

Preface

The relevance of this book draws from the engagement with sourcing new Southern perspectives on urban and regional planning. For a long time and until now, there exists a resilient gap in knowledge regarding the determination of appropriate planning instruments for redressing urban productivity decline which has plagued African economy. The intellectual community has contended with this challenge in the context of global hegemonic influences on planning theory. The dynamics in planning theory exacerbated with the ascendance of neoliberalism as global economic orthodoxy since 1980s. This reality unleashed changes epitomized in neoliberal planning theory. Neoliberal planning serves as delivery instrument in neoliberal political economy. After more than three decades of experimentation, neoliberal planning theory is called to serious question due to indications of its poor performance in the delivery of green growth and spatial justice in Africa.

Regardless the generally appreciable level of compliance to neoliberal participatory planning and the above average compliance identified for some African countries specifically South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia and Tanzania, the move for reforms in the curriculum of planning education in favour of neoliberal planning model is literally put on hold following recent recourse to rethink neoliberal participatory planning paradigm. The rethink, which is intended to reinforce the theoretical arsenal of planning, informed the sub-theme of South-South engagements: new Southern perspectives on urban planning in the 2014 AAPS conference. The forthcoming 2016 World Planning Schools Congress: Global Crisis, Planning & Challenges to Spatial Justice in the North and the South, organized by the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN), is also concerned with exploring Southern perspectives for planning.

The content of the proposed book is a timely response that postulates a theoretically compelling Southern perspective of planning in the African context. Given the precarious disposition of African political economy and planning experience, the book proposes a new direction, which rethinks neoliberalism as meta-theory of planning in Africa. It pioneers an original school of thought that presents a general theory of planning for Africa in the twenty-first century.

The book analyzes the development of planning paradigm in Africa since the turn of the twenty-first century. The primary purpose is to provide an insightful rethink of trends in the development of existing planning orthodoxies. These planning orthodoxies, which were conceived in the 1980s and thereafter with the mindset that upholds neoliberal values, are diagnosed to have difficulties with delivering spatial integration in Africa. Thus the book is particularly curious about the vogue of informality in planning and argues that it derives from the meta-theory that subjects Africa to dependent capitalism. The book contributes an alternative planning theory along with territorial planning framework instruments that are sensitive to the delivery of spatial regional integration for African renaissance.

The wide range of end users anticipated, which embrace the political class, the intellectual elite, and the academia who are concerned with planning, will find the book useful at the meta-theoretical, theoretical and practical levels. At the meta-theoretical level, neoliberalism as development ideology for Africa is called to question. This is done against the backdrop of concerns for epistemological foundations of external domination and ideologies in African political economy. The re-engineering of imperial trends is topical for new regionalism which currently engages the attention of the international community—the political class and the intellectual elite especially political scientists and role players at the African Union (AU). The theoretical level discusses the dynamics in the science of planning, its links and relationships with meta-theoretical issues, and the contributions of the academia and research institutes as primary role players in this arena. Thus the book contributes planning theory reforms as an entry point to impact the pending review of academic curriculum for planning education in Africa. Then at the practical level the book serves as food for thought for the intellectual community and as point of reference for planning consultants and development agencies.

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Introducing the Neo-Mercantile Planning Theory

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