

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OR SUSTAINABLE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS? DEBATING SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN BOTSWANA

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Abstract

This paper explores the contested nature of sustainable human settlements in Botswana. Sustainable development has attained the status of a catchphrase for actors that include international financial institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Development Partners, Non-Governmental Organisation as well as international political organisations like the United Nations and its agencies. As a member of the United Nations (UN), Botswana affirms commitment to the sustainable development agenda within which the quest for sustainable human settlements falls. Despite the wide adoption by diverse actors, sustainable development is highly contested in its conceptualisation and on how it is to be attained. In debating sustainable human settlements in Botswana, there has been little attempt to interrogate the contested nature of the concept. The predominant concept inclines more towards the techno-ecological intergenerational definition associated with the UN's Agenda 21 where the focus is on reconciling economic development with environmental impacts. The paper argues for a more political definition where the focus is on sustaining lives and livelihoods. We argue that there remain within the country's normative development planning framework and liberal democratic political system, opportunities for sustainable human settlements models that privilege sustainability of lives and livelihoods. It is suggested that the ideal espoused herein can be reached through the utilisation of sanctioned spaces of participation within the country's political system and a shift from conventional expert-centred knowledge production to co-production ethos of enquiry and practices.

Key terms: *sustainable lives and livelihoods, sustainable development, sanctioned spaces of participation, co-optation, co-production*

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses how the sustainable human settlements debate has unfolded in Botswana. Since the Earth Summit in 1992 and the subsequent adoption of Agenda 21, sustainability has occupied centre stage in research and policy agendas in both the global North and the global South (Simon, 2016). Calls for sustainable human settlements pervade national and international forums organised by different actors both at global and local scales. Included among the actors are international financial institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Development Partners, Non-Governmental Organisations as well as international political organisations like the United Nations (UN) and its agencies (Mila and Hoornweg, 2013; International Development Finance Club, 2014; The Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, 2006; United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2009; Alusi *et. al.* 2011). The United Nations in particular, has been at the forefront of the sustainable human settlements advocacy. Starting with Habitat I, through Habitat II and III, United Nations member states have unswervingly pursued the sustainable development ideal. Still under the UN auspices, Goal 11 of the widely publicised 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for 'inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements' (United Nations, 2016).

Despite its wide adoption by diverse actors, sustainable development is highly contested both in its conceptualisation and on how it is to be attained (Pieterse, 2008; Perry and Atherton,

2017; Williams and Millington, 2004). Questions often asked and over which differences emerge revolve around what is to be sustained. In the case of Botswana, there has been little attempt to interrogate how the contested nature of sustainable development affects the framing of the country's sustainable human settlements agenda. It is contended that the dominant concept of sustainable human settlements in the country as reflected in the public sector publications is predisposed towards a biophysical and technological construal of sustainability and its attendant preoccupation with sustaining development. In debating sustainable human settlements, we propose a more political reading of sustainability where the concern is with sustaining lives and livelihoods. The debate focuses on the systemic structures and processes that determine the sustainability or unsustainability of human settlements. Embracing the radical democratic tenet that views transformation as realisable within the existing capitalist system, we demonstrate that there remain within the country's governance structures spaces of hope that could be turned into pathways for sustainable human settlements that privilege sustainability of lives and livelihoods.

The paper is divided into six parts. Following the introductory section, the second part discusses the contested nature of sustainability and sustainable human settlements. The discussion focuses on two competing concepts 'sustainability as sustainable development' and 'sustainability as sustainable lives and livelihoods' (National Scientific Foundation Workshop on Urban Sustainability (NSFWUS), 2000). It is argued that of the two viewpoints of sustainability, sustaining lives and livelihoods offers better urban futures for the global South. Section three focusses on the conceptual framework within which those concerned with sustainable lives and livelihoods or alternative urban futures operate. Section four considers how the sustainable human settlement debate has unfolded in Botswana. Drawing from the conceptual framework above, section five identifies opportunities within the country's governance and policy environment that could leverage a shift towards sustainable lives and livelihoods. The final section is the conclusion.

2 SUSTAINING DEVELOPMENT OR SUSTAINING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS? THE SUSTAINABILITY DEBATE

Sustainability is one of the most contested concepts in the social sciences. With a multiplicity of claimants, it has been argued that sustainability is a 'chaotic concept so poorly theorized and laden with so many definitions that it risks plunging into meaninglessness, at best, and becoming a catchphrase for political demagoguery' at worst (National Scientific Foundation Workshop on Urban Sustainability (National Scientific Foundation Workshop on Urban Sustainability [NSFWUS], 2000:1). As postulated by the NSFWUS (2000), the definition of sustainability 'operates and functions at different spatial scales and also reflects the perspectives of the individual's social, economic and political positions' and as such differences emerge over what is to be sustained (NSFWUS, 2000:6). For the NSFWUS, the answer to what is to be sustained falls into two polar extremes- one for big players operating at global scale, and at the other end, those players operating at local levels. At global scale sustainability is 'synonymous with sustainable development and its management, embracing the agenda of the market, top-down planning, scientific, technological and or design based solutions. At local scale 'sustainability is synonymous with sustainable livelihoods and in which local context can lead to different and locally contingent perspectives on the meaning of and condition for sustainability and the means to achieve it' (NSFWUS, 2000:6). As shown in the next section, the implications of the two polar extremes cited above are quite substantial in the crafting of the sustainability agenda.

2.1 Sustainability as ‘Sustainable Development’

The concept of sustainability as sustainable development is associated with the intergenerational definition of sustainable development introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) - the Brundtland Report. The Commission defined sustainable development ‘as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987). Central to the above understanding is the need to ensure that development does not destroy or deplete the planet’s life support system. The aim here is to ensure that environmental resource base and ecological base for economic activities are sustained indefinitely. When applied to cities, the quest for sustainable cities dictates that city officials should ensure that development proposals are screened for possible impact on environmental assets. In the case of Botswana, for example, guarding against negative impacts on environmental assets has been the focus of the environmental impact assessment requirement during the preparation of spatial development plans.

A major characteristic of sustainability as defined above is the implicit universalism which could be summed up as ‘sustainability is the same everywhere.’ This thinking informs the agitation for the formulation of sustainability indicators. Following the adoption of the Urban Agenda 21, major actors in the global economy, notably the World Bank and Development Partners, came up with programmes and prescriptions on how sustainable cities and human settlements were to be realised. These actors also played leading roles in the formulation of sustainability indicators as was the case with World Bank’s Global City Indicator Program and the Canadian International Development Agency (World Bank, 2017; Thorpe, 2017). The thinking behind the indicators as in the case of ISO 37120 was that they could be ‘used by any city, municipality or local government wishing to measure its performance in a comparable and verifiable manner, irrespective of size and location or level of development’ (ISO 37120, 2014). From the intergenerational definition of sustainability, it is possible to arrive at a common definition, common measurement (using the identified / selected indicators), and therefore prescribe as to how sustainability can be brought about. Following the formulation of sustainability indicators, governments were urged to adopt steps and measures that would ensure that environmental assets are not destroyed. The foregoing concept and approaches to sustainability informs the World Bank sponsored Eco² cities programme. According to the World Bank, ‘Eco City builds on the synergy and interdependence of ecological and economic sustainability and their fundamental ability to reinforce and strengthen each other in the urban context’ (Suzuki *et.al*, 2012). Suzuki *et.al*. (2012) further claim that the programme advances a ‘balanced notion of economic cities—where the emphasis falls on sustainable, innovative, inclusive, and resilient economic activity, within the context of a larger cultural and value systems’. Eco cities are in essence business ventures aimed at ensuring continuity in wealth generation functions of the cities. In putting forward the models, the World Bank plans to partner with government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and private sector organizations.

Criticisms have been raised regarding the concept of sustainability as ‘sustainable development’. According to the NSFWS, for actors at the global scale, sustainability could mean the preservation and reproduction of current power relations and systems of production. As Pieterse (2008) warns, it is quite possible that under this concept of sustainability, the prevailing exploitative global capitalist system is reproduced indefinitely despite poverty

reduction and sustainability rhetoric. At issue is whether there can be sustainable cities in a globalising capitalist system? The general view is that where sustainability is construed as sustainable development, reference to sustainable human settlements or cities is indeed oxymoronic. Unsustainable cities or human settlements result from embedded processes that sustain capitalist production and distribution systems and as such these should be the focus of the quest for sustainability.

2.2 Sustainability as ‘sustaining lives and livelihoods’

Critics of sustainability as ‘sustainable development’ advance a more political concept of sustainability where the concern is with sustaining lives and livelihoods instead of sustaining development (National Scientific Foundation Workshop on Urban Sustainability (NSFWUS), 2000:6). Sustainable livelihoods are interpreted as processes of social and ecological reproduction situated within diverse spatial contexts’ (NSFWUS, 2000:8). As presented by the NSFWUS sustainability as sustaining lives and livelihoods is founded on the following basic premises:

- i) Sustainability is a process not a fixed or predetermined outcome.
- ii) Our concept of sustainability is consistent with a robustness and flexibility in problem solving within localities rather than management towards certain, preconceived outcomes.
- iii) This entails a shift in thinking about sustainability from achieving set standards and single solutions to empowerment for local problem solving based on diverse knowledges.
- iv) The role of local knowledge and practices is vital; there is much to learn from alternative ways of addressing sustainability in different contexts.
- v) Urban sustainability is an integral part of, and not distinct from, sustainability in general. This implies examining the process of urbanisation within the context of dynamic and complex social, economic, political and ecological processes producing sustainable or unsustainable landscapes.
- vi) Urban (or any other) places are not containers of sustainable or unsustainable processes but rather are produced through processes that may or may not be sustainable.
- vii) Urban sustainability does not connote urban self-containment, isolation, or insulation from global processes but rather the development of local-global relationship conducive to sustainability.
- viii) Sustainability is fundamentally a political rather than a technological or design problem, in the sense that the greatest barrier to sustainability lies in absence of institutional designs for defining and implementing sustainable practices at local contexts.

According to the NSFWUS, the adoption or observance of the above premises has important implications as to how sustainability is approached as the focus is turned to processes rather than outcomes. In addition, the approach recognises the place-specificity of solutions based on local knowledges. Viewed as such, the wide usage of universal recommendations often through best practices and the use of universal sustainability indicators becomes questionable. Linkages and flows between local and global spaces are acknowledged and factored into the definition and analysis of sustainability. Flexibility as opposed to predetermination in defining sustainability outcomes is recognised. Local capacity is empowered to address unintended outcomes and respond to global pressures. This is particularly important when contrasted with

the use of sustainability indicators and marketing of models such as eco-cities where the local is often ignored.

It is important to note the resonance between the conception of sustainability as 'sustainable lives and livelihoods' and urban transformative agendas espoused under the 'just city' and 'right to the city' advocacy. What the above have in common is the need to address the inequalities generated by urban entrepreneurship and economic growth – first models embraced by neoliberal approaches to urbanization (Perry and Atherton, 2017:3). The call is for a restructuring of underlying power relations in the production of urban space. Currently, within the neoliberal city, private property and exchange value are the main determinants in the organization of space. What 'just city', 'right to the city' and 'sustainable livelihoods' advocate is the prioritization of use value and putting 'people first, and not profit first'. According to Belda-Miquel *et.al.* (2016) privileging people and not profit recognizes the right of inhabitants to use the city through their daily lives rather than the right of economic agents to exploit the exchange value of the urban space.

Building on the NSFWUS notion of sustaining lives and livelihoods, Pieterse (2008:134) identifies the following ideals as essential for the realisation of sustainable urban lives and livelihoods:

- i) [An] effective democratic local state committed to a vibrant public sphere.
- ii) An effective spatial development framework that can give expression to the developmental objectives of the state and citizens.
- iii) A plural, dense and active civil society that engages the state and business sectors around the normative aspirations of the city.
- iv) A normative commitment to the right to the city, pluralism, social justice and poverty reduction.

The thinking that informs the above is part of a burgeoning scholarship in the search for alternative urban futures. This scholarship falls under the ambit of radical democracy and views the predominant neoliberal approach to urbanization as unsustainable and destructive.

3 RADICAL DEMOCRACY AS BASIS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

The search for alternative urban futures or 'just cities' is critical of neo-liberal approach to urbanization which it views as engendering inequitable distribution of the benefits of urbanisation. Cities and other human settlements display inequalities in terms of access to infrastructural services, access to decision making and opportunities for decent livelihoods. Neo-liberal perspective on urbanization is characterized among other things by competition among cities for investment that often leads to restructuring of the city to attract international business (Pieterse, 2008:79). Preoccupation with attracting international businesses and attainment of world city status has led to an upsurge in what Watson (2013) referred to as 'African urban fantasies'. While Watson (2013) wondered if these were ever meant to be implemented, Cain (2014) used the case of residential housing in Angola to show that indeed some of these urban fantasies are implemented to the benefit of the elite.

Governments' fixation with world-class status for their cities often leads to situations whereby economic interest dominate the decision-making processes of cities. This usually results in boosterism projects that crowd out public infrastructure that would otherwise benefit the majority of the urban poor (Pieterse, 2008:134). To counter what is viewed as 'relentless

commodification and re-commodification of urban spaces' calls have been made for alternative urban futures (Brenner *et.al*, 2009). An increasingly shared view among alternative urban futures scholarship is that transformation can indeed be realized within the existing capitalist system (Feinstein, 2010). How this works is captured by Pieterse (2008: 6) when defining what he dubbed 'radical incrementalism':

...bringing change into the world through more discrete avenues, surreptitious, sometimes overt and multiple small revolutions that at unanticipated and unexpected moments galvanize into deeper ruptures that accelerate tectonic shifts of underlying logics of domination and what is considered possible. Radical incrementalism is a disposition and sensibility that believes in deliberate action of social transformation but through a multiplicity of processes and imaginations, none of which assumes or asserts a primary significance over other struggles.

Perry and Atherton (2017:3-4) provide further insights on how alternative urban futures are possible within the existing capitalist system. The authors distinguish between transformative and affirmative strategies:

Transformative strategies seek to change social and structural frameworks which have given rise to unequal outcomes. Affirmative strategies seek non-reformist reforms which aim to transform cities from within existing frameworks, whilst setting in motion a trajectory of change overtime in which more radical reforms are practicable

Transformative urban agendas are common amongst analyses that draw on Chantal Mouffe's agonistic politics. Contrary to deliberative democratic politics and its search for consensus, agonistic politics acknowledge the prevalence of conflict, strife and dispute in urban planning. Given the above situation, agonistic theorists argue for alternative 'ethos premised on fostering respectful disagreement to avoid coercive dangers of the search for consensus' characteristic of liberal democratic politics (Inch, 2015).

According to Pieterse (2008:134) several assumptions underlie the vision of urban transformation founded on radical democracy. These include the existence of participatory systems and mechanisms, politicized civil society and a normative policy framework that embraces ethos such as social justice, right to the city and poverty reduction. Participatory mechanisms and processes within a given society's political structures and policy environment provide the basis for agonistic politics in which the voices of the marginalized are mobilized and heard. The existence of a politicised civil society that can engage in political contestations within the provided mechanisms and processes of democratic participation, is also considered important. Also considered critical is a normative framework which espouses right to the city, pluralism, social justice and poverty reduction. Pieterse (2008) further contends that the normative framework provides the supportive context within which claims for sustainable lives and livelihoods could be made.

It is important to note that some of the ideals identified above have been appropriated by global actors like the United Nations and its agencies (Kuymulu, 2013: 924). Reference to right to the city, social justice, democracy, poverty alleviation are common catchphrases in UN operations and have been cascaded down to member states. In the case of Botswana, social justice, poverty eradication and democracy are presented as national principles on which the country's development trajectory is founded. We interpret this as providing the context and environment within which pressure for just cities, right to the city and sustainable lives and livelihoods could

be exerted through systemic drivers of sustainability. According to Pieterse (2008) systemic drivers of sustainability refer to the underlying structures of the urban system that generate sustainable or unsustainable urban processes. Thus, they are ‘the practical sites of political struggles’ that can be targeted to advance systemic changes amenable to sustainable lives and livelihoods. Through timely intervention, progressives engage the state and corporate interest to ensure the prioritization of lives and livelihoods instead of profit as is the norm in capitalist urbanization. One of the avenues through which such engagements could be effected is through what has been dubbed spaces of participation (Cornwall, 2002; Cornwall and Caello, 2007). As argued by Miraftab (2009) spaces of participation are often created by neoliberal governance as forms of legitimizing their domination but can be innovatively used as sites for mobilisation for social transformation.

A question that needs addressing is who utilizes spaces of participation? The question is important particularly in cases where civil society is viewed as dysfunctional, as in the case of sub-Saharan Africa (Watson, 2002). Spaces of participation are utilized by what Fainstein (2000) calls ‘audience for the good city – just city debate’ made up of what she defines as insurgent groups, officials in progressive cities and ‘guerrillas in the bureaucracy’. Elsewhere in both the global South and global North, it has been shown that increasingly urban social movements are becoming important actors in the search for just cities and as such spaces of participation have become important mobilisation sites for social transformation. The manner in which these diverse groupings operate is discussed by Purcell (2009) who draws on Laclau and Mouffe’s concept of ‘chains of equivalence’. According to Purcell (2008) ‘chains of equivalence’ brings together diverse groupings united by their dislike for existing power relations and can operate at different levels - local, national and global. An important feature of the chain of equivalence is that none of the groups within the grouping seeks to impose its position on others and each group retains its autonomy. Examples cited by Purcell include the anti-globalisation movement which brings together various groups against manifestations of the globalization of neoliberalism.

Apart from political mobilisation of the marginalised through invited spaces for citizenship, promotion of sustainability as sustaining lives and livelihoods can be pursued through the emerging practice of co-production of knowledge. Co-production is at the centre of what has been described as ‘engaged research-practice’ (Perry and Atherton, 2017) which it is suggested:

entails working closely with communities, civil servants, politicians, private firms, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) etc. to address real problems, while using these engagements as material for rethinking urbanism, how and why cities operate and function as they do, and how the processes and effects of urbanization can be influenced and changed (Ernstson *et.al*, 2014).

Perry & Atherton (2017:2) postulate that co-production creates ‘spaces for learning and cross institutional reflection between academia and policy in the spirit of more sustainable urban transformation’.

Several research institutions in sub-Saharan Africa have embraced co-production methodologies in the quest for just human settlements. These include the Centre for Urban Research and Innovation (CURI) at the University of Nairobi, Kenya; the Lagos Urban Research Network (LURNet) at the University of Lagos, Nigeria; and the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town, South Africa (Ernstson *et.al*, 2014). The establishment of the African Urban Research Initiative (AURI), which seeks to ‘gather African

NGOs and academics in the co-production of urban knowledge' is also viewed as significant in the drive towards participatory knowledge production (Ernstson *et.al*, 2014).

The foregoing discussion highlighted the contested nature of sustainable human settlements. The contest, it was argued, emanates from the disputed understanding of sustainable development, the concept from which the term sustainable human settlements stems. A distinction was drawn between 'sustainable development' and 'sustainable lives and livelihoods.' The distinction is advanced mainly by those critical of neoliberalist approaches to urbanization and their preoccupation with profit. Arguing from a radical democratic stance, the critics call for centering sustainability on sustainable lives and livelihoods. An important proposition central to this scholarship is that transformative urban agendas can be pursued within the existing capitalist system. Those concerned with just urban futures are urged to utilize participatory democratic spaces to agitate for systemic 'non-reformist' reforms. Equipped with insights from the above conceptual framework, the next section looks at how the sustainable human settlements debate has unfolded in Botswana.

4 THE QUEST FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN BOTSWANA

The predominant concept of sustainable development in Botswana inclines more towards the techno-ecological intergenerational definition associated with the UN's Agenda 21 where the focus is on reconciling economic development with environmental impacts. The intergenerational interpretation resonates with the country's neoliberal development model. Despite the sustainability rhetoric, human settlements in Botswana continue to display inequalities in terms of access to infrastructural services, access to decision making and opportunities for decent livelihoods.

The search for sustainable development in the country is traceable to the country's formulation of the National Conservation Strategy in 1990 (Keiner *et.al*, 2004). Specific reference to sustainable human settlements in policy documents first appeared in the country's National Report and Plan of Action for Habitat II. The Report was prepared for presentation at the 1996 UN Habitat II meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey (refer to Republic of Botswana [RoB], 1996a). Progress made pursuant of the Action Plan was presented at the UN General Assembly in 2001 (refer to Republic of Botswana, 2001). The National Report and Plan of Action defined sustainable human settlements in line with the Rio Declaration – Agenda 21 as 'sustainable management of and the use of built and natural resources in a manner that ensures that the needs of the present generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

The above definition is commonly found in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the preparation of spatial plans (see for example Republic of Botswana, 2014a: Republic of Botswana, 2015). As defined in the ToR, sustainability is based on three pillars - economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability. Economic sustainability is presented as concerned with accessibility and affordability of development to the intended beneficiaries and service providers such as the local authority. Economic sustainability is also defined in the ToR as requiring the broadening of the economic base through diversification linked to the local resource base. Environmental sustainability revolves around the protection of the natural environment and it is contended that the development process must conserve resources, particularly water, and guard against waste and pollution generation. The social sustainability principle is based on the view that the development process should promote a sense of identity and safety. It is further asserted that development should contribute to physical and

psychological well-being through improved access to opportunities, facilities and services. In its search for sustainable human settlements, the preparation of any spatial plan should be accompanied by the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as per the provisions of the country's Environmental Act, 2011.

Reference to sustainable development is also found in Botswana's national development plans as well as the two national Visions - Vision 2016 formulated in 1996, and Vision 2036 formulated in 2016. For instance, the theme for the country's National Development Plan (NDP) 9 aimed for 'Sustainable and Diversified Development through Competitiveness in Global Markets'. As argued in the NDP 9, 'Botswana's key to sustainable development centres on global competitiveness and economic diversification (RoB, 2003). With regard to Botswana's Visions, Vision 2016 called for sustainable growth and diversification and that the country's economic growth will be sustainable (RoB, 1996). Vision 2036 is more explicit in its sustainable development aspirations and seeks to align Botswana's national development agenda with the global agenda for sustainable development and the principles of the African Agenda 2063 (RoB, 2016). The sustainable development pathway envisioned in Vision 2036 is one that balances social, economic and environmental objectives underpinned by good governance (RoB, 2016). Pillars 1 and 3 of the Vision deal with sustainable economic development and environmental sustainability respectively. Specific reference to sustainable human settlements is mentioned under the Vision's Environmental Sustainability pillar.

Despite embracing the sustainable development narrative, human settlements in Botswana exhibit what Watson (2013) following Yiftachel (2006) dubbed 'stubborn realities' of cities in the global South-East. Watson (2013) argues that these realities are characterised by urban tensions, instability, polarization and contested political control as identity groups seek to protect their distinctive group characteristics. It is these stubborn realities that both frustrate and provide opportunities for sustainable lives and livelihoods. The 'stubborn realities' revolve around three overlapping features of Botswana's neoliberal approach to human settlement development. These are firstly, the profit driven and elitist nature of the human settlement planning, secondly, the country's centralised policy processes, and thirdly, the state's tendency to co-opt rather than domesticate the UN's Habitat Agenda. These are discussed in turn below.

4.1 Profit-driven and elitist settlement planning

The dominance of the intergenerational definition of sustainable development in Botswana should be understood within the context of the market economic model followed by the country's developmentalist state. Since independence in 1966 Botswana has operated a system of development planning characterized by regular preparation of national development plans (NDPs). NDPs contain the national development strategy which all development efforts in the country should pursue. Botswana is generally portrayed as having one of the best-performing economies in Africa (Capital Resources, 2013). Furthermore, the country has been described as operating one of the most open economies in the world (Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI) 2014). The rapid economic growth has seen the country transforming from one of the poorest at independence in 1966 to the current middle income status conferred on it by the World Bank.

Botswana operates a market-based economy with its attendant constant neoliberalist references to the private sector as the engine of economic growth. For its part, the government has been urged to adopt an enabling role in the development process. Global competitiveness and economic diversification are considered critical in the country's pursuit for sustainable

development (RoB, 2003:27). The manner in which the diversification drive in Botswana is interpreted also demonstrates the country's commitment to privatisation.

Diversification is understood in a broad sense to include diversification of economic activities as well as ownership, management and decision making...privatization of state enterprises where feasible and appropriate...hiving off certain government activities (Mogae, 1996:4).

The market-driven advocacy advanced above has led to a sequence of privatisation of state owned enterprises and efforts at the privatisation of the country's airline - Air Botswana are at an advanced stage. In all these moves, the rationale is that the entities being privatised have become too costly for the government to run. The disposal of state enterprises and assets through privatisation has met with dissention particularly from the media where it has been construed as looting of national assets by a corrupt elite (Mogapi, 2017).

The neoliberalisation of Botswana's economy is also evident in the development of the country's human settlements. Reference to attempts at making the cities more competitive and attractive to transnational capital are commonplace. The emergence of privately developed industrial (Commerce Park), Shopping malls (Game City, Airport Junction and RiverWalk), residential townships (Phakalane, Gaborone North, Mokolodi) and office parks (Fair Ground) are clear indications of the increasing role of the private sector in the development of urban areas in Botswana. Neoliberalist growth ambitions are also portrayed in the development visions for the country's major settlements. In the case of Gaborone, the city's vision aspires towards 'a vibrant, prosperous, sustainable and globally competitive city as well as model city of choice' (RoB, 2008:21). The envisioned Gaborone is one with,

Functional, livable, safe and good connectivities with efficient transportation system; that portrays a good image and character befitting of a capital city in a globalising world, with diversified economic base, with adequate employment creation, opportunities, that supports and grows Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs), that supports and drives citizen economic empowerment, that attracts Foreign Direct Investment and competes favourably in the world economy' (RoB, 2008:21).

In 2013, the country's second city, Francistown came up with its Vision 2022. The Vision had five pillars - namely to be effective and efficient in networking; an economically vibrant city; safe and secure city; united and proud city and, an educated, innovative and productive city. Through the Vision, the city aims to be an investor destination of choice by 2022 (Botswana Daily News, 2013). Both the Gaborone and Francistown visions cited above have the hallmarks of elitist urban development that privileges economic growth at the exclusion of other urban concerns. The pursuit of competitiveness and world class status often leads to urban development models that marginalise the majority of the urban citizens. This is evident in a wave of boosterism projects currently undertaken in urban areas, notably Gaborone, Francistown and Lobatse.

The projects include the new Central Business District in Gaborone which is targeted for the high-end market. According to Mosinyi and Sejakgomo (2009) a plot measuring 8000 square metres can cost up to P4 million. The need to improve connectivity between Gaborone and Phakalane, a low density up-market suburban residential area led to the construction of a 5.9 km road at the cost of P59 million (Pitse, 2017). In the case of Francistown, the construction

of an intersection and a 30km dual carriage way is estimated to have cost P1billion. Launching the project in 2009, the responsible minister emphasised the link between transportation and economic development. It was hoped that the intersection will ease traffic flows and indirectly act as an attraction for potential investors who want to set businesses in Botswana. In addition, it was envisaged that such infrastructure will be aesthetically appealing and will give a facelift to Francistown (Maikano and Kologwe, 2015).

In 2015 tenders for the rejuvenation of the towns of Lobatse and Francistown were floated in the Botswana Government Gazette. A reading of these tenders shows a protracted search for ways of bringing profit-driven business into the two towns. In the case of Lobatse, the revitalisation plan was required to adhere to the following principles – (i) rationalising land uses for optimum performance to be realised through concentrating retail activity, introducing mixed use activity, embracing spaces for business in appropriate locations; (ii) compacting and containing town growth, and enhancing linkages within the town; (iii) enhancing the aesthetics character of the town; (iv) creation of a vibrant activity node; (v) creation of a vibrant public environment; (vi) branding of the town to create a distinct physical identity; (vii) enhance areas of civic significance (RoB, 2015:28). Of interest is that the tender in question does not make any reference to the promotion of sustainable lives and livelihoods as one of the principles that the plan should adhere to. Under these projects, the thinking is usually that the physical restructuring of a settlement will attract business. Apart from its environmental deterministic nature, the narrative defies global capitalist logic in believing that construction of road intersections in Francistown, erection of skyscrapers in the new CBD in Gaborone, and enhancing the aesthetics character of towns as in the case of Lobatse can attract foreign investment.

4.2 Centralised Policy processes

Botswana's development planning system is highly centralised – a feature that has greatly influenced the manner in which the country's sustainable development agenda has been crafted. Sustainability as sustainable lives and livelihoods is premised on participatory democratic practice whereby there is flexibility in the manner in which sustainability issues are identified, measured and corrective measures identified. Local knowledge is considered vital in addressing and defining the sustainability agenda. From the preceding discussion, it is apparent that in following the intergenerational concept of sustainable development, like the rest of the policy processes in Botswana, the sustainability agenda remains largely top-down.

The centralised nature of the sustainable development agenda in Botswana is evident in the representation and operations of structures charged with formulating the country's sustainability agenda. The above was the case with the National Committees set up for the preparation of the National Plan of Action for Habitat II and Habitat III. These committees are dominated by civil servants from different central government ministries. In the case of the National Committee for Habitat II, it was contended that membership was going to be drawn from all sectors that have a significant influence in human settlements and shelter. Out of 16 members that constituted the committee, five were drawn from the Ministry of Local Government, Land and Housing; six from District and Urban Councils; and one member from each of the following - Botswana Building Society (Bank), Botswana Telecommunication Corporation, Botswana Housing Corporation (parastatals) and Habitat for Humanity (an NGO). The composition was still public-sector dominated in the case of the Habitat III National Committee, except that this time there was representation from the Trust for Community

Initiatives and Botswana Homeless and Poor People's Federation, an emerging NGO based in the City of Francistown.

Public sector domination of the National Committees implies limited levels of discussion as the government position on controversial issues is often taken as given. During the preparation of the Botswana Country Report for Habitat III, questions relating to slums and homelessness in Botswana were debated at the instigation of University of Botswana participants. While public sector officers disputed the existence of slums and homelessness in Botswana, University of Botswana participants insisted that slums and homelessness existed in Botswana. After a lengthy discussion, a compromise was reached to the effect that 'the country's cities and towns are devoid of widespread spontaneous settlements, slums and homelessness' (RoB, 2014b: 60). Until those excluded by profit driven urbanisation can directly participate in such forums, the Slum Dweller International clarion call 'not about us without us' will remain a myth for the marginalised in Botswana.

4.3 Co-optation or domestication of the UN Habitat Agenda?

The preparation of Habitat reports usually follows guidelines on the programme areas which member states are required to report on. In the case of Habitat II for example, member states were to report progress on the following: providing shelter for all, improving human settlement management, promoting sustainable land use planning and management, providing integrated provision of environmental infrastructure (water, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management), promoting sustainable energy and transport systems in human settlements, promoting human settlement planning in disaster prone areas, promoting human resource development and , capacity building for human settlement development (RoB, 1996b).

In crafting its sustainable development agenda, Botswana chooses to co-opt instead of domesticating the UN Habitat drawn agenda. Co-optation portrays the country's existing policies as already addressing the sustainability agenda. Contrary to the above, domestication would imply adjusting existing policies such that they are in line with the sustainability agenda as put forward by the UN and its various agencies. Botswana's Reports to Habitat II and Habitat III clearly demonstrates preference for co-optation over domestication of the UN Habitat Agenda. While preparing the Habitat II Plan of Action, the National Planning committee declared;

Botswana being part of a globalising and urbanising world intends to cooperate with the international community in seeking appropriate and innovative solutions to shelter and settlement problems. In fulfilling the commitment, goals and objectives of the international community, Botswana believes that all action towards shelter and sustainable settlements development should take into account national development priorities, capacities and circumstances. This means that the needs of the international community must not override the national commitments (RoB, 1996b: 2).

Following the above declaration, the National Committee went on to list and show how the country's existing National Housing Policy and various settlement development strategies were within the UN Habitat Agenda. The problem with co-optation is that the thinking that informs the Habitat Agenda, and the philosophy within which existing settlement and housing policies in Botswana were founded, are very different. Agenda 21 and the resultant conventions are products of incessant pressure from actors outside the public sector - mainly non-governmental organizations and other pressure groups. Thus the UN Habitat Agenda is a product of protracted

debates between varied actors like the Slum Dweller International, World Bank, Governments, and Development Partners etc. Within such a set-up, the public sector or government remains an important actor - and does not necessarily dominate decision-making on policy direction. In the case of Botswana, extant policies and programmes viewed by the state as in harmony with Habitat Agenda are anchored in the state-led developmentalist school whereby, as argued earlier, the public sector assumes a dominant role.

Domestication of the Agenda would require that the Habitat Agenda is unpacked and adapted to the situation in Botswana. In the spirit of radical democratic practice, domestication of the UN Habitat Agenda would require involvement of different interest groups. Domestication of the Agenda as opposed to co-optation, has the potential to embrace the NSFWS call for ‘empowerment for local problem solving based on diverse knowledges, the need to view local knowledge and practices as vital in the quest for sustainability and also, willingness to learn from alternative ways of addressing sustainability in different contexts’ (NSFWUS, 2000:8).

The foregoing discussion highlighted the main challenges to the realisation of sustainable lives and livelihoods in Botswana. It was argued that the intergenerational concept of sustainable development dominates the country’s sustainability agenda. The above is viewed as in consonance with the country’s neoliberal approach to development. The next section discusses how working within the neoliberalist context in Botswana, the sustainability agenda could be tilted towards sustaining lives and livelihoods.

5 TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

A central tenet in the radical democratic critique of neoliberal approaches to urbanization is the possibility of urban transformation or alternative urban futures within the existing capitalist system. As argued earlier, the thinking envisages ‘non-reformist reforms which aim to transform cities from within existing frameworks’. This section explores opportunities that exists within the country’s planning environment that could be capitalized on as entry points for bringing about radical incremental changes that could ultimately pave way for sustainable lives and livelihoods. Drawing from the conceptual framework discussed earlier, we argue that normative principles on which to anchor calls for sustainable lives and livelihoods do exist within the policy landscape in Botswana. We also argue that the liberal democratic dispensation existing in Botswana avails participatory mechanisms and processes that progressive groups and those agitating for sustainable urban lives and livelihoods could engage the state and corporate capital.

5.1 Normative Principles: social justice, decentralisation and human rights

Pronouncements on social justice, democracy and poverty eradication are common catchwords in Botswana’s development narrative. Right from independence in 1966 Botswana adopted democracy, development, self-reliance and unity as the four principles on which the country’s development trajectory will be based. The country’s Vision 2016 introduced what became the fifth principle - *Botho*. Apart from being associated with ‘being well mannered, courteous, and highly disciplined, *Botho* is also viewed as promoting social justice (RoB, 1996a:5). The five principles are regarded as setting the ‘stage for the planning objectives of sustained development, rapid economic growth, economic independence and social justice’ (RoB, 1996a). Aspirations towards a just society are expressed in the country’s Vision 2036 adopted in 2016. Pillar 4 of the Vision maintains that: ‘the constitution and human rights framework of Botswana will ensure human equality, uphold the rule of law, guarantee the inalienable birth

right of citizenship while offering individual liberties in which all residents are allowed and encouraged to contribute positively to society' (RoB, 2016: 25) Moreover, Vision 2036 pledges participatory development through decentralisation. Local level institutions are regarded as important vehicles in what is viewed as a bottom up development planning and community development. The Vision calls for 'decentralisation of power, decision making, resource mobilisation and service delivery as well as the promotion of active participation of local authorities in driving development in their respective localities'(RoB, 2016: 27). The conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion above is that in terms of the normative framework, there exist pronouncements on which the quest for sustainable lives and livelihoods could be anchored. The question is; who is going to utilise the above entry points to catalyse just human settlement transformations in Botswana? We argue below that two pathways are possible; political pressure at local level, and secondly, the use of co-production of knowledge to aid the search for just human settlements.

5.2 Participatory processes and mechanisms

Since attaining independence in 1966, Botswana has operated a multiparty liberal democratic political system. The extent to which the development planning system is participatory, is highly contested. While state publications and documents project it as inclusive and participatory, alternative interpretations view the country's model of participation as limited in its transformative possibilities (Molebatsi, 2013). Arguments that view the system as participatory cite local government structures which they argue, are "designed to facilitate people's participation in development", which it is further contended, "reflects the long tradition of democratic consultation and devolved decision-making" (RoB, 1989:445). Contrary to the above perceptions, critics of development planning process in Botswana contend that the planning system remains centralized and non-participatory. Policy formulation and implementation in Botswana has been described as technocratic and allowing little participation by ordinary citizens (Tsie, 1998: 9).

Drawing on Gaventa's concept of spaces for participation, a study conducted by Molebatsi (2013) reported that the existing 'invited spaces for participation' within Botswana's policy landscape have been used effectively by advocacy groups to mobilise communities against unpopular policy decisions. In the case cited by Molebatsi, the invited space for participation used was the traditional consultative institution of the *Kgotla*. *Kgotla* meetings are widely used in the planning process for solicitation of community views as well as information dissemination. During plan making processes, planners usually arrange with the traditional leadership to convene a series of *kgotla* meetings. The practice is widespread even in the country's urban areas where they have become a formal way through which public policy debates are conducted. Politicians, in the form of parliamentarians, government ministers and councillors use *kgotla* meetings for solicitation of developmental ideas and proposals from local communities to be tabled at council or parliamentary sittings.

It is during *kgotla* meetings that political pressure has been exerted on politicians by the electorates to leverage recognition of informal sector activities previously prohibited in urban spaces. In the case of Gaborone, concerns over widespread unemployment – particularly among the youth, pressured the City council into allowing youths to set up businesses such as car washing bays in the city's open spaces (Personal communication with Gaborone City Council Chief Physical Planner, 2017). Road reserves along major roads in the City of Gaborone have become hives of activities such as carpentry, welding, cutting and spray painting. Food vending is also a booming industry in the City of Gaborone (Molefe, 2003).

According to Molebatsi and Kalabamu (2016) a Cabinet Directive issued in 2016 allows informal sector traders to operate with minimal disturbance by City officials and other government operatives. The examples cited above suggests that participatory mechanisms and practices provided through spaces for participation, such as public meetings have been used in pursuit of urban visions more akin to sustainable lives and livelihoods.

5.3 Co-production of knowledge on alternative human settlement futures

The conceptual framework highlighted the importance of co-production of knowledge in the realisation of just human settlements. It was also argued that where civil society was weak or communities were not mobilised, it was the duty of those in search of progressive human settlement alternatives to embark on advocacy, mobilisation and even militant direct action (Pieterse, 2008: 95). Civil society in Botswana is generally considered weak and local communities seem to be less involved in policy making processes (Kenneth and Taylor, 2008).

In the case of physical planning, for example, communities have often claimed little awareness of existing planning measures (Molebatsi and Kalabamu, 2016). Advocacy and mobilisation could become part of co-production of knowledge in the quest for transformative human settlement agendas initiated by progressives and other change agents. For Botswana, such a move calls for a shift in human settlements research which hitherto remains locked in the conventional expert-driven epistemologies. It is submitted that co-production of human settlement knowledge in Botswana is critical in the search for sustainable lives and livelihoods. The University of Botswana's 'university-community engagement' programme could form the basis for such a move. As articulated in the University's Strategic Plan, university-community engagement entails:

Establishment of local community learning hubs using technology to link local communities and the university and providing learning opportunities covering different areas of interest for various interest groups and to function as community resource for innovative ideas (University of Botswana, 2004: 5).

Currently the Department of Architecture and Planning, at the University of Botswana, offers case study based courses that could form the basis for innovative planning practices that bring together academics, local authorities, central government officials and actors from the informal sectors to deliberate on sustainable lives and livelihood agenda (Molebatsi, 2012: 6). Yet another opportunity for co-production of knowledge lies in the research directions adopted by the Department of Architecture and Planning's Southern Urbanisms Research Group (SURG). The group regards co-production as critical in envisioning and crafting pathways towards more inclusive and sustainable human settlement futures for Botswana (Department of Architecture and Planning, 2017).

6 CONCLUSION

Like all other member states of the United Nations, Botswana has embraced the sustainable development advocacy and the quest for sustainable human settlements is at the centre of the country's development efforts. Despite widespread adoption, it has been shown in this paper that sustainable development is highly contested. At the centre of the contestations are enduring disagreements between adherents of neoliberal globalization and their avowed critics. Enthusiasts of neoliberal globalization view the market and profits as the answer to economic progress. Anti-neoliberalists view neoliberalism as promoting inequalities which in human

settlements often results in what has been termed stubborn urban realities - marginalization, exclusion and unsustainable urban futures.

Within the contested terrain, it has been argued that the dominant narrative of sustainable development in Botswana is the intergenerational interpretation which resonates with the country's neoliberal development path. The intergenerational definition depoliticizes sustainable development and instead projects it as a technical problem that can be addressed through uniform and universal prescription such as those contained in the eco-city models. Arguing from a radical democratic stance, alongside critics of neoliberal approaches to urbanization we call for the re-politicization of sustainability and the centering of sustainable lives and livelihoods in the country's sustainability agenda. As such we embrace the anti-neoliberal clarion call 'cities for people and not profit'.

One of the central tenets of the radical democratic scholarship from which those who seek to counter neoliberal globalization operate, is the proposal that transformative urban agendas for more just cities can be pursued within the existing capitalist system. Working from this assumption, it has been argued that the normative planning principles in Botswana and the invited spaces of participation can be used by progressive groups to agitate for systemic 'non-reformist' reforms that promote sustainable lives and livelihood in the planning of Botswana's human settlements. Finally the paper calls for a shift in knowledge production from expert-driven to co-production of knowledge as one way of promoting sensibilities of human settlements that privilege sustainable lives and livelihoods.

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