In Search of an Appropriate Planning Approach for an Upcoming African Heritage City:

A Case of Lamu World Heritage Site

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Abstract

Lamu World Heritage site is a typical developing world city, it is the only urban centre in Lamu County, hosting a majority of the county population with its service delivery failing to adequately cater to the masses thus leading to urban poverty and economic disparity. Its problems are bound to increase if appropriate urgent planning initiatives are not implemented especially given the current projects coming up in the area including the Lamu deep water port and LAPSETT corridor economic activities. This paper while employing a critical review approach of existing planning initiatives for Lamu World Heritage Site combined with personal observations and experience, seeks to determine the most optimal planning approach. The paper found out that the just city model, was capable of presenting a model of spatial relations based on equity and can be able to bring about equity and improved quality of life. The paper further found out that this inclusive planning model, unlike other theories and models, is able to accommodate the different society groups and social class to bring about urban areas that are accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable. In conclusion, the paper argues that the 'just City' model is the most suitable option for Lamu World Heritage Site given its unique conservation demands as it creates a framework for sustainable development. It is therefore recommended that the just city model be the planning model of choice for Lamu as it guarantees a safe liveable environment with affordable and equitable access to urban services and livelihood opportunities for all the city residents in line with UNESCO's thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda and appropriately demonstrates how culture and conservation has contributed to inclusion and empowerment in the City.

**Keywords:** Planning, heritage, equitable, livelihood

INTRODUCTION

The Lamu archipelago, as seen in **Figure 1**, is home to a large concentration of remnants of Swahili settlements, as evidenced by the many house ruins from as far north as Isahakani, Kiunga and Mkokoni coming all the way down to Ungwana near the Tana River delta. However the most notable ones were the ones on the islands namely Siyu, Shanga and Pate on Pate Island, Manda and Takwa on Manda Island and Shela and Lamu on Lamu Island. Lamu Stone Town is one of the surviving Swahili towns that covered the East African coast from the 12th Century to late 17th Century. The Swahili people, trace their origins from the Shungwaya area prior to the 9th Century; an area which most Bantus of Eastern Kenya associate their origin with, an area situated along the southern Somali coast and subsequently over time came to fuse with Persian and Arab traders and immigrants (Allen, 1993; Knappert, 1979: 3). The sharing of commerce ties via the Indian Ocean by these peoples crystallized the formation of the Swahili civilization with a unique identity unified by a common language and culture.

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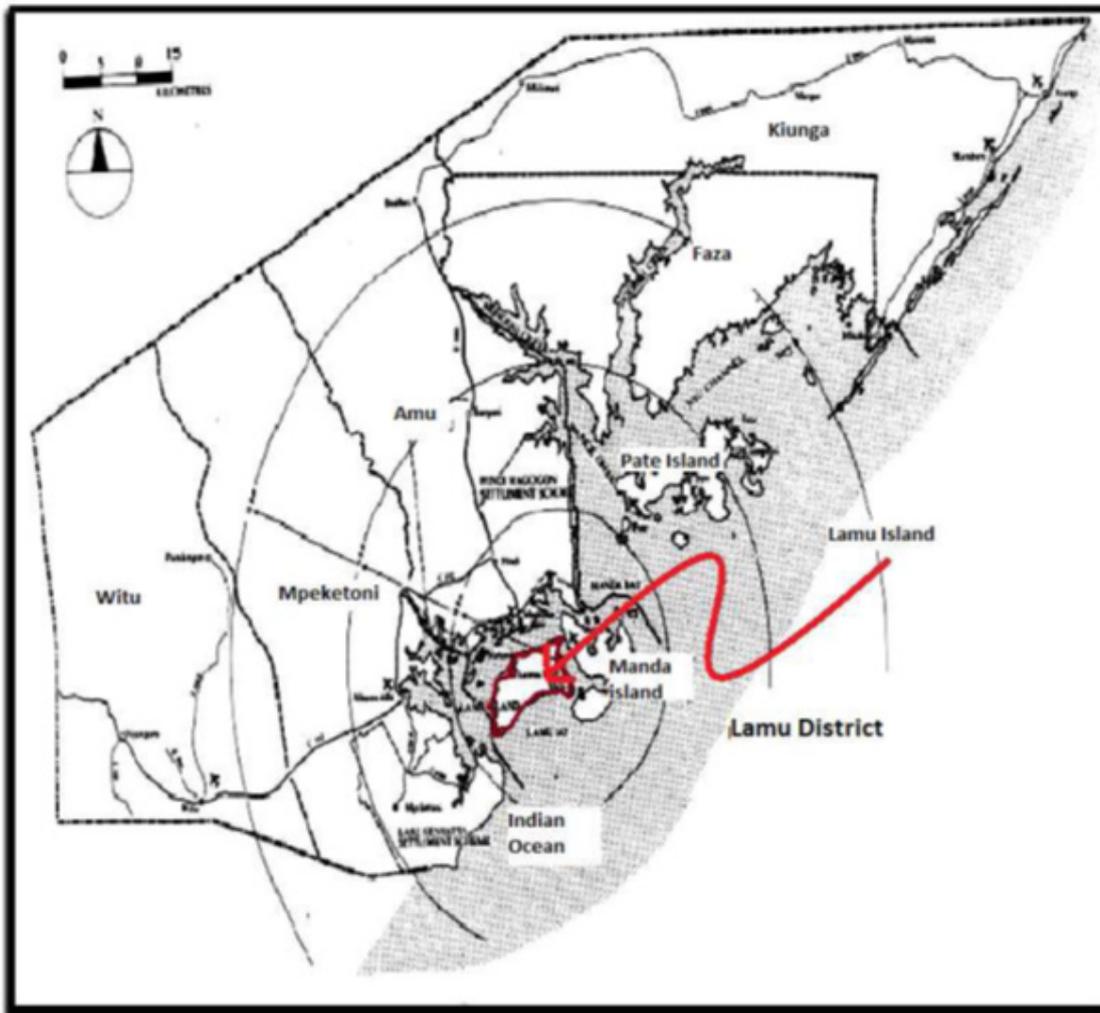
FIGURE 1
Lamu Archipelago
Source: Siravo and Pulver, 1986

The Swahili civilization and its accompanying towns thus exhibit similar characteristics due to the fact that they are a common product of the mixing of a variety of cultural influences brought about by their being at the nucleus of the lucrative trade that existed between the raw material rich hinterland and the Far East, India and the Arab world. All Swahili towns including Lamu, exhibit a very unique architecture, which was a mixture of traditional building styles and external techniques acquired through trade contacts helped by the vast raw materials and resources available. The geographical footprint of the civilization's culture stretched as far as the South coast of Arabia, the Persian Gulf and the western seaboard of India, whereas to the interior it went deep up to the great lakes as depicted in **Figure 2**.

FIGURE 2
Swahili Civilization location
Source: National Maritime Museum, London, 2013

Lamu Island is the most significant on the Lamu archipelago for having the largest still surviving historic town which is still intact. In terms of its geographical setting, it has an excellent sheltered harbor and even though it is not well endowed with good agricultural soils but mangoes and coconuts can be grown on the island. Perhaps, that is why when faced with the prospect of not being able to produce enough food produce for itself, Lamu looked outside for supplies. Some authors have noted that historically, Lamu was a society of consumption living of the products from other areas be it agricultural produce from the mainland plantations, luxury goods from Arabia and India with the surplus redirected to Zanzibar, other city states or to other parts of the Indian Ocean trading system (Mohiddin, 2001: 41 – 47). This openness made Lamu to be essentially a recipient society, a fact that not only made it thrive as a city state within the Indian Ocean trade system especially during the time of the Omani rule when it was the northern most trade nucleus. The decline of Lamu as the most important northernmost thriving city state was precipitated by a number of factors namely; first abolition of slavery and with it the demise of free labour in the plantations that used to supply Lamu with agricultural produce.

The second factor was three fold; the decline economically of Zanzibar therefore less demand for Lamu's surplus coupled with changes in the trade patterns within the Indian Ocean occasioned by the advent of technology brought about by the industrial revolution which reduced demand for mangrove poles. The third major factor was the onset of colonisation which led to the centralization of economic activities, especially after the shifting of the colonial headquarters to Nairobi after the completion of the Mombasa – Kisumu railway line and with this development there was less focus on the coastal strip, which meant that the former independent city states were the subject of regulations, taxes and economic administration while being at the periphery of the new economic order. The ban on mangrove harvesting had a devastating effect on trade as per Lamu residents' accounts who claim that after the ban, the port which used to be busy with steady stream of dhows and ships was reduced to a shadow of its former self with only a handful of ships and dhows (Omar, 2014).

Therefore the relegation of the Swahili states to the periphery of economic arrangements consigned them to a slow natural death, even Mombasa being part of a port city serving a large hinterland and Zanzibar which still continued as a city state to some extent did not fare any better. Overall this state of affairs was a blessing for Lamu, thanks to this relegation to the periphery from the economic centre, it escaped the attention accorded to many of the other places like Mombasa due to its perceived inaccessibility and remoteness which seemed unattractive to the so called 'investors'. Due to this scenario, Lamu managed to retain a large collection of its 17th – 18th Century stone houses unlike many other Swahili towns. Moreover, Lamu with its tranquility and coupled with there being no vehicular traffic on the island has been quite attractive to retired foreigners who after toiling all their lives would wish to have a calm and tranquil environment to spend their retirement. It has been noted that "Lamu offers to the foreigners a piece of pre-industrial past of their "modern" industrialized societies and to live there is to take an imaginative flight into the 15th Century but with practical technological amenities of the 20th Century" (Mohiddin, 2001: 41).

However lately, this has been its waterloo, with the upgrading and listing of the town as a world heritage site under the UNESCO World Heritage List; there emerged an unprecedented upsurge of interest in the ownership of property especially in the stone town. Some estimates have noted that property prices have short up by up to 1000% in the recent past (Khan, 2010: 65). Even then this is still relatively cheap in real monetary terms compared to similar beach front properties in other World Heritage sites **(Figure 3).** Omar (2014) notes as regards this question of property acquisitions by foreigners that close to 90% of the stone town sector of Lamu Stone town was in the hands of foreigners or non-indigenous Lamu people. The problem has been compounded further by the government's plan of construction of the country's second major port in Lamu together with mega investments in the form of a resort city and high speed railway line linking Kenya to South Sudan and Ethiopia. The proposed project has run into heavy opposition from a variety of local stakeholders including environmentalists who argue that the region's rich cultural and natural heritage would seriously be destroyed by such a major project. Moreover, it is argued that

for a project of its magnitude, the government has neither involved the local community nor even undertaken environmental and cultural impact assessments studies that would spell out the potential damage to the heritage.

FIGURE 3
Picture of Lamu beach front
Source: Omar, 2014

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper employed a critical review approach of existing planning initiatives for Lamu world heritage site combined with personal observations and experiences in order to determine the most optimal planning approach that is not only inclusive and involves numerous stakeholders and activities but also one that addresses the dimensions of urban and rural poverty such as income and social poverty, environmental poverty, health poverty and educational poverty. Literature review from previous practitioners and researchers regarding planning activities in Lamu provided a basis for secondary data while personal interactions with Lamu Town residents provided primary data for this study.

THE PLANNING THEORIES

Inclusive city
An inclusive city, as described by UN Habitat is a city that promotes growth and equity. It is a city that provides opportunities and better living conditions for all through social, spatial and economic inclusion (Bank, 2021). Social inclusion manifests itself in a city through democracy and participation of all its residents regardless of their economic status. An inclusive city must ensure everyone, especially the marginalized has access to basic rights. Additionally, increased employment opportunities for urban residents and having the ability to gain from economic growth in a city portrays its efforts in providing economic inclusion for its residents.

Finally, the provision of affordable necessities such as housing, water and sanitation by local and national governments progresses its efforts in ensuring spatial inclusion for all its urban residents. These urban inclusions are meshed together and should reinforce each other in order to diminish exclusion and improve lives. In order to create an inclusive city, urban planning and development must be carried out simultaneously. The concept of urban planning was established to tackle the needs of an increasing urban population for a conceivable future and includes urban design, theories and policies (Koirala, 2019).

The dimensions of urban poverty indicates the conditions that may have direct or indirect implications on the quality of life of the urban poor. These dimensions are as illustrated in **Figure 4.**
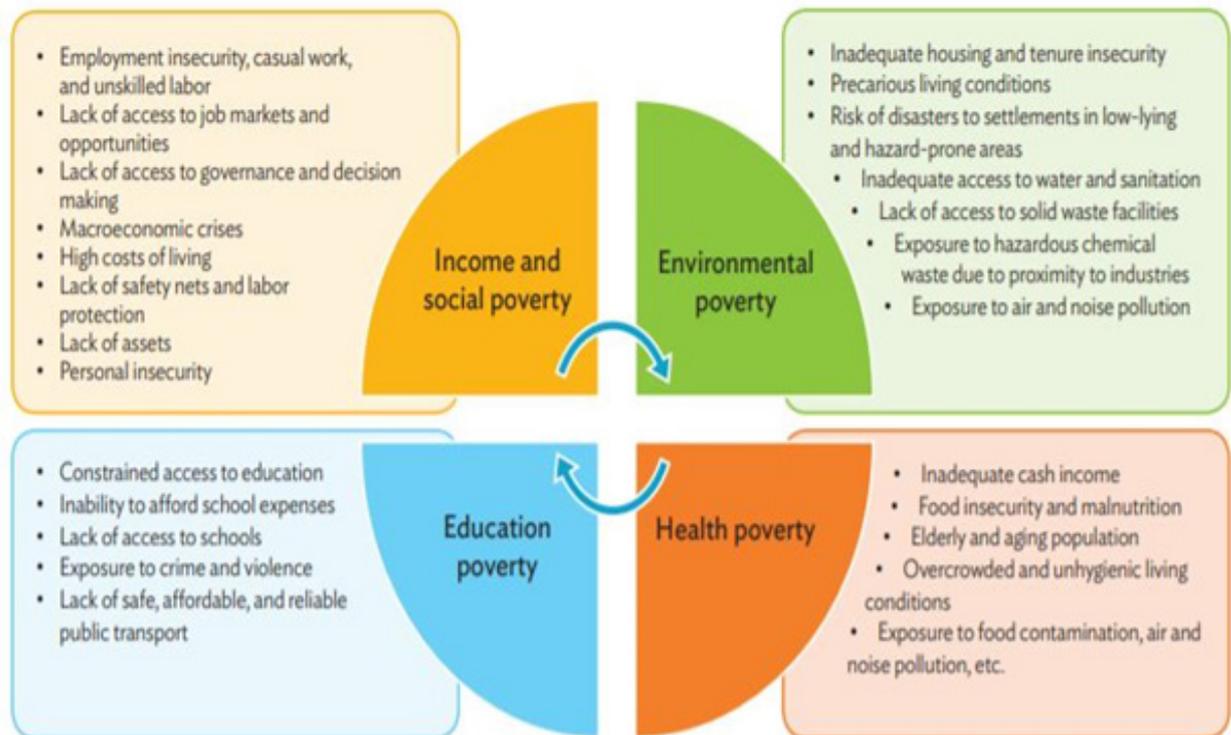
FIGURE 4
Dimensions of Urban
Source: Bank, 2017

Inclusive Urban Development Framework

Previously, planning was not used as a methodology of enabling development, rather it was seen as an end product. The standard form of planning involved technocrats and administrations making decisions on the urban planning and policies. Inclusiveness is a recent inclusion to the scope of urban planning and this concept has led to an integrated development approach that aims to tackle urban poverty and seek to create an accessible, resilient, affordable and sustainable urban livelihood (Koirala, 2019; **Figure 5**) .
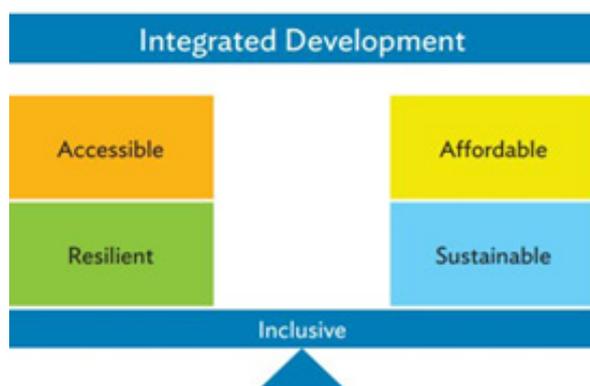

FIGURE 5
Integrated Urban Development.
Source: Bank, 2017

The industrial revolution with its rapid growth in urban planning transformed urban planning from the technocrats' based top-down approach into an inclusive form of urban planning that relies on a social learning approach hence precipitating a paradigm shift in the achievement of sustainable development. This also led to the evolution of contemporary planning theories that sought to provide frameworks on the implementation of inclusive planning approaches so as to facilitate the improvement in the quality of human life.

This paper considers the ideal planning scenarios under the three planning theoretical models prevalent today which are: The communicative model, the new urbanism and the just city. The communicative model accentuates a planner's role in arbitrating among the stakeholders within a planning situation while the new urbanism approach illustrates a physical picture of a desirable city to be achieved through planning.

The Communicative Model

The communicative model, also known as the collaborative model is derived from two philosophical methodologies; John Dewey and

Richard Rorty's American Pragmatism and The Theory of Communicative Rationality as discussed by Jurgen Habermas (Fainstein, 2000). These two approaches contrast in their attitudes with the former leaning towards observation and drawing generalizations from instances of best practices within planning. Communicative rationality, however, starts with an abstract proposal. It assumes a conception of rationality that supersedes the self-conscious autonomous subject using principles of logic and scientifically articulated empirical knowledge to guide action (Healey, 1996)

Even though they emerge from different philosophical traditions, pragmatism and communicative rationality converge when used to provide a framework for planners. A planner's main role in communicative rationality is to listen to people's stories and help with establishing a consensus from different viewpoints. Instead of providing technocratic leadership, the planner is an observant learner who provides information to stakeholders and ensures a point of convergence where no particular group will dominate regardless of their social-economic hierarchy. This interaction is a form of practical communicative action as the planner acts as a mediator and intermediary between stakeholders. (Healey, 1996) Summarizes this theoretical approach with the following highlights:

1. All forms of knowledge are socially constructed
2. Knowledge and reasoning may take varied forms such as storytelling and subjective statements
3. Stakeholders foster their views depending on their social interactions
4. Stakeholders have different interests and expectancies that may be social, symbolic or material
5. Public policy needs to draw upon and avail information and reasoning drawn from various sources

The New Urbanism
New Urbanism represents a design-oriented approach to planned urban development. It was developed principally by architects and journalists but the message is also carried by planning practitioners. New urbanism is more ideological than theory and its orientation bears

a resemblance to that of early planning theorists such as Ebenezer Howard and Patrick Geddes in their aim of using spatial relations to create a close-knit social community that enables various elements to intermingle (Fainstein, 2000)

New Urbanists advocate for an urban design that comprises different building types, mixed uses, combination of housing for various income groups and a strong favoring of the public realm. The basic unit of planning is the neighborhood, which is characterized by its limited physical size, a well-defined edge and a focused center. (Kunstler, 1996) Enforces this by stating 'The daily needs of life are accessible within a five minute-walk.' This has led to the creation of new towns and neighborhoods known as the suburbs. Unlike Communicative theory, new urbanism emphasizes on the substance of plans rather than the methods of achieving them.

The suburbia lifestyle was a preferred choice for most Americans during the postwar era, and while it fostered the creation of close-knit social communities, the new urbanism approach also led to fragmentation of societies. That is, it alienated friends and relatives and broke down bonds of communities that were previously successful (Katz, 1994).

A Just City
A just society which the just city is founded arises out of the dismantling of the structure of class domination. There are two types of just-city theorists: radical democrats and political economists. Radical democrats contrast from communicative planning theorists in that their approach to participation is more revolutionary and goes beyond the contribution of stakeholders to governance by civil society. They believe that advanced social change can only be attained when those who were excluded from power have the ability to exercise it. Political economists, on the other hand, take a clear perceptive stand concerning the allocation of social benefits. Political economy analysis reproaches policy makers for being the captive of business interests and primarily addresses revolutionary groups, officials in progressive cities (Clavel, 1986) and "guerrillas in the bureaucracy". (Needleman & Needleman, 1974)

RESULTS

Disadvantages of Communicative Model

Communicative model has displayed its efforts in saving planning from discriminatory tendencies and should not be faulted for its ideals of openness and diversity. However, the theory has an inclination of substituting moral exhortation for analysis. This theory is Utopian and loses its edge when called for action. This is mainly due to the fact that even though the ideas of the marginalized were taken into account by the planner, the objectives of planning are still swayed and outweighed by the majority groups who have economic and social forces.

Communicative theorists also tend to focus more on the role of a planner than the context of the outcome of the planning activity. Unlike other ideologies that have objectives, planning lacks objectives. Instead of asking what needs to be done to improve the state of cities and regions, communicative theorists typically ask what planners should be doing. Even though communicative theory attempts to give stakeholders a voice in the planning process, it is not effective enough to give a clear framework on how the objectives can be met and still gives dominating classes the ease of asserting their ideologies for their own benefit. This is the situation obtaining in Lamu, the World Heritage site has witnessed an ever-widening gap between the dominating wealthy class and the asset poor class who have been pushed to the periphery of not only economic development but also physically out of the centre of the City. Therefore, successive planning regimes have not been able to cure and bridge this divide.

Disadvantages of New Urbanism

It is argued that New Urbanism approach is responsible for not only causing traffic congestion along freeways and aesthetically unappealing development but it is also the producer of crime (Fainstein, 2000). Even though its influence results somewhat from widespread dissatisfaction with suburban development and nostalgia from traditional forms, this approach is supported by the strong advocacy of new urbanists who also play the role of salespersons. This has led to the overselling of an idea that promotes an unrealistic environmental determinism that has seeped its way throughout the history of physical planning.

Architects have used the rectification of physical models as an approach to create local neighborhoods by replicating a physical environment that promotes greater social contact within the community. Nevertheless, these practitioners still fail to contemplate segregation within the greater urban area according to class, race and ethnicity, and, may in fact, help enable it. (Lehrer & Milgrom, 1996). Although new urbanism is more ideological than the communicative model, which focusses more on a planner's ideas, its deficiencies make it an unsuitable framework for transforming Lamu town into an inclusive city which caters to all residents, but poses the danger of aggravating the social segregation within the greater urban area which currently is evolving along social class and wealth lines.

Advantages of the just city model

The Just city theory values participation in decision making by minority groups and equity of outcomes (Sandercock, 1998). Political economists base their policy on 'who dominates and 'who benefits and even though this is generally defined by economic interests, the assessment of outcomes can also be defined with regard to gender, sexual orientation and race. A just city needs to promote economic inclusion by encompassing an entrepreneurial state that not only generates welfare but also increases wealth, it needs to project a future exemplifying a middle- class society where both the poor and the wealthy are catered for. The end of communism paved the way for new ideologies in liberalism and free market capitalism. Taking into account the general public as a stakeholder in development gave rise to participatory approach and enhanced strategies for maintaining good governance system (Koirala, 2019)

Participation in public decision making is a fundamental ideal in a just city because it prevents the domination of one social class during the plan making process. Even though participation is an indicator of democracy, democratic pluralism offers slim chances of escape from dominance by groups that have access to organizational and financial freedom. A classic democratic theory avoids this by empowering minorities with rights that cannot be violated by the majorities. Therefore,

the suitable principles for assessing a group's claims should not be based on procedural rules alone but rather, if the group's goals are attainable, and whether they maintain the principle of social justice (Fainstein, 2000)

In order to apply a just city perspective, one must take into consideration that the results attainable through public policy may be adversely inhibited by the economy. Thus, even though the main concern may be to end discrimination or improve the quality of the environment, economic interests still limit the possible courses of action.

Despite being projected as the continent with the highest rate of urbanization by 2020, Africa has displayed a high level of inequality in regard to development and empowerment. The rate of service delivery in African cities and urban centers is low, access to infrastructure is limited and employment opportunities are scarce. Even though the rural population migrates to urban areas in order to access the services mentioned above, administrations and local governments still fail to adequately cater to the masses thus leading to urban poverty and economic disparity (Anon., 2007).

Case Studies
A perfect case study for inclusive planning is South Africa. After the abolishment of apartheid in 1994, the need for the establishment of new local governments provided an opportunity for creating policies that were not within the normal limiting structures. Colonialism had led to the development of urban centers in South Africa. This consequently led to urbanization as a lot of Africans moved to the urban centers in search of job opportunities and better infrastructure to improve their quality of life. However, they were faced with many challenges, with the primary one being apartheid. The colonialists, who were the majority group-imposed segregation amongst Africans and denied them access to basic utilities and services thus subjecting them to urban poverty.

After independence, there was a need to create an inclusive city that catered to everyone's needs regardless of race, gender or economic status. The inclusive Cities Conference was held with a view of deepening the understanding of how to make rapidly urbanizing cities more inclusive and how

to provide a framework of doing so (Anon., 2007). The conference's aim was to; focus on material inclusion and exclusion- access to urban resources and infrastructure, constructing urban citizenship in everyday lives and also learning from emerging experiences of inclusion in African cities.

The conference stressed on economic empowerment of youth and civic movements through social banking and development banking in order to make communities self-sufficient and sustainable. Urbanization was causing a social shift in South Africa therefore funds that are lent to these movements were to be directed towards projects that improve infrastructure in where they live and to create jobs. Banks such as Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) helped communities and local governments to develop capacities to come up with their own Integrated Development Plans that took into consideration their contributions. Additionally, the bank, in partnership with the National treasury and local governments employed practitioners who worked systematically to develop capital projects and systems that ensured sustainability (Tomlinson, 2003).

DISCUSSION

When one evaluates the current Lamu Integrated County Development Plan against the just city model of planning, it can be noted that the plan falls far short of the attributes of the just city model. First and foremost; its mode of production was mainly driven by the technocrats with little involvement of the town's populace and hence most of the proposals were driven by the county leadership as opposed to the needs of the residents. Moreover, the development plan does not prioritize the residents needs which are mainly the unsanitary villages which are haphazard and poorly planned making accessibility difficult and roads are quite narrow and in other areas non-existent. Secondly, housing in the County is generally inadequate and this shortage is more acute in the upcoming urban centres outside Lamu town, therefore it would have been expected that slum upgrading would have been given more attention in the plan had the local voices been incorporated in the planning process as such an action would have bridged the inequality gap. Thirdly, the anticipated growth in population for the County occasioned by the upcoming development projects will require

development of newly planned urban areas with integrated solid and liquid waste management system as proposed in the Plan. There seems to be no action in terms of better preparing the residents to not only manage the housing shortage through provision of affordable and accessible housing but also promotion of economic activities that would enable the residents to benefit from and hence improve their livelihoods. As earlier stated, the economy affects every aspect of development. Therefore, any effort to promote inclusivity in Lamu town must consider the urban resident's economic benefits and also incorporate their participation in plans to bring about a development that caters to everyone's needs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the theories mentioned above are contemporary and more aligned with the new inclusive planning approach, this paper concludes that the 'just City' model is the most suitable option for Lamu World Heritage Site given its unique conservation demands as it creates a framework for sustainable development through a bottom up approach where the concerns of the marginalized, minority and poor are taken into account while at the same time providing a safe livable environment with affordable and equitable access to urban services and livelihood opportunities for all the city residents and other city users to promote optimal development of its human capital and ensure the respect of human dignity and equality. The Just City theory is the best approach for transforming Lamu town into an inclusive city because it ensures the minorities' voices are not only heard but their ideologies are acted upon. Therefore, this paper recommends the adoption of the just city planning framework for an inclusive Lamu town within the context of a global capitalist economy as it will ensure it is resilient, affordable, accessible and sustainable. The paper also recommends that the development plan for Lamu should be citizen based and must reflect the aspirations of the all the residents, hence mechanisms must be put in place to ensure all residents of Lamu are engaged and their aspirations accommodated in any future development plan as per the parameters of the just city model.

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