

**Report**

# A Study on History of Early Modern Town Planning of Banjul

**Ebrima A. Kolley<sup>\*</sup>, Wang Xiao, Peng Kai**

School of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, China

**Email address:**

brmkolley29@yahoo.co.uk (E. A. Kolley)

<sup>\*</sup>Corresponding author**To cite this article:**Ebrima A. Kolley, Wang Xiao, Peng Kai. A Study on History of Early Modern Town Planning of Banjul. *Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning*. Vol. 2, No. 1, 2017, pp. 23-28. doi: 10.11648/j.larp.20170201.13**Received:** January 3, 2017; **Accepted:** January 16, 2017; **Published:** February 10, 2017

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**Abstract:** From a military fort to a city by the British for the resolution of building a military fort for the clampdown of the slave trade, the modern urbanization of Banjul is a self-determination course beneath the inspiration of British Town Planning Theory. This paper discusses briefly the historic progress of physical planning development scene in Banjul. It offers some visions into the features of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial planning contexts in Banjul. The argument in this paper is the serious city administration problem and planning which has continuously exhibited unpredictability, disintegration and an absenteeism of perceptible city commitment.

**Keywords:** Town Planning, Colonial, Legislatures

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## 1. Introduction

Town Planning (Physical Planning) is the procedure of encoding the coordination of the direction, structure and outline of the improvement, advancement and management of urban settlements with the aim of safeguarding all these essential land-use needs (Containing monetary, societal, ecological, institutional, traditional, entertaining and rest desires), for all the socio-monetary populace masses in the society are provided for in well-matched and interdependent locational relations and densities. By varying the category and range of permitted activities from place to place within the urban context, town planning authorizes that there is a habitation for each worthy action whereas protection of harmful actions from inhabited areas, thus protective and upkeep civic well-being. Otherwise, John Radecliffe says that town planning is ‘concerned with providing the right site, at the right time, in the right place, for the right people’ [1].

Lewis Keeble describes Town Planning as ‘the art and science of assembling the use of land and lying of buildings and communication paths so as to protect full realistic degree of economy, suitability and attractiveness’ [2]. The procedure of town planning as imagined here is unique of instruction city-comprehensive scope and attention and rejects micro/sectional or community planning actions that might

practice portion of a theatrical presentation of the city-comprehensive plan.

Conservative and official town planning rehearsal in the Banjul was mainly of British colonial making and greatly of town planning legislature in the province resultant and developed from the series of British Town planning legislatures/Deeds and their amendments during the 12th century. Former British colonial town planning legislatures with the overall detached “to regulator urban growth and offer for slum clearance and regeneration” were ratified in British colonies with solid “colonist” actions and possible for inter-public engagements”.

This paper emphasis on Town Planning development in Banjul through evolving pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial over an era of time.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology used to collect data was the secondary data which is used to enrich the paper content by the existing data. The data from various sources with various information related to the topic is used as second-hand information with access to internet, desk reviews and a review of other existing data and research related to the topic of the paper.

### 3. Pre-colonial Town Planning in Banjul 1800s – 1880s

Contemporary conservative town-planning of Banjul had British colonial geneses.

Before then, the city occurred with no official planning but had its traditional settlements forms and physical constructions mainly verbalized by traditional land use and tenure scheme. There was officially “unintended” but expressively “systematic” physical construction to settlements, mainly valuing traditionally recognized arrangements and ways of life. Actions had their places like market places, religious buildings, farm lands, public gathering places, graveyards, schools, playgrounds, and obviously roads and footpath patterns. This was the condition in Banjul. The morphology, usage or form of traditional settlements, obviously diverse within city neighborhoods beside tribal crowd lines, nonetheless there remained constantly an accepted and recognized usage to the settlements if all procedures of essential land-uses. Uniform in settlements by “traditional sprawl” by nucleated settlement forms, there remained diverse and valued physical edict. The populace and housing overcrowdings that portray contemporary sprawl was not outward then. All essential land-use type was delivered for.

#### 3.1. Colonial Town Planning in Banjul 1880s – 1965

The first important formal attempt at country planning in the colony started in 1894, when the Crown colony was divided up into districts with every district placed under the administrative jurisdiction of a local chief. The chiefs were supervised by colonial government commissioners and were responsible for ‘good government’. Moreover to enacting the council ordinance, the regime took bold steps to develop policies designed to convert most tracts of land in the territory into crown land.

It was not till after World War I and especially after World War II that some of the most important town planning initiatives were undertaken in Gambia. Between October 1943 and October 1945, Maxwell Fry, as Town Planning advisor to the Resident minister of the colonies for British West Africa, had studied a number of the colonial capitals, one of which was Bathurst (Banjul). The ultimate purpose was to advise the colonial regime on crafting appropriate town planning legislation and the machinery for implementing it. Fry summarized the results of his findings in an address he gave to a meeting he had with the Royal Empire Society on 26 June 1946 [3]. In the segment on Bathurst, Fry paints a vibrant picture of the genre of problems colonial planners faced or were likely to face in their efforts to design a function plan for the city. The construction of the Country’s main airport in that colonial capital city, Fry noted, constituted a nightmare for the planners. This, he explained, was due to the circumstance that the airport had occupied virtually all the usable space in the tiny city, which was situated on a low altitude and saddled with acute drainage problems.

Fry recommended relocating the colonial government to a

new site. This recommendation was rejected by colonial authorities not merely for the enormous cost of executing such a proposal but also, and maybe most significantly, because of the historic value of Bathurst by way of a symbol of colonial power in the territory.

Bathurst was surveyed and planned by the colonial engineer or planner by the name J. H. Brady in April, 1885. It was then surveyed and mapped and the streets named. The drainage system was constructed. All streets are provided with single or double side drains on a thin street which collect storm water and empty into the main collector drains which are linked to the stream.

The Planning problems of Bathurst were discussed in British Parliament in 1946, and described as ‘Frustrating’. It appears that the plans were not being executed, Maxwell Fry and Betty Benson, Draft Town Planning scheme for Bathurst (Banjul) and the Kombo Area’s office of Town Planning Advisor to the Resident minister, West Africa, 1946. The town is terrible overcrowded and is built on a low sandbank where there is no room for expansion. The population has been drifting in over the ages from the protectorate area, and there is a great deal of overcrowding in the town. The only practicable solution is to construct a new town elsewhere, and that has been provided for by the laying-out of an area at Kombo St. Mary. A report published in 1946 by the Gambia Government suggests that various schemes have been discussed, put forward, revised and put forward again for the drainage and lay-out of the Kombo St. Mary area but was a story of frustration.

The land use and spatial planning of Banjul, dates back to colonial days and this directed to the genesis of the land office now known as the Department of Physical Planning and Housing (DPPH). It is accountable for all the planning matters of the country. The improvement planning of Banjul by the outline of roads and their names, drainage, electricity and pipe-borne water facilities etc. was the beginning of Town Planning of Banjul. Gambia planning laws are the leeway of 1948 English Towns and Country Planning legislature into the colonies. Every lawful mechanism expresses into this legislature to define contemporary spatial geographic planning which narrows to only execution and development control.



Figure 1. Banjul 1947 Map.



*Figure 2. Banjul (Wellington Street 1940s).*

### **3.2. Post – Colonial Town Planning in Banjul 1965 to Date**

From independence in 1965 until 1980 not much has been done in footings of planning of Banjul. As single of the tiniest cities in the world, Banjul has never indeed had a sewage system. Most of the compounds in Banjul had pet latrines that were collected at night when they became full and replaced with empty ones. They were previously taken to a vital locality to be transported to the waste dumpsite situated in the outer city at Mile 2 Prisons area. As more city dwellers gravitated towards Banjul in hunt of business opportunities and employment, the populace was underway to progressively grow civic toilets which were set up to lodge the desires of the dwelling. Nonetheless this was not sufficient and something had to be done for the sake of human health and just plain old sanity. There were certain compounds in Banjul that consumed private septic tanks and would pay fee to BCC (Banjul City Council) to direct their huge tanker trucks to unfilled the septic tanks once they were full.

In the first 1980s, the then government of the first republic after colonial rule adopted a policy to construct a modern sewage system in Banjul to eradicate the preceding “human system” track by Banjul City Council’s Health and Services Department. SOBEA (a French company) was constructed to improve Banjul’s sewage system. Work on the city’s sewage project was inaugurated in 1984. Banjul has had a complete sewage connection since 1990. All areas of Banjul are connected to the system and waste and storm water into the main pumping station that was located on Bund Road then free into the river.

Greater Banjul Area (GBA) and the 3 growth centers- Brikama, Basse, and Farafenni were originally prepared under the Physical Planning Act 1984 [4]. The master and land use plans for these areas are to rationalize the use of land and control of spatial expansion. Plan implementation is not successful to the extent that urban sprawl is a vivid occurrence. The main capital area of Banjul is restricted in positions of expansion because of its physical limits as an Island city and therefore the population has in the past double decades been moving out to new areas.

Currently, the Land Use Plans and Policies development were approved over the period 1984-1989, which culminated

in the 1991 Physical Planning and Development Control Act [5]. The Act established a national planning board and planning authorities for Banjul and for each region, accountable for the preparation of the draft plans- Local, Regional and National Plans. Section 8 of the Act provides that the draft plans shall provide guidelines for spatial development and effective use of land to ensure a well-balanced environment and good living conditions. Development standards were also adopted for open land, industrial and institutional usage.

Subsequently, by the 1995, Land use Regulations, Draft Plans Regulations, and Development Control Regulations [6] were publicized pursuant to the Act. The Land use regulations provided a schedule of land uses, classes and land use zones for the drives of draft development plans and development control. The Draft Plans Regulations provide for the form, content and guidelines to be applied, in the progress of draft plans, while the Development Control Regulations regulated the procedure and guidelines for the issue of development permits, the authorization of building plans, and construction standards. No other plans have however been developed since 1989. The Planning Board and Planning Authorities have not been operational in recent years.

In the Town Planning history of Banjul, the city’s only expropriation was that of Banjul Port Expansion Project. The planning performance in this area is good. In general, expropriations are accepted in the civic interest, and it is uncommon for the government to expropriate land for pure private use. However, expropriations for the drive of making residential layouts do occur, in which case the mainstream of beneficiaries are private individuals. This is portion of a policy to create housing available and affordable. Expropriated land is also typically put to its destined use immediately. Compensation is remunerated for expropriation of registered land i.e. leasehold and freeholds beneath the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act [7] in cash and, where appropriate, in kind by relocation of residential owners. Half Die –All 34 compounds were allocated plots of Land at the Katchikally layout as compensation furthermore to cash compensations for the developments of the compounds. The compounds were acquired in 2008 and the Katchikally Layout which comprises of 1.66 hectares, were allocated in the same year. One case of good practice in expressions of fairness and transparency of compensation, which should become the norm, is the situation of the 34 properties at Half –Die in Banjul, which were expropriated for the port expansion. A task force of different institutions and property owners, was setup to implement the process. An independent consultant was hired to move out the determination of value and to conduct negotiation for compensation. Compensation was promptly paid to over 90% of expropriated owners. The few owners who were dissatisfied were perceived by a panel in an arbitration exercise.

The land use records available is severely outdated and limited in scope. The Greater Banjul Area (GBA) and the 3 urban growth centres of Brikama (WCR), Farafenni (NBR) and Basse (URR) remain the only land use plan.



Figure 3. Current Map.



Figure 4. Banjul Top View.

#### 4. The Challenges Faced by Banjul (from 1980s to Date)

The challenges faced by Banjul neighborhoods in urban scenery today are that of unsystematically emergent of unfettered build-up areas, overcrowded and dilapidated housing, enclosed by virtually extreme obscenity. There are barely much drainage services or solid waste disposal services. Mounts of garbage are shared features everywhere. These features are now such persistent marvels in most great and intermediary neighborhoods that the formation of this city is now mainly distinct by where these unlawful settlements coil up. These features and developments are making it the entire extra luxurious, if not unbearable, to offer such city areas with basic facilities.

These outcomes in poor infrastructure services and declining civic services such as poor drainage and insufficient sanitation, insufficient water supplies, hills of rubbish and other solid waste, reserved mobility as an outcome of out-of-date physical layouts, or no planned layout, prosperous street tradeoff, congested, insufficient transport systems and insufficient and declining road

facilities causing congestion and overcrowding, noise and pollution.

Pervasiveness of low points of social restraint and public duty is a task to city planners and administrators in the country. Houses are erected without much respect to standing building and health codes or zoning and subdivision rules. The extent of these marvels naturally devastates the exertions of city planners, city administrators, health and building inspectors whose efficiency are auxiliary, challenged by existing and current activism of involvements by distinct and often-times non-descriptive activism groups. It has been distinguished that the popular (between 40% and 80%) of urban populace in African cities and towns currently live in slums [8] or in such unintended and uninhibited urban settlements, and many are continuous sufferers of real or endangered removals by civic authorities.

The greatest significant and acute task confronted by Banjul is the crippling faintness of institutes of town development planning and administration. Municipal authority frequently has too little capital that is suitable to meet their responsibilities. Day-to-day, the financial administration hitches and economic deficits are compounded. The official base and infrastructure for active urban planning and urban development administration is still mainly pathetic and in a state of fluidity – urban local governments with pathetic and unrealistic income base, with insufficient technical and administration abilities and as yet imperfect political will and obligation on the part of the vital and other advanced level governments to let the local institutes and their mechanisms function. The detail rests however that:

*“... the impact of programmes meant at urban shelter, services and infrastructure rest upon the quality of the institutions accountable for planning and implementing these projects. The official mechanism offers the passage through which the urban sector problems and urgencies are expressed, projects are planned and applied and Inter-sector complementarity is proficient.*

*Institutions serve as the most severe overriding factors through which financial resources and talents are used for, between other things, promoting sustainable urban development” [9].*

Planning, afterward all is simply as active as the managerial system support and the political viewpoint, enthusiasm and pledge of the government in which it functions allows [10]. The Gambia government is yet to allow this official consolidation at the indigenous level, and this is an essential task to active urban development planning and administration.

The last task is poor governance, bribery and waste of capitals. The chorus is about how many the governing leaders have taken out of the countries and spent everywhere in the world, relatively than in their identifiable countries. How bad, actually corrupt government is for a country has been proven by some governmental governments.

Effective town planning and implementation are the antidotes to these continuing urban tasks. While official plans,

codes, ordinances or such other land-use regulator procedures may not essentially look the most important causes prompting land-use patterns and their development, in the present framework of enormous urbanization in the Gambia, they are still exceptionally significant, for it is through them that the appropriate civic authorities – national, state, provincial, local government or planning agencies – effect where and in what track, for what and when urban development will arise. Also, active land-use planning and its major land -use policy implement – zoning – is in principle threat avoidance and moderation exercise.

Firming the institute(s) for handling urban development is the municipal/local government or development/administration bodies are the places to start.



*Figure 5. Open Drainage.*



*Figure 6. Waste Dump Site.*



*Figure 7. Dilapidated Structures.*



*Figure 8. Drainage Problem.*

## 5. Conclusion

The Town Planning procedure of Banjul has surely proceeded from its institutional base and geneses from the sequence of British Town Planning Legislations (Acts) from 1932 through 1947 to 1965 and primarily intensive on physical layout determinations of Banjul to the recent widening perception of incorporating economy. This change and shift however appear to leave the urban planning procedure in a workout in a theoretical and definitional motion of what it is exclusively anticipated to be and do its distinctive fortes and its limits. Town planning as a field of professional activity cannot be a prerogative to and do everything urban area. While an important part and partner in urban administration and management, it cannot and need not essentially include the former.

Looking at the initial contemporary town planning history of Banjul from 1800s to date, then British, promoted the initiation of Banjul's city planning. During Banjul's development process in the initial contemporary times, we can perceive the colonial features of its city planning, and also the progress of its civilization. It was developed and transformed through a procedure of recognition and abandonment. Yesterday is a mirror for today, and today is the inheritance and continuity of yesterday. Understanding the yesterday of Banjul planning and construction can help us to well comprehend the historical process of the city's planning and development, and to learn from its lessons and experience, so as to bring Banjul to a brighter future.

## Recommendation

This paper intensely recommends a multi-sector method to town planning and implementation of public sector programs and strategies. Consequently, it still has the load of crucial limitations of its responsibility. It cannot remain to be as at now, a vague conception from which anyone or group of challenging action could describe its tenacity and procedure and continue to act in the name, framework, spirit and context of town planning. More intense soul-searching and discussions among concerned professional are called for in this regard. Through this, the discontinuation between planners and plan recipients can be connected. Coordination

of development programs and creativities is also extremely promoted to allow plans function as whole rather than insulated and dispersed concepts which make implementation a huge duty.

The paper appeals to considerable re-training and attitudinal re-direction for the leadership and governing leaders of the city. This will make them swallow the necessary skills and behaviors in real governance, and it has the possibility of attracting the marvel of poor leadership to allow them electrify plan implementation and realize set goals is also recommended.

The mechanisms/institutes for collecting data for planning need consolidation or total services. A weak data base benevolence, an idealistic plan, consequently determined should be made to enrich data precision and dependability through active mechanisms and people. Also, Planning Board needs to be widened to include civil society groups and other areas in order to widen representation and get broad input for plan preparation and implementation.

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