

Can urban planning accelerate the achievement of the MDGs? The case of an urban planning exercise in Freetown (Sierra Leone)

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1. Introduction

Five years after the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the international community "resolve to take far-reaching and monitorable actions to reform the ways aid is delivered and managed". This was formalised in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of March 2005. In point of fact, it was an attempt to make operational the achievement of the MDG and it also can be used as a valuable programme evaluation grid.

In response to the Paris Declaration, donors have developed instruments to integrate these principles in the way they believe they may be best supported.

Several cases show the effort made by the international and donor community to achieve development through policies, partnership commitments, strategies, activities and indicators. Despite this effort, gaps and missed links among the activities implemented are identified, and also the gap between the methods adopted by the donors and applied by the implementers. In all these gaps underdevelopment resides.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the challenges of promoting cross-sector approaches in multi-institutions areas like urban development. In particular, the case of Freetown in Sierra Leone is analysed. The paper shows that even though the Paris Declaration is an important step to fill the gap between the MDGs and their practical implementation, in urban development there is still a need to build or reinforce links between development activities, donors and methods adopted by the different partners. Can urban planning fill the gaps in between the principles and the practice and reinforce the link among the development partners and stakeholders?

Urban Planning faces the five principles of the Paris Declaration and finds an answer.

2. Urban planning in developing countries

In Sierra Leone and in most of the African countries urban planning is a neglected discipline: seldom it is included within the faculty of architecture or engineer and almost never it is an independent discipline. On the contrary, in the North, the post university courses of urban planning in developing countries are several³.

In the last decade, urban planning successful stories in the developing world are mostly linked only to committed and very active politicians who bravely dared urban planning or to urban

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³ See Urban-Studies.de a post university course on urban planning in developing countries at Darmstadt University, the distance education on urban and regional development and town planning set up at the Oldenburg University with support from the University of Dortmund / SPRING, University of Stuttgart, Technical University of Hannover / ies, Technical University of Berlin; in Canada, the Urban Institute at the University of Montreal ; in Spain, the Technical University of Catalonia. The Oxford Brooks University, the Department of Planning Unit (University College of London) and the Institute of Housing Studies in Rotterdam are instead old institutions in this sector.

planners who became politicians. That is the case of Edi Rama⁴ in Tirana (Albania), Sergio Fajardo Valderrama in Medellin, Penalosa / Mockus⁵ in Bogotá⁶ (Colombia) and Jaime Lerner in Curitiba (Brazil).

Perfectly in line with the successful stories just mentioned, but in opposite direction, quite often happens that the elected mayor are called: the new dictators, or the new kings, since they take the right and the responsibility to do whatever they believe it is right to do. This common believes is particularly widespread in developing countries experiencing decentralisation: from the Balkans to the Africa countries.

The common believe lies on the assumption that urban development is a mere political matter and being a mayor a politician democratically elected and representative of his community, hence he can arrogates to himself the right to decide for all. The risk of a new, widespread and small scale dictatorship is quite high: it is the risk of merging the city management role with the decision making role which is to be based instead on a participatory process rather than on the organization of the consensus.

If the academic institutions in the North feel the urban demographic change and the related challenge of next few years particularly in developing countries, the donor community has not fully systematize urban planning as an external aid implementation tool. Apart from the prolonged and extensive World Bank urban experience⁷ and some valuable research and knowledge generation initiatives from agencies like DFID⁸, some of the main donors still lack of consistent urban development policies. Till recently, geographical coordinators at the European Commission office responsible for implementing external aid programmes (EuropeAid) seemed to think that urban planning in developing countries is just “road and transportation” and/or “water supply and sanitation”⁹. Alternatively, the activities allegedly related to urban planning in developing countries were (if strictly necessary) to be proposed and accomplished within the local European Commission Delegations programmes in the developing countries.

The immediate impression is that EuropeAid was not familiar with the specifics of urban planning in developing countries. A manual (Guidelines For Sustainable Urban Development)¹⁰ was committed to Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS)¹¹ and finally produced by Forbes Davidson and Rolf Dauskardt with collaboration from the Development Planning Unit (DPU)¹² and Lund University (Sweden)¹³, and inputs also from Adrian Atkinson and Geoffrey Payne. It has not been officially released yet, but it has been informally distributed. At the moment it is possible to refer to it as a draft produced for the European Commission (EC) by IHS with DPU and Lund. It is not very much publicised and it is quite an unknown publication however available in Internet¹⁴

⁴ Edi Rama (from the Academy of Fine Art of Tirana) promoted the rehabilitation of the Tirana historic centre and launched the Clean and Green project in Tirana to deal with the consequences of the pollution of the Lana River; His Clean and Green project in 2000 resulted in the production of 96,700 square metres of green land and parks in the city and the planting of nearly 1,800 trees. He also ordered the painting of many old buildings in what has come to be known as Edi Rama colours (very bright yellow, green, violet). Edi Rama was elected World Mayor 2004 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edi_Rama).

⁵ Fajardo and Mockus are mathematicians. Fajardo is also the sun of a renowned architect in South America.

⁶ *Heureux de vivre à Bogotá !*, Courier International 864/2007.

⁷ <http://www.worldbank.org/urban/>

⁸ <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/research/engineering.asp>

⁹ February 2004. Reported in Minervini, C. *Urban Planning in the Balkans: three models to compare*. N-Aerus Conference, Darmstadt 2006. <http://www.n-aerus.net/web/sat/workshops/2006/papers/minervini.pdf>.

¹⁰ Towards Sustainable Urban Development. A Strategic Approach. Consultative Guidelines for Sustainable Urban Development Cooperation.

¹¹ <http://www.ihs.nl/>

¹² <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/DPU/>

¹³ <http://www.lu.se/lund-university/>

¹⁴ http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/drivers_urb_change/official_docs/Tow_Sust_Urb_EU_Guidelines.pdf

As highlighted in the subhead, the manual presents a strategic approach to urban development. It is a guide to assess the overall urban potential development strategies, to be consistent with the International and EC financing and application rules for project proposals. The principles of good governance and urban development sustainability dominate over the urban planning practice, as well as the sectoral approach prevails over the links and interrelations among the several planning components¹⁵. As a matter of fact the overall objectives of the Guidelines, it is stated in the introduction, “are to provide a framework for effective support for urban development and to create sectoral projects in urban areas to improve their overall performance and impact” (p. 8).

The urban exercise in Freetown that is analysed here is one of the first EC leaps forward towards the urban planning application to developing country urban areas, a test inspired by and tuned in to the Paris Declaration.

3. Sierra Leone, development trends and a question.

Almost ten years of civil war, ended in 2002, exhausted the population of Sierra Leone and flattened the national economy.

At the moment the security situation is relatively calm¹⁶ though “the main threats to stability include the high numbers of unemployed young people, poor economic and social conditions, exacerbated by the rising price of food commodities and gasoline, and unresolved political and ethnic tensions”¹⁷.

After six years of relative stability “(...) the country is likely to achieve (only) some of the MDG-targets with sustained current efforts and resources, but is unlikely to attain some others even at current investments and efforts. (...) Weak institutional capacities in the public sector and civil society coupled with shortage of personnel, gaps in expertise and skills and poor motivation are a major challenge for Sierra Leone”¹⁸.

The answer of the European Commission and DFID actually consists of a broad-based economic growth which can deliver employment, raise incomes and reduce inequality is critical to Sierra Leone’s future¹⁹. The approach is sectoral: trade, environment, public finance, governance, basic service delivery, health, water and sanitation.

The World Bank also stakes on economic reform, decentralization, infrastructure development and the social sectors²⁰.

In the meanwhile the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 and the Accra Action Plan in 2008 have turned aid and cooperation into partnership, focussing on delivering concrete results that improve peoples’ lives.

Their statements have clearly marked a change of attitude of the donor community towards the so called partner countries and at the same time have promoted a development based on a holistic, coordinating and planning approach.

Sierra Leone is surely one of those countries, weak in governance and capacity, and in need of effective aid, hence fragile, according to the Paris Declaration²¹. Beside that as far as the

¹⁵ The linkage analysis (Appendix 5) consists of four pages (over 224); and GIS, which is supposed to provide the tools for cross-cutting knowledge mapping analysis is mentioned two times (for displaying energy information on an energy atlas, p. 145, and for having an efficient identification system (for example, by cadastral and/or GIS systems, p. 149).

¹⁶ Sixth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, presented the 29th April 2008.

¹⁷ Idem

¹⁸ The MDG in Sierra Leone: update on MDG-based planning processes <http://www.sl.undp.org/mdgsl.htm>

¹⁹ Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for the period 2008-2013. Chapter IV – Response Strategy of the Country.

²⁰ The Sierra Leone Country Assistance Strategy for 2006-2009.

²¹ “In fragile states, as we support state-building and delivery of basic services, we will ensure that the principles of harmonisation, alignment and managing for results are adapted to environments of weak governance and capacity. Overall, we will give increased attention to such complex situations as we work toward greater aid effectiveness”. Paris Declaration 2005.

urban development growth is concerned Sierra Leone follows the world trend. Half of the population is urban; one third is metropolitan (living in Freetown), and the urban population is expected to double in less than one generation²². The development model tends to be rather urban than rural; the community development counts on different levels of production organization rather than subsistence models. On the other hand the poverty model seems to be based on the quantitative growth of the urban centres where magnify the poor rural living conditions as for the housing, the services and facilities and the livelihoods.

Hence given this urban development trend and given the opening of the mentioned two international venues to a coordinating and planning approach a question raises: can urban planning accelerate the achievements of the MDG? Consequently and specifically, can urban planning contribute to the increase of the donors' aid effectiveness in the case of the development of urban areas like Freetown?

To answer these questions the structure of the present paper will follow the five principles of the Paris Declaration (ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability) and will try to find out if the respect of these principles in the case of Freetown is sufficient to promote an effective urban planning that accelerates the achievement of the MDGs, and whether urban planning is then necessary to build up a sound basis of urban development.

2. Freetown: the capital and the huge rural settlement

Since the end of the civil war many development agencies, International and Local NGO have been involved into the bits and pieces compiling the Humanitarian and Development Aid strategies in Sierra Leone, while the international organisations have been providing the country with basic infrastructure and capacity and institutional building.

The capital town, Freetown, has been left a bit behind despite its almost 2 million inhabitants, despite the fact that 1/3 of the country population was living in town, despite the natural and exclusive features of the peninsula were spoiled, despite the huge and mass migration flow from the countryside. One of the main reasons is because, in spite of extreme poverty is significant in Freetown, the human development indices in the provincial areas are even more dramatic and, therefore, most of the international aid is channelled to those rural areas. The Western Area and, in particular Freetown, are considered the most developed areas in the country and therefore they are not the first priority of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP)²³.

The population of Freetown has been rapidly growing during the past two decades – with the rural-to-urban migration being fuelled by the civil war (1991 – 2001²⁴). With the large-scale destruction of residential units, and the management system not being able to cope with the increased influx of people from the rural areas, this growth of population in Freetown resulted in an accelerated growth of its slum areas. Many slum dwellers moved to the capital fleeing the atrocities of the civil war. Later, they decided to stay in Freetown. The slums also house refugees/migrants from neighbouring countries like Liberia. Others are rural-to-urban immigrants, whose motives are primarily based on the hope of improving their lives in the capital.

²² By 2030, towns and cities will be home to almost 5 billion people. The urban population of Africa and Asia will double in less than a generation. This unprecedented shift could enhance development and promote sustainability—or it could deepen poverty and accelerate environmental degradation. State of the World population 2007. <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2007/english/introduction.html> [United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2007].

²³ “Freetown is rather better off than the other urban areas, but a pattern of severity is piling up in the big city. The severity of poverty is higher than expected. A key concern with Freetown is congestion and the sanitary conditions in which the poor live” (Sierra Leone PRSP 2005-2007, p. 27. To Freetown the Sierra Leone PRSP (2005-2007) lists among its priority housing for the Freetown slum residents, water supply and a fishery harbour.

²⁴ Disarmament and demobilisation of ex-combatants were completed early in 2002.

Apart from the business district and the limited bourgeois areas spotting the hillside and the coast, Freetown today is by far occupied by a multitude of urban poor: 70% of the urban population hardly reaches the dollar per day²⁵. The housing conditions are definitively poor and unhealthy. Apart from the so-called business district served by a sewage system, 77% of the families have out-door and on-site sanitation²⁶ and almost 6,5% of the population practice the open-air defecation (bush, streams or sea)²⁷. Moreover only 1% of the Western Urban Region (namely Freetown) household lives in a single-unit-one-storey dwelling, meaning that the average household / dwelling rate is around 3. The coastal slum areas, the most densely populated urban areas in between the cliffs and the sea, are not included in any statistics²⁸.

The house type imported from the countryside is creating a large low density built areas all around the Peninsula. The building materials are taken from the nearby forests and the sea shore thus creating the deforestation and erosion. The water supply system survives supplying half of the peninsula with a leaking pipe network and management²⁹. 75% of the population has not on-site access to water and the average consumption of water varies from 15 to 20 l/day/person. Compared to other urban centers of this African region, this level of consumption is among the lowest whilst the cost is very high (1,5 € per m³) compared to other Sub-Saharan capitals where the average price of water is around 0,5 €/m³ - ≈ 0,8 USD/m³.

Traffic is congested mostly due to the anarchic use of the roads by pedestrians, cars, taxis, private and public buses, carts, trucks (any size), and street vendors. Marketing is not regulated. Everyone sells everything (fortunately). Sometime the impression is that the sellers exceed the potential buyers.

All the basic urban functions (slaughterhouse, markets, landfill sites, housing, army camps, etc;) are overlapping each other on a strip of land (1,5 km width by 35 km long – from Hastings to Lakka) in between the sea and the mountains where the very poor are the main actors of the land reclamation activities: up on the hill and down to the sea. The life is bustling, the informal sector was carrying up the development, and then the Freetown City Council (FCC) intruded making the citizens paying individual and property taxes, and any sort of market dues. As a matter of fact the FCC is trying to get the lead of the urban development process thanks to the high level of confidence shown by the citizens towards the local institution³⁰ and the law on decentralization.

3. Urban Planning in Freetown

Freetown was planned like all the other British and French colonial towns to gain political and social control (Ambe Njoh, 2006) of an area where the Overseas Government of the Crown was established. This is particularly clear through the regulative plans³¹ still in force on the so called “Queen’s Lands”, namely Freetown.

²⁵ A PRA (Practical Rapid Appraisal) has been done in June 2008. It is a non formal quantitative method to investigate the characteristics of a population with no statistical significance.

²⁶ 1,5% Ventilated Improved Pit-latrine, 75% pit latrine, 0,5% bucket, and 16% flushing toilets

²⁷ J.L.K. Muana, M.A.B. Gegbe, 2004, *Population and Housing Census. Analytical Report on Housing Situation and Characteristics*, November 2006.

²⁸ These slum areas are very peculiar of Freetown. Large communities are occupying the sea shore with shelters made of corrugated metal sheets, and reclaiming land using garbage.

²⁹ Reported in the *Preliminary Assessment of the Freetown Development Plan: Pre-identification Study*, financed by the European Commission Delegation in Freetown (Sierra Leone), Draft Final Version.

³⁰ The willingness to pay taxes, according to the FCC officers and tax collectors is around 90%. That is mostly due to the good results the municipality has achieved into an urban thorough cleaning exercise.

³¹ Chapter 66. Freetown Improvement. An Ordinance for the Improvement of the City of Freetown. Jan. 1960.

From 1944 to the 1969 three planning exercises³² followed. All of them never turned into reality neither inspired the governors and the responsible of the city and country planning. Also the suggestion to revise the urban planning legal framework (by Sir A. Gibbs within his “Structural Plan”) remained a dead letter.

In 2004 the law on the decentralization included urban planning within the functions to be delegated to the FCC, thus reducing the possibility to provide the town with a proper urban development plan since the FCC had not any capacity and technical background for making an urban development plan.

In parallel, whilst the investments on basic needs are still far to be covered, some of the main donors in the country have increased the aid allocated to the development of Freetown. Several international community actions are currently under formulation or implementation³³. All these initiatives have included sectoral planning activity to frame or justify the investment. This can be basically explained because of the lack of urban planning in Freetown and, therefore, the need from the donors to formulate more logical and sustainable urban interventions though still sectoral.

In May 2008, the European Commission funded a preliminary assessment of the Freetown development level and potential aiming at identifying and proposing options for the contents of an indicative structure of the Freetown Development Plan. Consequently, this paper will predominantly focus on the findings that can be drawn from the public reports published in the framework of the Pre-identification Study of Freetown Development Plan.

In the Pre-identification Study of Freetown Development Plan, urban planning was intended and proposed as an effective planning and management tool for the coordination of all the urban development activities. Planning meant investigating the utmost potential development of each single and smallest stakeholder (actor of the urban development, namely the citizen) within the overall urban development plan. Planning meant establishing the rules or rather the grammar of such a development. Although the rules vary with time and cannot be framed for ever they need to be occasionally structured and recognised, in other words shared, by the people using the same language as well as the same territory, the same land. Therefore the urban planning was intended as a community layout, a reference framework, a functional order shared by the overall community for their own development, and at the same time had to be responsive towards the five principles of the Paris Declaration: ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, mutual accountability.

4. Ownership

Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies and co-ordinate development actions.

The first partnership commitment³⁴ of the Paris Declaration is based on a clear and basic concept endorsing the right of the partner countries to lead (and own) their own development.

³² The first comprehensive planning was the Maxwell Fyre “Town Planning Scheme” for Freetown in 1944. This scheme was not implemented as well as the 1963 “Freetown Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan” by Z. Borys. However in the 60s plot layout schemes were proposed (Local/Action Area plans) for Magazine, Cline Town, Fourah Bay Road. In 1969 a “Greater Freetown zoning Map” (and accompanying Rules, not adopted and not implemented by the Government. The Structure Plan by Sir A. Gibbs & Partners (UK, in association with Techsult & Company Ltd., Sierra Leone.), January 1997, is assumed as incomplete, and has never been implemented. Many of the proposed development solutions however are still viable and implementable.

³³ The Energy and Water Project and the Infrastructure Development Project financed by the World Bank, the Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan by DFID, the Master Plan for the Electrification of the Western Area by JICA, and the “Freetown Development Plan” Support Project by the European Commission.

³⁴ Developed in a spirit of mutual accountability, these Partnership Commitments are based on the lessons of experience. We recognise that commitments need to be interpreted in the light of the specific situation of each partner country. Paris Declaration [13].

If urban planning is an effective urban development tool, can urban planning enhance the Sierra Leone capacity to exercise effective leadership over its development policies, and strategies and co-ordinate development actions?

The answer to this question however is subject to the capacity of the local and national institutions to accept and use urban planning as a development tool.

Usually urban planning is considered as an expert driven, top-down, and merely technical urban development practice. In fact, when the holistic approach to the urban development was presented in Freetown it looked like more a theory than a concrete action that the general public accepts for releasing themselves from a poor daily life³⁵. In most of the cases urban planning is believed to be undertaken by highly expert town planners of the town planning department or by Urban Development Authorities; it is considered as a typical activity proposed and implemented by the government, which is usually quite keen to discuss about policies and not bread, laws and not actions, theories and not practices.

Apparently urban planning is not accepted by the common people. It does not belong to the culture of the urban poor neither to the local university culture. In Freetown there is a faculty of engineering and geography, and does not exist a faculty of architecture and urban planning. According to the decentralization process promoted and officially started with the Local Government Act 2004 the FCC should deal with development planning activities. Despite of that an Urban Planning Department up to now does not exist.

There is not an urban planning culture³⁶, and with due exceptions, neither an urban planning capacity. To create such a culture countrywide three different solutions could be envisaged like establishing a faculty of architecture or an *ad hoc* master course courses in urban planning within the local faculty of engineering or other cultural institutions (foreign and local), inviting qualified Sierra Leonean urban planner from abroad to run the first urban development decade, or selecting a number of young engineers and involve them actively in the Freetown urban development plan thus training them³⁷ in making and managing urban plans under the supervision of a senior local and an international urban planner. At the end of this “learning by doing” urban planning exercise the young engineers are then invited to keep on working within the FCC on the basis of interesting economic conditions.

Ownership of development policies and practices is secured only under the condition that the development tools are owned too.

5. Alignment

Donors base their overall support on partner countries’ national development strategies, institutions and procedures.

Can urban planning contribute to align the donors’ support to Sierra Leone being based on the national development strategy, institutions and procedures?

The answer is twofold. As for the donors’ alignment per se, the answer is definitively positive since urban planning (and country planning at a larger scale) has an approach which is area-based, cross-sectoral and integrative. That is peculiar of a contemporary global culture which applies to urban areas worldwide and faces the urban growth with technologies like multi-level governance networking and project-oriented.

Urban planning moreover empowers considerably the local institutions (the FCC in the first instance) and clearly defines

- urban vision and strategies (through a permanent participatory planning),

³⁵ Freetown Development Plan: Pre-identification Study, European Commission, November 2008.

³⁶ The culture of urban planning in Africa is mostly limited to the colonial age, and limited failed exercises.

³⁷ Usually (according to common practice) this urban planning exercise is carried out merging two different groups of young architects and urban planners: a local group (which is permanently working for the FDP) and a foreign group from any foreign university (master course in urban planning in developing country) who is willing to attend summer school or an apprenticeship abroad.

- land use regulations (detailing the planning process and procedures, subdivision regulations, urban growth physical and hazard constraints, and volume of construction according to the local potential development, enforcement and monitoring process),
- non-regulatory mechanisms for land development (infrastructure investment and use of fiscal and financial tools for urban development).

In a country where the urban population is 2/3 urban the national development strategies cannot avoid taking into account the local urban development strategies.

6. Harmonisation

Donors' actions are more harmonised, transparent and collectively effective.

Can urban planning improve harmonisation, transparency and collective effectiveness of donor's actions in Sierra Leone?

If urban planning is a development tool which is participatory and inclusive the answer is surely positive and in line with the recommendations of the Paris Declaration like

- encourage broad participation of a range of national actors in setting development priorities, and
- engage in dialogue with donors on developing simple planning tools.

As a matter of fact to be realistic and feasible an Urban Development Plan has to be based on any local available resources, the interest and the willingness of the local population being the latter actively involved into the envisaged development. In this regard any assessment and the related analysis are to be arranged with appropriate participatory technologies.

The Freetown Development Plan (FDP) has to be also inclusive because the economic resources available are not many and moreover are very much fragmented. The FDP needs to use every single small existing resource, and, among the others, also the resources which could raise from the so called slum areas (usually and previously neglected because never considered a resource but an obstacle to the urban development).

If urban planning is an inclusive development tool, then it needs to be based on a complex matrix of urban functions where every single sector or topic is linked to the others. Even the computer science can hardly find a solution however helps a lot drafting urban design solutions (CAD), processing data (SPSS), joining complex database with the geographical information (GIS). Computer Science keeps together the many functions of a town and makes them interactive ... and collectively effective.

7. Managing for results

Managing resources and improving decision-making for results.

To manage resources these are to be qualified, quantified and localized³⁸. This assessment is the pre-requisite of their management.

Can urban planning contribute to the managing and implementing of the aid in a way that focuses on the desired results and uses information to improve decision-making?

A GIS is the first necessary step for launching an urban planning exercise. It is the most appropriate tool for creating a database inventorying all the existing urban resources, linking those resources to their location and making an adequate Knowledge Mapping Analysis.

GIS³⁹ is a generic technology which is applicable to a wide variety of fields where spatial data and analysis are an important component. The GIS for urban planning would be specifically oriented towards supporting the process of preparation, implementation and monitoring urban area development and related regulatory plans. In this regard GIS is definitively the most appropriate technology for gathering, storing, maintaining and querying of the city inventory.

³⁸ Localisation of resources is separated from the quality assessment as for its peculiar managerial importance.

³⁹ <http://gis.esri.com/library/userconf/proc95/to300/p271.html> , <http://www.gisqatar.org.qa/conf97/links/m3.html> , <http://gis.esri.com/library/userconf/proc97/proc97/to550/pap505/p505.htm>

At the moment in Sierra Leone only some of the national governmental institutions use or are operating a GIS technology, among the others the Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) and SLRA; none at the FCC level. All the institutions however show interest and willingness to cooperate in setting up an effective GIS system focussing on Freetown.

A coordination effort needs to be done for collecting and merging the resources of all the interested partners involved. This is the first step towards a rather comprehensive and coordinative action leading to a Freetown Development Plan ...and improve decision making for results.

8. Mutual accountability

Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

Can urban planning contribute to enhance mutual accountability and transparency between Sierra Leone and donors in the use of development resources?

The fifth principle of the Paris Declaration makes reference to two key principles of Good Urban Governance⁴⁰: transparency and accountability. They are essential for making the relationship between stakeholders and local government cooperative and effective.

Such a relationship is cultivated since the first steps of the urban planning activities when a participatory approach is applied to assess the existing and potential resources, interests and willingness of the local population to be actively involved into the envisaged development. It is also an ongoing dialogue with all the other relevant stakeholders: not only politicians but also investors, and among them of course the donors.

As a result, an operational urban development program is set up which consists of a consultative platform from where the investors, and donors in the first instance, pick up the projects to be developed and implemented being sure that those projects are enrolled within a comprehensive and inclusive urban development plan.

In theory the individual and collective involvement of the stakeholders within the above mentioned exercise (the operational urban development programme) creates a solid partnership, improves transparency and enhances accountability. In practice the use of participatory approaches in enhancing accountability has been largely demonstrated in the health sector (Cornwall A. et al 2000)⁴¹ and in the urban governance (Wampler B., 2004).

Sierra Leone institutions and donor community exercise their mutual accountability starting from the moment they both recognize the importance of urban growth and urban planning and commit themselves to start an open dialogue on urban development. Such an exercise has been initiated by the European Commission Delegation in Freetown with the “Freetown Development Plan: Pre-identification Study”. The donor community and the Sierra Leone institutions (at the local and central level) have been summoned since the beginning of the project (May 2008). The final conference on the project outcomes (October 2008) has legitimated the intentions and the practice, leaving open the leading role for drafting the FDP.

9. Conclusions

Urban planning is a fundamental practice that needs to be fully incorporated in the technical cooperation for external aid. However, as this paper has shown, urban planning in developing countries could match with the five principles of the Paris Declaration under certain specific condition.

⁴⁰ UN-HABITAT launched the Global Campaign on Urban Governance in 1999 to support the implementation of the Habitat Agenda goal of “sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world.” <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=25&cid=2097>

⁴¹ The Health sector has been often pioneering in the field of participatory techniques and related researches (Varkevisser, C. M. 1991).

A recent example in Freetown illustrates the importance of this convergence in order to achieve the MDG in Sierra Leone: a new massive water supply source is urgently needed, and a DFID funded study proposes that the only feasible solution in the short term is the construction of an additional dam. The major constraint of this project is the immediacy of the catchment area to the expansion zones of the city. It is evident that, if there is going to be an extensive housing development in the catchment area, it will put at risk the quality and quantity of the drinking water. An urban plan would obviously not be sufficient to avoid the progressive expansion of the city inside the catchment area, but it is necessary. If both, Government and donors, understand urban planning as an opportunity to adhere to the Paris Declaration commitments, then the urban plan becomes a powerful tool to restrain the growth of the city toward that source. If the plan is assumed (owned) at all levels of the social and political sphere, then law enforcement is not only a matter of police action but also of social/peer pressure (ownership). If the urban plan contributes to align donors' support with the decentralisation process, it will empower the City Council to implement proximity policies to discourage housing and economical activities in those areas (alignment). Urban planning will require from donors and Sierra Leonean stakeholders an effort to harmonise their interventions and therefore to avoid contradictory actions that may give incentives to develop housing in the catchment area (harmonisation). Only an urban plan will provide evidence that the catchment area is actually protected and that the results of the project are being achieved (managing for results). And finally, an urban plan will increase the accountability and transparency in the use of aid funds for the water supply project because citizens will be able to verify that the service has improved and that the banning to develop in the catchment area is without exception, and donors and authorities will be able to check the expected benefits of the project (mutual accountability).

In this respect the European Commission Delegation in Freetown has promoted an urban planning exercise appealing to the efficiency and effectiveness, based on the limited practices and the highlighted principles of the mentioned EC guidelines for urban development and inspired by the commitments of the Paris Declaration.

Whether this urban planning exercise is to be considered necessary to alleviate poverty, achieve the MDG, leveraging on the urban areas, this is questionable and provable. The answer will follow at least a couple of years from the Freetown Development Plan draft (2010). At the moment a thorough Knowledge Mapping Analysis is envisaged to start within a fully-fledged Technical Assistance to the Freetown City Council. It is going to last one year. It is a long time; however it is necessary for acquiring all data from a metropolis of almost two million inhabitants, and it is necessary for launching, finally, the Freetown Development Plan and check it out.

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