

The Advent of Upgrading Schemes in Urbanizing Traditional Settlements of Botswana: Case of Kanye Village

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Abstract

Botswana is a country with one of the fastest urbanizing population in sub-Saharan Africa with over 60% of its population living in cities, towns and urban villages. Botswana consists of several urbanizing traditional settlements within its settlement system, which have over the years transformed in terms of size, morphology and economic structures. The policy intervention processes and the resultant physical configuration within these urbanizing traditional settlements is testimony to the political economy of Botswana's history. Contemporary planning as a key policy intervention process, in these urbanizing traditional settlements, however, provides the space for contest between formal planning based on 'northern-derived theory' and indigenous planning practices. Thus, the advent of Upgrading Schemes, as part of this contemporary planning, brings to the fore this contestation. This paper traces the case of an Upgrading Scheme for Kanye village, articulating its relevance, shortcomings and limitations to effect change, and so proposes a policy framework within which the upgrading schemes could be formulated and undertaken in Botswana.

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Keywords

Indigenous planning practices; Kanye village; Upgrading schemes; Urbanizing traditional settlements; Botswana

1. Introduction

1.1. Background Context

With an estimated urban population of 70%, Botswana is one of the most urbanised countries in Southern Africa (Statistics Botswana, 2022). Apart from rural-to-urban migration, the increase in urban population is accounted for by in-situ urbanisation of rural settlements (Molebatsi, 2013). Besides conventional urbanisation in the form of increasing urban populations due to rural-urban migration and establishment of new townships (e.g., Selibe-Phikwe, Jwaneng, Orapa and Sowa), numerous rural settlements appear to have acquired 'urban' traits. Included under urban centres in Botswana are urbanised rural settlements, most of which date back to the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

Many of the traditional villages in Botswana (e.g., Tlokweng, Ramotswa, Kanye, Maun and Serowe) and peri-urban settlements (e.g., Mogoditshane and Mmopane) are currently dominated by urban characteristics such as rapid population growth, dependence on non-agricultural employment, widespread rental accommodation, high building densities and 'modern' housing. Although the transformation offers opportunities for socio-economic development, it also appears to have caused cultural challenges and unprecedented problems including inadequate infrastructure services (sanitation, water and electricity), unemployment and high levels of crime (Kalabamu, 2013).

1.2. Spatial Planning Practice in Botswana

As noted by Acioly Jr. (2010) many countries have an intricate institutional framework regulating land use at the local level that involves locally based town and country planning and land administration units operating alongside a variety of central government agencies, including a ministry of lands and national land administration systems. Local governments are often subordinate to a ministry of local government, which limits municipal autonomy and adversely affects local capacity responses to tackle urbanization challenges.

Spatial planning in Botswana has experienced major shifts in terms of models that govern and guide space organisation. The changes revolve around two contending space organisation models, namely the indigenous model and modernist model. Indigenous models are found in the country's urban villages where they are more pronounced in the oldest and usually central parts of these settlements. For their part, modernist models are found normally on the urban village peripheries and are the most prominently used in the expansion areas of these villages.

Modernist planning principles were first introduced in the towns of Botswana. Despite the fact that these were in line with the values of the predominantly European inhabitants, these planning principles were presented by both the colonial government and the post-independence government as universal planning principles to be emulated in endogenous settlements. The design principles and resultant morphological structure of the towns differed from those that shaped endogenous settlements. Whereas endogenous designs were founded on the communal, the towns were products of modernist planning founded on private ownership of property, individualism and motorised circulation systems. More importantly, as products of the developmentalist narrative, the design concepts of these towns were to be extended to the traditional settlements.

The emergence of the towns and the continued existence of endogenous urban centres meant that the colonial urban system in Bechuanaland comprised of two morphologically distinct settlements. This resulted in a morphological duality that continues to cause planning challenges in the urban villages. Contrary to the collective design and management practices on which endogenous settlements were founded, modernist planning was a vocation for professionals formally schooled in the subject. In addition, modernist design principles practiced separate land-use zoning and segregated residential areas.

Once imported to the global South, urban planning became a vehicle for modernisation and more specifically, a westernization project. Local and indigenous planning knowledge, standards and building materials were replaced by western planning standards founded, allegedly, on scientific rationality (Njoh, 2009). Concepts of space organisation informed by the values and cultural traditions of resident communities in urban villages and the remaining non-urban settlements are not adequately catered for in extant planning legislation (Molebatsi and Kalabamu, 2016). This is the argument advanced in this paper that current spatial planning and space organisation models in Botswana do not adequately embrace the country's rich cultural identity.

1.3. Urbanizing Traditional Settlements in Botswana

A historicized account of the traditional settlements is central to an understanding and appreciation of space organisation of these settlements. The country's urban areas comprise diverse settlements that include urbanised endogenous settlements. In Botswana's urban parlance, the oxymoron 'urban villages' is used in reference to endogenous settlements that have urbanised *in situ*. Urban villages reflect the settlements' foundation on the communal as a political and social organising ideology. The physical layout of Tswana settlements was to a large extent a reflection of the socio – political structures that characterised Tswana societies.

A distinctive feature of urban villages is the existence of the *bogosi* and *kgotla* as governance structures alongside modernist structures charged with administrative and physical planning responsibilities (Molebatsi, 2011). *Bogosi* and the *kgotla* greatly influenced the general morphology of endogenous Tswana settlements. In their original form Tswana settlements were compact and nucleated – a feature which Graeme Hardie (1980) says distinguished the Tswana from other peoples of southern Africa. Hardie contends that Tswana settlements were ‘not organized geometrically according to physical elements such as roads, central square etc., but rather its form was generated from the conceptual model of the society following traditional rules and precedence’ (1980, 31). Residential plots within each ward were arranged around the plot of the ward head resulting in a horseshoe formation.

Central to the layout of a Tswana settlement was the ward – the basic political and administrative unit in a Tswana society. Wards were made up of relatives who communally owned the land and, as such, individual members could not dispose of their land through sale. As shown later in this article, modernist planning in the colonial and post-independence periods has successfully eroded these attributes of endogenous Tswana settlements, resulting in extra-legal land transactions that have made access to land a challenge in Botswana.

2. Understanding Upgrading Schemes in the Botswana Context

There is now a realization amongst planners worldwide that, for settlements to perform well, it is necessary to pay attention to the quality of “place”, particularly the physical image and identity which a settlement presents to the outside world. There is also realization that for settlements to perform economically, what counts is not just a good economic policy, sound infrastructure, or an efficient transport system (although these are important in their own right), but it is the way in which these various aspects of the settlement work together to create a particular social and economic milieu that makes it attractive to investors. What both investors and residents of a settlement seek is a meshing of the various functional aspects of a settlement to create particular place qualities which make both good living environments and a good place to do business. This requires co-ordination around the kind of place which the public authorities are helping to shape.

Senior Project Manager at AMC International in 2014 at a Critical Infrastructure Development & Renewal Summit held in Gaborone, which looked at the key challenges and solutions in the upgrade and construction of critical infrastructure including pipelines, roads, electricity generation and transmission infrastructure and more pointed out that fast-tracking urban renewal for sustainable economic development in emerging economies is necessary. He pointed out that expanding and diversifying Botswana’s economy has led to an increase in investment for infrastructure development from government who has in the past decade initiated various projects in the aim to improve the level of service and the competitiveness of Botswana’s economy. The construction and renewal of transport systems, boosted by the growing coal industry, has been plagued with many challenges most of which stem from poor planning and inefficient use of financial resources.

Upgrading emerged as a concept applied to sanitize declined areas, improve the quality of life and to create/enhance economic vitality. Upgrading leads to the resolution of built environment problems and seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area that has been subject to change. Upgrading goes well beyond efforts to put vacant land and buildings to use, but rather that it is more about implementing policies in existing areas with the aim of building upon sustainability objectives, with commitment to economic, social and environmental problems. Over time upgrading has been led by several key foci: Retail, Transport, Culture; Heritage, Housing; Tourism; Public Spaces; and Public Art as anchor activities (drivers). There are instances where the upgrading focus covers one or more drivers. Participatory approach is now considered more beneficial compared to authoritative decisions in upgrading schemes. The upgrading process that is based on dwellers choices and participation will obviously work better as this will enhance their motivation (Roy and Abdullah, 2005).

It is worth distinguishing between upgrading driven by households or community-neighbourhood investment and by external programmes, which may or may not support household and community investment (Satterthwaite, 2010). As noted by Satterthwaite (2010) in many instances, households improve the quality and size of their housing. But upgrading driven by household investment does not address the need for settlement-wide infrastructure – water pipes, sewers and drains, paved roads and paths, electricity, educational and healthcare facilities and public space. On the other hand, external programmes focus on providing roads, paths, water, drainage and sanitation and designed by professionals with little involvement by local residents (ibid).

3. Theoretical Framework

As argued by Molebatsi and Morobolo (2021) in its homogenising element, modernist planning advocates universal standards in terms of design, building codes, development control and governance structures. These homogenising and universal planning instruments sit uncomfortably with the evidently diverse conditions at local levels. The principle of universalism resulted in the claims that standards were the same everywhere (Natrasony & Alexander, 2005), and that some standards and values represented civilisation and any departure from this reflected backwardness and barbarism. One of the enduring critique of universalism and the civilisation claims of the colonial project is the subject of what has been dubbed Southern Theories (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Connell, 2013). Because of the significance of Southern Theories in proposals given in this paper, it is important to briefly look at the theory.

It is argued that Southern Theory perspective provides a framework within which planning models that are more culturally sensitive can be developed. The contention is that ‘southern theory’ offers an opportunity to understand different settlement genres in Botswana and the corresponding, indigenous planning methods rooted in local realities. Southern theory is an emerging theory that challenges the universalism claims in dominant urban thought. At the core of the southern urbanism thought is the view that, instead of universalistic claims, the dominant theories were in actual fact founded on intellectual traditions that developed in the lived experiences of people in the global North. These were now used to understand and even guide policy interventions in populations located in the global South. This universalism has been viewed as inappropriate, inadequate and in most cases denigrating when applied to other cities. Adherents of southern theory draw attention to the fact that Western intellectual traditions and practices had subalternised non-western ways of thinking and forms of knowledge (Molebatsi, 2014). Consequently, there has been a search for theories or perspectives that could provide a wider spectrum on urban theory. “In order to challenge and contest the global pattern of universality there must be an assertion of alternative knowledge systems” (Connell, 2013).

The essential argument to note is that “Southern theory is not a fixed set of propositions but a challenge to develop new knowledge projects and new ways of learning with globally expanded resources” (Connell, 2013). These methods of theory production and assertion of multiple and conflicting rationalities is further elaborated by Ananya Roy in arguing for what she called “new geographies of theory” through a discussion of the different geographical areas and various empirical and theoretical structures that underpin how each of these different cities are viewed and conceptualized by authors from those regions. Southern theory is essential for a refocus and critique of dominant models in planning and cautions against the blind and unquestioned acceptance and utilization of western planning models by planners in the south (Watson, 2009).

4. The Case Study

4.1 Morphology of Kanye

Kanye built up area covers a total of 8 617.8 hectares. The existing land use within the built-up area is comprised of residential, commercial, industrial, civic and community, general agricultural, recreational/open space and roads. The built form of Kanye within these residential clusters is based on the traditional settlement pattern, and is characterized by irregular sized and shaped residential plots, with winding roads and footpaths often without a defined hierarchy. The built-up area has the physical form of a traditional rural village, with foot paths linking various land use activities. The residential clusters display a horse shoe formation around open spaces.

Kanye has developed in two predominate forms. The first is the traditional and organic pattern, while the second is the conventional layout pattern. Kanye is also characterised by residential developments in newly developed areas based on conventional layout plans in the periphery of the settlement. Thus, residential developments within Kanye are concentrated in the old traditional part of the settlement. The plots within this part are arranged in a horse shoe pattern with a common space known as “patlelo” at the centre. The road hierarchy within the traditional part is not well defined. The traditional or horseshoe style consists of plots with common boundaries, or plots with and without well-defined boundaries, or free-standing plots around a ‘patlelo.’ The patlelo is an open space used for meetings by ward residents, and usually has a kraal attached to it, for small stock keeping.

These spaces play a vital role in community relationships. However, some of the spaces are not well kept and there is need to develop them into well kept open spaces. Some of these open spaces are used as waste dump sites while others are used informally for car washes and driving school businesses. The older part of the built-up area is dominated by the traditional “horse shoe” pattern, which is characterised by irregular sized and shaped residential plots around a patlelo (small open space). This traditional spatial structure with winding roads and footpaths is perceived to be uneconomic utilization of land resulting in high costs in the provision of infrastructure services. However, this “horse shoe” pattern has cultural and social significance. The patlelo is normally used for social gatherings.

Land in Kanye is predominantly under tribal or customary land tenure. This land is under the jurisdiction of Ngwaketse Land Board (NLB) and Kanye Subordinate Land Board (KSLB). Usage rights for this land tenure are granted either communally, or to individuals. Given that this is customary land, land is not supposed to be sold and thus there is no de jure land market as such in Kanye, only the sale of properties (i.e. improvements to the land). Customary land tenure allocations are to citizens only for residential purposes, ploughing purposes and/or borehole purposes. These types of allocation may only be transferred to non-citizens after conversion to a common law land holding. Common law land tenure allocations are to either citizens or non-citizens, for residential and commercial uses. Common law land is leased from the Land Board, only the improvements on the land are owned by the plot holder. In its land allocations, the Land Board has traditionally been allocating residential plots in the range of 1600m². The residents have always preferred larger residential plots in order to accommodate such activities as gardening and chicken runs. The drawback of large plots sizes and irregular shape is that infrastructure provision becomes costly and a smaller number of plots is delivered. In the existing built-up area, land allocations were not based on detailed layout plans but were made largely on the choices of the applicants. This has resulted in haphazard developments and sprawl within the village.

4.2 The Upgrading Scheme

The Kanye Development Plan recommended an upgrading scheme for the Kanye Planning Area. The upgrading scheme or master plan built on the policies and objectives set out in the Revised Kanye Development Plan of 2017. The intention was to formulate an urban design framework for upgrading of central Kanye. The Kanye Upgrading Scheme, however, focused on transport (circulation and road network), retail (economic nodes and zones) and culture/heritage led regeneration.

The Upgrading Scheme identified two alternative conceptual plans, viz:

1. Linear Development
2. Nodal Development

Nodal concept was adopted as the most practical option given the development level of Kanye, and the plan period (remaining 18 years). The Scheme identified 6 precincts along the activity spine. The current Central Business District and the Gaborone-Jwaneng Junction serve as the 2 main nodes while the other 4 areas serve as the sub-nodes. The approach moves towards a philosophy based on urban restructuring principles that seek to integrate people, space, activity and movement. To achieve this the Scheme proposed the enhancement of urban generator nodes through appropriate land use development and controls, which required creative spatial restructuring of the current fragmented landscape and creation of an integrated environment. The development of each node will leverage on the existing developments, building on the existing infrastructure and built environment and restructuring the land acquired from residential establishments to establish a strong & cohesive urban pattern.

The key structuring elements of the scheme included:

1. Establishment of nodes and sub-nodes with residential inliers connecting the nodes.
2. Creative development of mixed-use developments exhibiting a strong urban form and quality.
3. Facilitation and improvement of access and efficient movement for non-motorized movement and public transport users, addressed through universal access design.
4. Creation of safe zones and secure environments, whilst providing viable public spaces that encourage social and economic interaction.
5. Creation of a clear and legible hierarchy of land uses & movement framework.
6. Development of short-term investment opportunities to ensure long-term socio-economic growth.

The scheme proposed an urban structure focusing on the pattern/arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings, open space and landscape which make up urban areas. It was envisaged that the interrelationship between all these elements, rather than their particular characteristics will bond together to turn the area into a successful place. The envisaged urban structure would apply equally to the nodes and sub-nodes, and eventually influence developments in between, and immediately outside the plan area boundary. The proposed urban structure would provide the foundations for detailed design of the constituent elements. It was proposed to create a coherent framework, which will form the basis of the design of individual developments

Furthermore heritage/cultural activities formed another driving force for upgrading and regeneration of Kanye. Cultural activities represent a powerful engine to drive residents forward and help communities meet the challenges of economic decline, as they represent an important step towards knowledge-based economy as important knowledge activities in their own right, and by establishing a climate of creativity that will generate innovation in other economic sectors. Heritage can play a key role in upgrading and regeneration of an area, and can bring new life to run down areas. Heritage conservation is a 'growth industry' and heritage assets can play a central role in achieving successful upgrading because they represent an opportunity rather than a constraint. There is a strong economic case for regenerating historic buildings. The benefits relate not only to the individual building, but also to the wider area and community. The inclusion of heritage assets in regeneration schemes provides a focus and catalyst for sustainable change. Even when vacant and in poor condition, listed buildings, and all other forms of built heritage, remain 'assets'

with the ability to truly enrich one's experience of the environment through their physical qualities and/or their historic or community associations.

In the case of Kanye, the heritage conservation strategy was to create a Heritage Route linking the Kanye Central Business District as the focal point and interchange with the identified cultural heritage sites and natural heritage sites. The importance of this heritage conservation would:

- help the young generation to know their own cultural identity.
- bridge the gap between people of different ages (generation gap)
- re-define the cultural significance and integrity of the heritage sites
- create some work opportunities for those who will be responsible for the heritage sites

The Heritage Route consisted of heritage sites gazetted by the Department of National Museum and Monuments, heritage sites recognised by the community, and key landmarks in Kanye.

4.3 Planning Considerations for the Upgrading Scheme:

The political economy of the area in this case entails those attributes and value systems which constitute the core identity and quality of life characteristics which create a community and these include the following:

a. Maintenance of Traditional Values

As a traditional settlement, Kanye's spatial structure is in essence based upon non-segregation and non-polarization of socio-economic groups. The scheme should aim to maintain and develop this aspect of the traditional culture. The importance of maintaining the traditional characteristics of Kanye should be recognized by the scheme. Existing developments within the older part should be treated with care. The centrally located open spaces found in each ward where social interaction and various cultural activities take place should be maintained. As much as possible elements in the traditional settlement structure should be harmoniously merged with modern planning as new development areas are planned.

b. Infill Potential in the Existing Built-Up Areas

The Kanye Planning Area Development Plan (1997-2021) had recommended an infill exercise within the old part of Kanye. There are potential problems and ramifications that can be experienced with regard to the implementation of this exercise. The scheme thus had to adopt this recommendation. The Council and Land Board would come up with strategies to resolve the anticipated problems and undertake an extensive infill exercise.

c. Spatial Growth Approach

The major thrust of the spatial growth approach is to plan Kanye as a compact traditional Tswana village hosting urban services. This will be achieved through making provisions for facilities that characterize urban centres, while maintaining the traditional village core character. The approach identifies local tourism opportunities to be harnessed, notably the rich traditional heritage and the conservation areas. The challenge therefore is for the scheme to propose innovative spatial growth strategies. Adopting the aforementioned spatial development strategies for Kanye assumes transforming the existing settlement's structure from a low density and dispersed development pattern to compact, mixed land use and intensified development. This will yield an urban character and enhanced economically viable activities.

5. Some Ideas on the Way Forward

As noted by Satterthwaite (2010) upgrading initiatives are important in addressing some aspects of deprivation faced by communities. But he argues that it is when the upgrading becomes an integral part of local governments ongoing investment programmes, with strong partnerships with the inhabitants of the settlements being upgraded, that they are most large-scale and effective.

6. Conclusion

The stumbling block seems to be the absence of collective formulation of planning instruments that are more relevant to urban villages and their subsequent enforcement. Furthermore, Africa's post-colonial institutional and organizational structures must coexist with customary rules and systems of land ownership.

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