As part of Botswana’s 50th Independence celebrations the PULA Institute of Town Planners (PITP) in collaboration with the Department of Town and Country Planning (Ministry of Land Management, Water and Sanitation Services) and the Department of Architecture and Planning (University of Botswana) organized a two (2) days Planning Botswana Conference (22nd to 23rd August 2016) to reflect on the country’s efforts towards the creation of sustainable human settlements.

An appraisal of settlements in Botswana reveals laudable progress in the area of spatial planning given that Botswana has not witnessed massive proliferation of informal settlements and slums. However, there is continued public debate on issues pertaining to housing provision and access to land. There is also criticism of urban planning from actors in the business community and informal sector, while planning intervention in ‘urban villages’ poses yet another contested area in Botswana’s evolving urban planning. These contests have resulted in persistent dissonance between planning objectives contained in development plans and what obtains on the ground.

Through paper presentations, panel discussions and case studies, it was hoped that the Planning Botswana Conference will come up with innovative ideas to guide the planning of human settlements.

This special issue of the Botswana Journal of Technology has six (6) peer-reviewed articles drawn from the papers presented at the Conference. The first article explores the contested nature of sustainable human settlements in Botswana. It argues for directing our efforts on sustaining lives and livelihoods and the utilization of sanctioned spaces of participation within the development framework of Botswana. The second article analyses the widespread view amongst stakeholders that the planning system is far less efficient, with the consequent delays and uncertainities seen as disincentives to investors and developers. It extends the debate on the planning system ability to deliver economic growth. In the third article the issue of culture and physical planning nexus is discussed. The article argues that current planning and space organization models in Botswana fail to adequately embrace the country’s cultural identity.

The fourth article sets out to investigate community awareness in Botswana on the link between climate change, community vulnerability and its resilience capacity to flood disasters and how that could affect the sustainable human settlements drive. The fifth article deals with the perceived barriers to rainwater harvesting as a source of water supply in Botswana, by assessing the levels of rainwater harvesting uptake in Gaborone City, and explores the constraints and opportunities of rainwater harvesting as a source of water supply. The last article explores the spatial and physical factors that increase communities’ vulnerability to flood disasters in Botswana.