done to ensure validity of major variables in the household questionnaire. Later, after pre-testing, the reliability and validity of the research tool (household questionnaire) was determined through a Content Valid Index (CVI) test using Cronbach's Alfa. A literature review of Uganda's physical planning and governance arrangements was conducted. This provided background insights for systematic implementation of the study.

The review also identified key urban sector stakeholders in Uganda's urban development processes. Based on this information and data obtained from some key informants, such as Hoima City's physical planner and local government officials, stakeholder mapping and analysis were undertaken to determine the research participants. The literature review, thus, helped to contextualize and direct the implementation of the research, as well as the design of the data collection instruments.

3. Results and Discussion

Findings from this study should be evaluated cautiously. They may not to be comprehensive. However, the connections of the results to physical planning issues and findings from relevant studies show that they are significant. In broad terms, understanding of physical planning issues differed across the participant groups. However, this was expected. The findings are categorized into three main headings including challenges and opportunities of Hoima City's physical planning. These are presented as follows:

3.1. Description of Respondents

The majority (54.6%) of respondents were females which is not surprising, given that in the study area the matriarchy social system dominates. It was also observed that a majority (90%) of the respondents were below the age of 60 years (Table 1).

As for education, 67.5% of the respondents had attained at least some level of education. Of these, 17.4% attained primary education and 50.74% had advanced to secondary school level education. However, the percentage of those who had advanced beyond secondary school level (i.e., university, tertiary, institute etc.) was relatively low, and they had also not gained training in any other specialties

Table 1. Socio-Demographic characteristics of respondents in percentages.

Descriptive	Division	Percentage %
	East	52.2
	Central	47.8
Gender	Male	45.4
	Female	54.6
Age	20 - 29	15.52
	30 - 39	44.3
	40 - 49	25.29
	50 - 59	10.34
	>60	4.60
Household Head	Father	95.0
	Mother	5.0
Education	No formal education	1.72
	Primary	17.24
	Secondary	50.57
	Tertiary	30.46
Household Size	1 person	9.2
	2 persons	15.0
	3	9.8
	4	20.3
	>5	45.6
Marital Status	Married	49
	Single	37
	Divorced	6
	Separated	8
Land Ownership	Customary	73.6
	Freehold	18.7
	Leasehold	5.3
	Public	2.4
Land size	<1 acre	6.3
	1 acre	10.0
	2 acres	1.6
	3 acres	13.5
	4 acres	24.5
	>5 acres	44.1

Source: Field data, 2022.

(e.g., Planning) (Table 1).

3.2. Physical Planning and Development

The findings presented in this section focus on some pertinent physical planning and development issues other than the challenges and opportunities.

3.2.1. Acquisition of Land

There was a consensus among all the participant groups that formal lands are acquired through Government. Also, formal land registration as the legal perfection of land ownership was universally recognized. However, there were nuances in knowledge of how and why Government is vested with that authority. Government and the private sector participants could state the relevant legislation that empowers Government to do so, but such knowledge was sketchy among the other groups of participants. Further, it came to the fore that formal lands could be acquired through subsequent transactions where a beneficiary of formal land sells the land to another person. Government and the private sector participants described clearly the alternative legal processes for acquisition through subsequent transactions. It was striking that participants from the professional bodies could not state the relevant legislation that vest Government with the authority to make land grants for development and clearly describe the processes involved given that they are professionals in the built environment.

Nevertheless, all the participant groups recognized a contrast between Government land allocation and customary land allocation processes—both of which could lead to formal registration of ownership to land. Further, they noted that registration of lands granted under customary arrangements could result in shorter leasehold terms. This stems from parties to land transactions strategy of back-dating land transfers in order to comply with the provisions of the Land Use Act. The provisions of the Act vest ownership of all lands in the state and that land grants should emanate from Government signifying that such land grants would ordinarily have risked their titles being regularized. This finding corroborates earlier studies, such as Ikejiofor (2006) who found similar land grant processes and practices, as well as strategies adopted by both vendors and purchasers of land to circumvent the requirements of the Land Use Act.

3.2.2. Meaning of physical Planning

Differences in perception of physical planning especially between Government participants and those from the professional bodies on the one hand, and the civic leaders and private sector participants on the other hand were noted. The former groups of participants had a comprehensive view of physical planning and opined that it should include economic, social and environmental issues, as well as involve communities, other stakeholders and deliver infrastructure and services. Conversely, the later participants expressed a narrower view of physical planning with some of their explanations, in particular, from the civic leaders showing a lack of understanding. These participants largely perceived physical

planning as physical arrangement of land uses and enforcement of rules and regulations to achieve harmonious land use, as well as provision of physical infrastructure. Nevertheless, there was a consensus within all the participant groups that physical planning in Hoima City is predominantly a Government activity. This finding is in tandem with studies, such as [Aribigbola \(2007\)](#) and [Egbu et al. \(2008\)](#) that observed that physical planning practice in the country is still informed by colonial legislation, which in many respects make it the preserve of Government and its functionaries to the exclusion of the greater majority of the citizens. However, there was recognition particularly amongst the civic leaders that there exist indigenous forms of physical planning across cities in the country. This was referred to as informal physical planning, which is mostly practiced in informal settlements as formal planning often do not extend to such settlements. Although visionary master physical planning and provision of infrastructure were seen as a benefit, the detailed rules and regulations of plans and their enforcement were to a certain extent resented by the civic leaders who were inclined to regard them in some respects as alien interference.

3.2.3. Participation in Physical Planning

Mixed outcomes were gathered on experience relating to community engagement in physical planning. While some members of each of the participant groups expressed that there have been instances where physical planning authorities have involved communities or the private sector in planning others within each group did not note such experience. Nevertheless, it was recognized that such practices could be useful. A Government participant in Hoima City, for example, noted as follows: Our experience shows that the involvement of stakeholders will enrich the process and product of physical planning. It helps to balance the vision of the State Government with that of the people. The response from the stakeholders also encourages acceptability of the plan. An example of the business community in Hoima City where the community, and physical planning and urban development authorities worked together to prepare planning schemes over lands and arrange for infrastructure and services was given by both civic leaders and Government participants from the city. It was explained that the arrangement was initiated by the community leaders who contacted the local physical planning authority. Whilst the example demonstrates that such participation could be initiated by communities' public authorities need to be receptive to and display honesty and openness in such arrangements for it to be successful. Indeed, these credentials were vital to the business community's example, which saw the community benefit from physical planning schemes and basic infrastructure. The community members were also very receptive to the physical planning schemes and were eager to comply with their provisions. This supports [Ogbazi \(2013\)](#), which identified similar such success factors in the evaluation of participation in physical planning and urban development as part of the maiden sustainable cities programme in Hoima City.

3.3. Challenges

3.3.1. Access to Formal Lands and Preponderance of Informal Developments

Access to formal lands for development was noted by 75% of the participant groups to be difficult. There were some indications especially from the civic leaders that the informal land delivery or acquisition process might be preferred by groups and individuals who often feel excluded from the formal land acquisition process. This is due to the shortcomings of the formal land delivery processes including delays and high cost associated with the processes. A civic leader in Hoima City, for instance, noted that:

When Government acquires land from the community, the community loses. The land becomes property of Government, and Government allocates it the way it wants. That reduces the available quantum of land to that community.

The participant explained that when Government acquires a community's land through compulsory purchase, the extent of that community's land is reduced by the size of the acquired land. Therefore, access to such lands by the community members is lost. The situation becomes worse where compensation for the acquisition is not paid and Government allocates the land without considering members of the community, but rather focuses on satisfying the needs of the elite and affluent in society, which often is the case.

It emerged from the interviews that ordinarily there should be ready access to Government land by every Ugandan. However, such is not the case due to the following: Upon acquisition the lands have to be re-surveyed, zoned and subdivision plans prepared to cover them. This ensures provision for various land uses depending on the needs of the relevant communities. However, these activities usually take a long period of time often between two and five years. This delay was attributed to logistical constraints, lack of adequate co-ordination among relevant Government institutions and the long periods for obtaining requisite approvals, such as Government budgetary approvals.

Applicants have to apply to land allocation committees for allocations and need to meet certain requirements, such as complete application forms, demonstrate evidence of financial capacity to develop the land and sometimes provide designs for proposed developments. Also, applicants have to pay some statutory fees. Whilst 20% of the people are able to get allocations easily and within a comparatively short period of time, it takes ages for the majority of the people to get allocations. Apart from inadequate resources both human and material, irregular meeting times of the committees, the long period it takes for the allocation committees to make decisions on applications was attributed to manipulations of the elite. Besides, the allocation process is riddled with corruption particularly extra out of pocket payments to public officials, and follow-ups to Government departments to facilitate the application process. The civic leaders in Hoima City disclosed that the period for allocation of land in the city could range between 14 days and 20 years upon submission of application depending

on how influential and affluent an applicant is. However, the majority of applicants in most cases do not receive response from the allocation committees. These delays often culminate in depreciation in financial resources developers would have used to finance their projects on the one hand due to inflation and increase in interest on capital payments on the other hand due to the time lag.

The above challenges were echoed by the other groups of participants. A private sector participant in Hoima City observed as follows:

Access to formal lands is hindered by the long bureaucracy associated with acquisition. Most often, it takes months or years before an applicant is finally granted a land allocation.

Although the above findings are consistent with the findings from the literature (Aribigbola, 2007; Egbu et al., 2008; World Bank, 2017), the Government participants were rather quick to lay emphasis on political interference in physical planning, logistical constraints, weak institutions, lack of staff training and inefficiencies as challenges. In contrast, participants from the professional bodies and the private sector, as well as the civic leaders were particular about challenges, such as the cost of compliance with regulations, administrative delays and bureaucratic complexities. The participants noted that a combination of lack of ready access to formal lands, and the above cost and inconveniences are disincentives to compliance, which partly leads to high incidence of informal developments. A private sector participant from the business community, for instance, observed as follows:

People engage in informal development because they do not wish to spend money on the expensive and time-consuming process of acquiring a development permit. The cost of securing building permit could get up to 20m UGX for a bungalow. The bureaucratic delay in registration is a big deterrent. Therefore, people prefer to invest their money before it depreciates regardless of the consequence of contravention. To secure building permit, it could take up to two years.

The incidence of informal developments was also partly attributed to non-payment of compensation for Government acquired lands as it has somewhat empowered expropriated owners to encroach on such lands. It was explained particularly by the civic leaders that such empowerment is bolstered by enabling conditions, such as expropriated community members not having access to formal lands, and Government's inability to utilize all the acquired lands, as well as ensure full scale development control.

Opinions, however, differed on whether it is a sensible option to require demolition on the grounds of illegality once a development has emerged informally. This was against the background of rapidly expanding cities where inward migration is culminating in all types of informal practices with economic necessities dictating that extra workers who have diverse and conflicting interests are welcome in urban areas resulting often in tensions. It can, thus, be surmised from the discussions that a major hinderance to access to formal lands and low

compliance with physical planning and development regulations is steeped in cost and inconveniences related to the formal land acquisition and development processes. This predominantly include statutory fees paid for the land and the administrative processes, extra out of pocket payments to public officials to facilitate an acquisition process, traveling cost for follow-ups on application processes, waiting times for follow-ups, delays with the acquisition processes and cost of time lag.

3.3.2. The Poor's Access to Lands

All the participant groups agreed that although there are no deliberate policies that discriminate against the urban poor's access to formal land, it is more difficult for them to access and hold formal lands. Apart from the already discussed difficulties with access to formal lands particularly the financial cost, the participants noted that the problem is due to the poor's lack of awareness of land acquisition procedures and the perception that the poor will not be able to develop any allocated land to the required standard. Therefore, they do not apply for land in good areas. For informal lands, the participants explained that access by the poor is increasing becoming limited due to rising levels of demand and prices. A participant from the professional bodies in Hoima City observed that:

Until recently, the local lands were easily affordable to the urban poor due to their low prices. However, the high demand for land has affected the prices and access by the poor.

The above finding corroborates findings from [Ikejiolor \(2006\)](#). That said, it came to the fore that where the urban poor are allocated formal lands it is often difficult for them to hold on to such lands over time especially if these lands are located in prime areas or become prime due to urban growth or positive location externalities. This is because the elite and the affluent usually want to take over these lands. Therefore, under guises including the need to undertake redevelopment, promote highest and best use of land and non-compliance with allocation and lease conditions like non-payments of periodic ground rents, the poor are compelled to vacate these lands under arrangements, such as sale of the lands at give away prices, allocation of alternative lands, and eviction.

3.3.3. Women Access to Lands

Gender was not perceived as a significant bar to land access. This is due to the increasing role of financial capacity as a major determinant to land access. However, some of the participants particularly the civic leaders noted the possibility of the existence of discrimination on the basis of gender. They said that there are still some limitations on women ownership of land in certain traditional communities in the country and that whilst these limitations may not necessarily bar women from owning land, they make them second fiddle to men. It further emerged that the continuous existence of these limitations is rooted in keeping family traditions and the fact that they inure to the benefit of men who often wield the most influence in the relevant communities.

3.3.4. Security of Land Tenure

All the participant groups agreed that lands obtained from the formal land delivery system are more secured compared to those from the informal system. This is partly due to the benefit of certification by Government and the virtual absence of multiple sale of the same parcels of land. The balance between the two forms of land grants was neatly encapsulated in the observation by a private sector participant in Hoima City as follows:

Land registration with the Government is slow for both the formal and informal lands but the security of tenure of formal land is more guaranteed than the informal land where cases of multiple sale and encroachment are rife.

The difficulty with identifying the rightful owners and authorized actors, such as leaders of land owning groups and agents, unreasonable terms, as well as the absence of well established mechanism to address post land grants issues were further cited as part of the causes of the tenure security problem. The issue of multiple sales of the same parcel of land was traced to a number of causes. First, it came to the fore that informal land grantors hardly keep proper records of their transaction. Therefore, they often forget that land, which is the subject matter of a current transaction, had already been sold. This finding concurs with what is reported in studies, such as Ikejiofor et al. (2004) and Ikejiofor (2006). Secondly, the issue is motivated by greed. It was explained that this often happens where a previously sold land is not developed and another purchaser approaches the grantor with a higher offer or where the grantor had already used the money from the previous sale(s) and he/she is hard pressed with money. It was further explained that multiple sales could arise where proceeds from sales do not benefit all members of a land owning family in which case other members of the family find avenues to sale the land particularly if it is not developed.

3.3.5. Lack of Awareness and Periodic Review of Master Plans

There was recognition of a lack of awareness of physical planning, development processes and regulations, and periodic review of existing master plans. Civic leaders, as well as participants from the private sector and the professional bodies particularly emphasized the challenge of lack awareness of physical planning processes. They predominantly attributed it to a lack of or inadequate engagement of urban sector stakeholders in physical planning and noted such lack of awareness has partly culminated in disregard for planning regulation, an issue which is generally acknowledged in the literature. Also, there was consensus among the participants regarding a lack of period review of existing master plans. A Government participant from Hoima City, for instance, noted that apart from a patchy amendment, the master plan for Hoima City prepared during the colonial era has not undergone any major revision. Questions were raised about the type and form of existing master plans with doubts as to whether they are culturally sympathetic. These questions stemmed from the observation that most of the master plans in the country were prepared by the colonial administration and the colonialists did so for their own interest. They excluded

the traditional areas and did not consult the traditional authorities in the plan preparation. Consequently, the cultural norms and practices of the Bunyoro society were not incorporated in these plans. For instance, the participants from Hoima City noted that virtually all the informal economic activities, which have always been associated with the indigenes were noted factored in the city's master plan.

3.3.6. Infrastructure Provision

Consistent with the literature provision of infrastructure was recognized by all the participant groups as one of the biggest challenges across the cities in the country. Infrastructure was seen to be lacking in informal settlements by all the participants and the existing infrastructure was said to be at risk from encroachment by unplanned informal development. Government and the private sector participants further identified that infrastructure is non-existent or of poor quality in some formal settlements despite the stipulations of master plans and good intentions of responsible parties. However, it was noted there have been instances where informal settlements and Government have worked together to provide basic infrastructure and services in such settlements. It was further acknowledged across the participant groups that community self-help and the assistance of NGOs are sometimes used to provide basic infrastructure for informal developments. This finding supports findings from previous studies, such as [Ibem \(2009\)](#).

3.4. Opportunities

The findings on the opportunities of the existing physical planning and development focus on individual housing and related developments, and major development initiatives taking place across the country. These are presented below:

3.4.1. Individual Housing and Related Developments

Although access to formal developable land remains a challenge, the participants noted that the informal land delivery system provides avenue for the greater majority of the urban population to access lands for housing and related developments, such as accommodation for neighborhood or informal economic activities. There was a consensus among the participants that the majority of the urban development activities taking place in Hoima City occur within the informal physical planning system. This is through provision of opportunities, such as easy access to land and flexible development processes for the majority of the urban population especially those in the low income group to meet their urban development needs and ultimately their livelihoods. These opportunities are important particularly in the face of the on-going urbanization and rising urban poverty in the country, as well as the inadequacies of the formal system. This supports the views of commentators, such as [\(Ikejiofor, 2006; Rakodi, 2007; UN-Habitat, 2014\)](#) that suggest that the informal system is relevant in some respects and lessons could be drawn from them

for better urban management.

3.4.2. Major Development Initiatives

The participants identified the emergence of some major land development initiatives across Hoima City. These projects were seen to provide opportunities to support the delivery of the functions of the physical planning and development. The projects cut across housing, commercial, transport infrastructure and climate adaption programmes that seek to ensure effective and efficient functioning of the cities to promote socio-economic development. Thus, they are supposed to provide a transformational impact in the urban landscape. Proposed initiatives and projects, such as stadium construction and university development were not yet in progress. These projects are a combination of joint venture between the Ugandan Government and the private sector (public-private partnership (PPP)) and purely private sector investment. Further, it emerged that they are partly motivated by favourable investment conditions, such as the on-going urbanization, and growing young workforce and middle income population, which has culminated in rising levels of demand for various real estate including plush homes, offices and retail shops, and good infrastructure. The participants, however, bemoaned the poor business climate in the City, such as delays relating to registration of businesses, urban crime, power fluctuations and outages, traffic congestions and other urban challenges discussed previously, which they said could derail the current investment drive.

The participants also observed that the projects could have long term implications for effective physical planning and urban management. For example, it was acknowledged that the university project promised to create 5000 jobs. However, the participants within the City expressed that there was little indication of how such development could address the needs of urban residents who are unable to access it for either accommodation or employment.

4. Recommendations

The participants suggested some solutions to the challenges of the physical planning and development in Hoima City. These suggestions focused on three main issues namely transparency in formulation and implementation of land allocation policies, support for structured physical planning and community involvement in physical planning and development. The details of the suggestions are presented below:

4.1. Transparency in Formulation and Implementation of Land Allocation Policies

There was a unanimous call for transparency in the formulation and implementation of policies on land allocation process, and the need to make formal lands affordable and accessible to all categories of people. Land allocation committees comprising representatives of various classes in society was recommended.

4.2. Support for Structured Planning

An appetite for structured planning of settlements with consistent application of receptive rules across all stakeholder groups was evident. Participants, including civic leaders were almost unanimous in their support for master plans and clear communication of those plans. This stemmed from the recognition that un-planned settlements lack suitable infrastructure and ad hoc arrangements lead to inequitable distribution of land and resources, as well as increase the tendency for different rules to apply for the rich and the powerful. Participants from the professional bodies and Government went on to suggest greater finance and resources to build capacity to enable implementation of plans. Greater professionalism and the use of modern technology were suggested by participants from the professional bodies. Also, payment of compensation on Government land acquisitions and enforcement measures to ensure development control were suggested.

4.3. Community Involvement in Planning

Community involvement and engagement were recommended to improve urban physical planning and management. However, there were different perspectives on what it meant. The majority of the participants from Government and the professional bodies suggested a need to educate and instruct communities in pursuit of pre-planned goals. Conversely, a pro-active role was recommended by the civic leaders and the private sector participants. The participants further suggested a greater integration between the formal and informal systems as a means to address the urban physical planning challenges noting that all can make a meaningful contribution to the debate. This recommendation was suggested from different perspectives. Integration was seen as a way to reduce bureaucracy by the private sector participants and those from the professional bodies. However, the civic leaders saw integrated planning systems as a way of keeping traditions and traditional spaces within planned communities, and community leaders as the holders of valuable local knowledge and helping to certify land ownership.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Growing levels of urbanization in the face of inadequate provision of infrastructure and extreme climate remain a serious problem in Hoima City. The existing urban physical planning and development, which is supposed to help address these issues is largely perceived as weak and, therefore, ineffective. Yet the existing system seems to provide opportunities for urban development. This study explored the challenges and the opportunities of the existing urban physical planning and development system with the view to providing input for policy direction. The study was based on interview survey of urban sector stakeholders in all wards and divisions of Hoima City.

The study found that formal lands are acquired through Government and that

land registration as a legal perfection of ownership to land was universally recognized. However, knowledge as to why and how Government is vested with the authority to grant formal land was not uniform among the participants. Whilst Government and private sector participants demonstrated extensive knowledge of the Government role under reference, such knowledge was patchy among the civic leaders and the participants from the professional bodies. This lack of uniformity in knowledge was also exhibited among the participants with regards to the meaning of urban planning. The foregoing implies that some prominent and influential stakeholders in the urban development processes may after all not be aware of the extant planning and development arrangements. What is even striking is that despite the comprehensive conception of urban planning by the Government and professional bodies' participants, planning in practice is limited to land use distribution issues and enforcement of regulation. However, these functions are not pursued rigorously. This signifies the presence of an inertia, which may be connected to some of the challenges identified by the participants particularly political interference, lack of resources and corruption.

Although examples of collaboration or community involvement in planning and development were cited, different views and experiences were expressed by the participants with a greater number suggesting that community involvement is not a norm. The views expressed by the participants corresponded with what has been reported previously in the literature. However, the differences in views and experiences demonstrate that efforts to increase participation may be uncoordinated and lack uniformity. Whilst this may not augur well for integrated development in the short term, it points to an opportunity and willingness to develop innovative systems from a diversity of examples of good practice. Such proposed innovative system could be informed by some of the necessary conditions to promote participation, such as communities taking initiative and public authorities being receptive.

Consistent with the literature, it was found that the planning and governance system has several challenges. Lack of access to formal lands by the greater majority of the urban population was noted. Apart from corruption, resource constraints and political interference, cost and inconveniences, such as bureaucratic delays were found to be major causes of the lack of access to formal lands. These causes were not limited to formal land institutions, but also to planning and land development institutions. These challenges together with non-payment of compensation for Government land acquisition were recognized as partly responsible for the preponderance of informal developments.

The poor's lack of access to formal lands was found to be far worse. This was due to financial cost, lack of awareness about availability and the allocation processes, as well as the poor's inability to hold onto to such lands. The poor's access to informal lands was also found to be decreasing in the face of urbanization and commodification of lands. This corresponded with findings from recent studies on the subject and needs to be addressed. There was, however, a question

around the established view of discrimination against women in terms of access to both formal and informal lands that warrants further investigation. This is because it was found that this is a rapidly changing area with financial capacity increasingly becoming a major determinant of access to land although some traditional communities still have practices that limit women's access to land.

In correspondence with the literature, tenure to informal lands was noted to be in secured compared to formal lands. This was attributed predominantly to multiple sales of the same parcels of land. Lack of awareness of planning regulation and processes among the urban population, and periodic review of master plans were identified as a challenge. The lack of awareness of planning regulations and processes, in particular, reaffirm the finding of some influential urban stakeholders not knowing these urban development imperatives. It also brings into sharp focus the need for community participation in planning, which could help to address this challenge. There may, therefore, be a need for communication and engagement of all and sundry in planning to generate wider awareness if ideals of urban planning are to be achieved. Another major challenge was inadequate provision of infrastructure and municipal services. Whereas literature suggests that planned areas are provided with good infrastructure, the picture that emerged from the analysis is that the position is far from clear and that settlements driven by communities and developers, taking advantage of major infrastructure, overlaid by local plans are just as likely to be well serviced. However, this pattern may render the major infrastructure obsolete due to underestimation of capacity.

Despite the foregoing challenges, it became evident that the existing planning and governance arrangement offers avenues for urban development. This is particularly in relation to the comparatively ease with which the greater majority of the urban population is able to access land and undertake housing, as well as related developments to accommodate their socioeconomic activities through informal planning, development and governance arrangements. This concurs with recent evidence on the relevance of the informal urban development system across SSA. Further, emerging major land development initiatives that could support the delivery of the functions of the planning and governance system were identified across the entire Hoima City. These were in the form of new and proposed developments, massive in scale and undertaken in partnership with Government, as well as purely private sector investment. Whilst these developments are envisaged to provide transformational impact, they may not necessarily be fully responsive to the diversity of needs across an urban area, city or region. That said, there was, in the main, a call for transparency in formulation and implementation of land allocation policies, support for structured planning and community involvement in planning and governance to redress the identified challenges. These suggestions appear to be responsive to the inadequacies of the existing planning and governance system as they could promote collective action towards the solution of the problems.

Given the foregoing, it can be surmised that findings from this study provide a strong validation for what has been previously reported in the literature, as well as bring some new insights to bear. In particular, transparency in land allocation, sustained engagement with communities in the form of participatory approaches to planning and governance, and regular revision of master plans could lead to better development outcomes. They also demonstrate that government input especially in the area of infrastructure provision is necessary. It is, thus, imperative for urban governance and management practices to seek to achieve these ideals and ensure that the wider developmental needs of urban residents including those in the informal sector are met. Accordingly, there is a need for a re-think of policies, mechanisms and arrangements for urban land, planning, and governance in Hoima City in realistic ways to address the ills of the urban development system and promote the opportunities it offers.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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