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# The Dilemmas of Rural Planning and Planners in Oyo State, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** The focus on urban planning continues to flood the global literature. However, there is continued silence and neglect with regard to rural planning. The study examined the state of rural planning in Oyo State, Nigeria. Primary data was sourced using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Questionnaires were administered to two hundred and fifty (250) rural households in six (6) rural local government areas (LGAs) of Oyo State. It was revealed that rural areas remain neglected and behind in planning activities. A majority of respondents believe that no planning takes place in the rural communities in which they reside. The study concludes that improved communication on planning issues between the tiers of the bureau of physical planning and urban development offices remains the route to effective planning. Improved capacity building (expertise) and training are suggested for rural planners. It is also suggested that understanding the local culture is important in contributing towards effective and responsive rural planning.

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1. Introduction .....	76
2. Study area: Oyo State .....	77
3. Methodology.....	77
4. Findings .....	79
4.1 Rural people’s awareness of planning .....	79
4.2. Rural household definition of planner personality.....	83
4.3 Difficulties rural planners face in terms of effective rural planning .....	85
5. Conclusion and recommendation .....	87
References .....	89

## 1. Introduction

The high global population configuration and composition of rural areas cannot be downplayed or ignored (Brown, Fuguitt, Heaton and Waseem, 1997). Despite this, the dichotomy in planning orientation and investments in rural spaces as compared to urban areas remains obvious (Ward and Brown, 2009). Planning practices and professionals continue to ignore that the birthplace of urban areas are rural, thus viewing traditional rural areas as a place of food production where responsive planning is not warranted (Scott, 2010). Ward and Brown (2009) observed that planning practices and professionals tend to focus on urban areas as a driver of innovation, with surrounding areas (rural and peri-urban) being neglected. In the view of Wahab, Popoola and Magidimisha (2018), more relevance is placed on food production than on holistic settlement planning.

Planning plays a crucial role in supporting the government's social, environmental and economic objectives for sustainable communities. The primary responsibility shared by planning commissions across the world involves the design and development of plans (comprehensive or master) for liveability for people (Chandler, 2000) residing in both rural and urban areas. Nonetheless, planners in the government domain are often considered less efficient in traditional and rural spaces (Dale, 1998) owing to the poor state of communication amongst planners and the planning environment (Hahn, 1970; Fisher and Knuston, 1989; Healey, Madanapour A. and Magalhaes, 1999; Franco, 2002; Rakodi, 2010). Irrespective of the high emphasis that has been placed on planning in defining the face of settlements (Cui, Dodson and Hall, 2015; Elbakidze, Dawson, Andersson, Axelsson, Angelstam, Stjernquist, Teitwlbaum, Schlyter and Thellbro, 2015; Slaev, Kovachev, Nozharova, Daskalova, Nikolov and Petrov, 2019), less is understood about the state of planning in local rural spaces and the citizens' view of rural planners (Naldi, Nilsson, Westlund and Wixe, 2015; Medayese, Adeleye and Popoola, 2016; Cruickshank, 2018; Popoola, Adeleye, Mhlongo and Jali, 2018). However, there does exist a limited level of planning by rural public officials towards the shaping of the local setting. In this quest, rural

planning agencies or authorities have an important role in creating prosperity in human settlements by fostering local identity and civic pride (Communities and Local Government, 2008). Thus, this study aims to examine the rural dwellers' perception of planners and planning activities in Oyo State, Nigeria.

According to Tosun (2006) and Muganda, Sirima and Ezra (2013), local people remain less informed on the planning activities in their areas. This development has limited the sustainability of the plans produced over the years, as decision-making and policy formulation in most of the rural communities in Nigeria remains top-down. Nevertheless, a further preposition by Muganda et al. (2013) states that local planners in Zambia will continue to have limited success within local areas as people's participation and views remain minimal. In Nigeria, studies (Falade, 1988; Sokari-George, 1990; Kamar, Lawal, Babangida and Jahun, 2014) have historically neglected rural planning, which has resulted in poor liveability conditions in rural areas of the country. Summing up, these studies reveal that rural people's inclusion in planning remains limited. Mudenda (2006) opines that, in Africa, poor rural planning and the little attention given to rural space gives rise to numerous problems that exist in rural areas, and these problems are primarily a problem of general development. These studies suggest that planners who are tasked with ordering space in rural areas and bringing about equity are not enticed to do so by the moving intellectual discussion of urbanisation, at the cost of rural collapse.

Now, rural communities no longer control their spatial destinies, but states can do much to enable communities to help themselves (Herrmann and Osinski, 1999; Matthews, Sibbald and Craw, 1999; Knaap and Chakraborty, 2007) at least by listening to rural people's views on issues. Listerborn (2007) states that the historical antecedent of the top-down approach has limited rural dwellers' representation in planning. Davidoff (1965) further narrates that planning within rural areas by local planning agencies is often done in isolation (with no regard for dwellers' participation in the planning process and decisions). It is argued that planning orders are often from the state or federal government with no local content and context represented. In a world of divergent views amongst the actors of the planning

environment, there is a need for an investigation into the local people's views of the official planning actors and rural planning outlook. This study provides an answer to years of less communicative representation by local people about the planning activities and planning body in its domain.

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine the state of rural planning in Oyo State
- To examine rural dwellers' awareness and perception of rural planning
- To identify the limitations on effective rural planning in Oyo State

To achieve these study objectives, the researchers questioned rural dwellers regarding their perceptions of planning and planners in Oyo state. The interest of the research is to understand the planning experiences of rural people, with the aim of improving planning delivery.

## 2. Study area: Oyo State

Oyo State is located in the south-west of Nigeria. The state is mainly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group, who are primarily agrarian but who have a predilection for living in high-density urban centres (Adegoke and Jegede, 2016). It has a total land area of 28,454 km<sup>2</sup> and is ranked 14th in Nigeria by size. The state had a population of 5,591,589 people according to the 2006 population census and has a density of 200 people per km<sup>2</sup>.

The state comprises thirty-three (33) local government areas, of which twenty-eight (28) are considered to be rural local government areas distributed across three (3) senatorial districts and fourteen (14) federal constituencies (Fig. 1). The local government areas are in charge of local grass-roots politics and the governance of the people and can be classified into urban and rural local government areas. The justification for Oyo State as the study area for evaluating rural planning activities is drawn from the geographical, demographic and historical location of the state in south-western Nigeria. Oyo State is strategically located about 128 km

from Lagos (the first capital city and the city attested to have given birth to planning) and 530 km from Abuja, the new federal capital. The state is made up of Ibadan city, which was the colonial administrative headquarters for the south-western region. Nonetheless, despite the state's historical antecedents and locational accessibility to Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Kwara state, it remains less planned, and planners' activities are questioned when compared to other states such as Lagos and Ogun (Abiola and Ibrahim, 2005; Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2005; Adebisi Oyeboode and Olubode, 2017). Ipingbemi (2010) posits that the organic, traditional growth, arrangement and morphology of the state has limited its planning and that rural areas are the most affected. Hence the need to examine rural planning activities in Oyo State.

## 3. Methodology

A mixed approach of both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques was adopted for this cross-sectional study. Corroborating the relevance of mixed methods, Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) and Creswell (2014) emphasised that mixed methods provide a justification and explanation for the quantitatively gathered data of behavioural research. In Johnson et al. (2007), the need for data comparison and improved evidence presentation is stated to be in the adoption of a mixed-methods approach.

In this study, structured questionnaires, which were administered to both rural household dwellers and planning officers in the sampled LGAs, were the source of quantitative data. In-depth interviews conducted with rural planners in The Bureau of Physical Planning and Urban Development and rural community dwellers in the sampled LGAs were the qualitative data capturing tool. Ethical considerations which involved the seeking of approval from local traditional leaders were incorporated into this study. Also, the choices of the rural respondents were well represented, and questionnaires were administered to rural dwellers who were willing to respond.

The sample frame is 185,683 in rural households. The researchers considered a sampling size

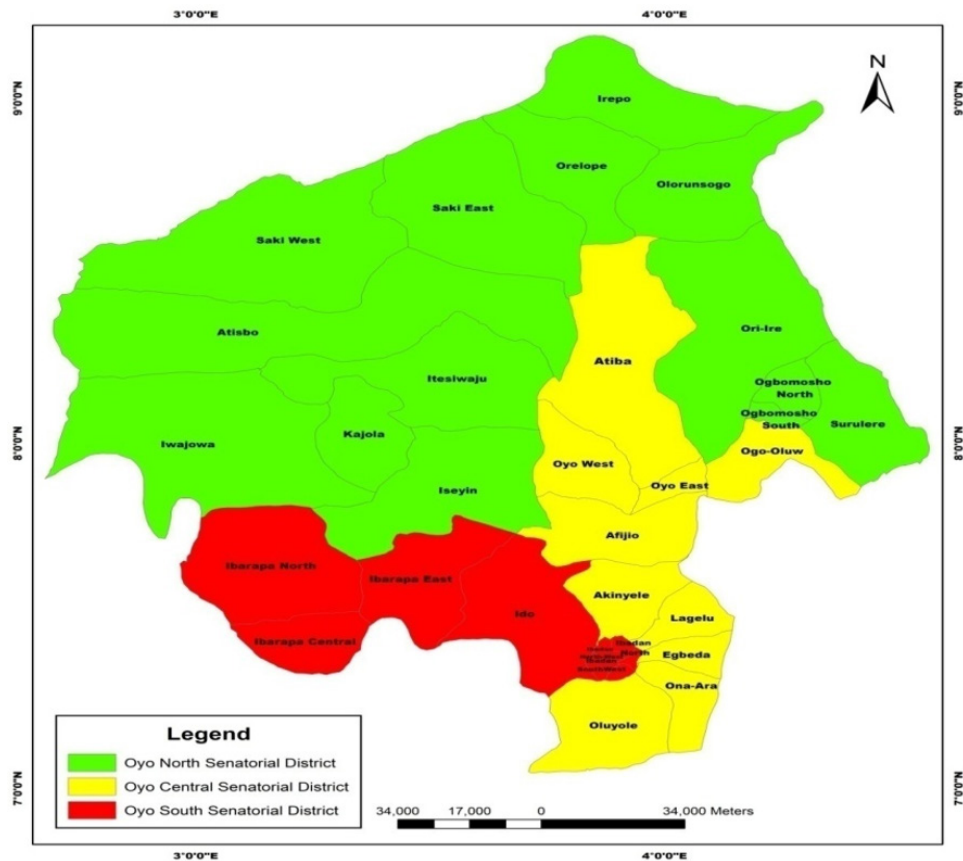


Fig. 1. Oyo State LGAs within the senatorial district context

ratio of 0.134%, which amounted to 250 household respondents, as a good representation of the sampled population. The sample size follows the assertion of Yusuf (2003) that a 0.0025% sample size is considered efficient for a study population size of 10 million. The questionnaires were distributed within the three senatorial districts of the six sampled rural LGAs (Tables 1 and 2).

A total of six (6) LGAs (two LGAs from each senatorial district) were chosen purposively, based on preliminary studies. It is from the purposively selected LGAs that communities were selected randomly. A total of six settlements, one from each LGA, was selected for sampling the study area within the local government areas using convenience and cluster sampling techniques. It is across the six settlements that a total of two hundred and fifty (250) rural household residents were interviewed.

To prevent sampling bias, a preliminary study took into consideration the rural terrain and spatial arrangement of houses and human activities. Also considered is the homogenous (Yoruba eth-

nic group) configuration of Oyo State. In the sampled rural LGAs, questionnaires were administered purposively, and interviews conducted accidentally subject to the need of wanting to respond to the questions asked. Community leaders served as the key informants and were interviewed. Moreover, people along circulation routes were interviewed using accidental sampling and based on the person's willingness to respond. For this study, the responders are household heads, wives, or the eldest person in the house. In instances where the responder was not educated or requested that discussions be in the native language for ease of communication, the questions were asked in the native language. Due consideration was given to ethical issues such as the respondents' privacy of responses given and the right to withdraw from the interview if the need arose.

A total of seventeen interviews were conducted for rural stakeholders across the six LGAs. The stakeholders include six officers in The Bureau of Physical Planning and Urban Development at the

LGAs; three officers in the department of works; an officer-in-charge of community and social development; an officer in the department of information; six rural community dwellers (two of whom are traditional and community elders); and three teachers in rural schools. Field observation was employed by

the researchers to compliment the condition of rural planning in the LGAs.

#### 4. Findings

**Table 1.** Sample LGAs and number of respondents from six local government areas

S/N	Local Government Area	Senatorial District	Classification type (peri-urban/rural)	Household population by NPC (2006)	Number of sampled respondents in each LGA (0.134%)
1.	IDO	Oyo South	Peri-urban & rural	117,129	33
2.	Ibarapa Central	Oyo South	Rural	116,809	32
3.	Irepo	Oyo North	Rural	139,012	38
4.	Olorunsogo	Oyo North	Rural	92,739	26
5.	Oyo-East	Oyo Central	Rural	118,465	33
6.	Egbeda	Oyo Central	Peri-urban & rural	319,388	88
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>903,542</b>	<b>250</b>

Source: National Population Commission (2006) and authors' analysis (2018)

##### 4.1. Rural people's awareness of planning

Some of the sampled households' respondents expressed the notion that rural planning entails promoting a better life and living for people. The idea that local planning entails settlement arrangements to show societal ideals and indigenous identity, promoting settlement aesthetics and beautification was presented. Some respondents iterate that planning in their domain involves the geographical arrangement of space for better administration. Despite the views above, few had the perception that rural planning involves the proper arrangement of land uses, infrastructure location, and settlement growth and development. An interviewee iterates that the embracing of planning tools and orientation remains minimal within the rural Oyo state. Below is a summary of the views of the rural planners interviewed:

*"... rural planning in Oyo State is nothing to write about. As rural people sell land with little or no cognizance of planning rules and regulations. Most of them (rural dwellers) are not used to it and familiar with it, the planning is not at par with the standards of the cities and major towns of the state like Ibadan, Ogbomosho. Our (rural*

*planners) efforts are still subjected to a lot of stress owing to the culture of the people. They rarely have cognizance for the department. Many build houses on the road and when you (planner) now roll out the development control mechanisms for either demolition or contravention, because they (dwellers) know your family owing to familiarity, they (dwellers) go to your parent's family house to complain. They (rural dwellers) may know what planning is, but do they accept its principles and mechanisms? I can boldly tell you NO...!"* (Planning Officer in the LGA, 2018)

This finding represents a gap in communication and neglect towards rural participatory planning between the people planned for and the planners. Dantani and Wada (2014) stated that community participation should be a prerequisite in planning. Planning education and practice cannot afford to be devoid of the public interest, community participation, and continuous sensitisation to and awareness of projects, rules and regulations that guide the built environment (Oloyede, Ajibola and Durodola, 2010; Aliyu and Kaoje, 2017).

Result analysis presents that 56% of sampled rural dwellers are unaware of the planning officer's ac-

tivities in the LGA or immediate communities. The remaining 44% are familiar with the planning activities in their LGA. They became familiar during applications for building approval, relatives who are planners, or during land litigation issues that call for the expertise of planners. This finding means that seven out of every fifteen sampled rural dwellers in Oyo State or one out of every two people in the study area are not familiar with planners in the rural LGA. This assertion points to the argument of Dalal-Clayton, Dent and Duboi (2013) that rural planning in Africa and Asia applies a top-down approach. The approach, according to Dalal-Clayton et al. (2013), has subjected the government to being a significant manager of the space, with the rural populace remaining less aware of the government actions. The argument is that planning in rural spaces is often devoid of collaborative efforts between planners and the rural populace. Thus, rural dwellers have less awareness of planning activities. The imposition by the government has resulted in the loss of the sense of rural planning across such a setting (Chigbu, 2013). In his writings, Chigbu (2013) states that as much as planning in these local areas is imperative for their development, the increasing modernisation and top-down approach (in the context of urban–rural transfer) has resulted in rural people ignoring planning values and not appreciating them.

However, some planning officers reported that there had been attempts to promote, and sensitise rural people to, the work of planners and planning principles in these areas. In such attempts, planners within the study area have, over the years, resorted to the traditional leaders and radio stations to publicise the planning principles and ideas. During an interview, a director of the Bureau of Physical Planning and Urban Development in one of the LGAs stated the following:

*“... When I was posted here (the LGA) less than a year ago, there was a lot of friction between myself and the community because of my execution of planning duty ... I found out that these people (rural dwellers in the LGA) are not even familiar with basic planning standards and requirements for physical development ... I therefore had to pay for radio adverts and interviews on the radio sta-*

*tion from my personal pocket (Oke-Ogun FM) to educate them on the planning workings, so as to prevent friction, security of life and assets ... and I can tell you that there was a great improvement in planning permit applications and land surveying and layout applications during this period ...”*  
(Planning Officer in the LGA, 2018)

Johansen and Chandler (2015) identified the importance of communicative planning in bringing about effective planning. In local areas, the relevance of the local leader remains mundane in the acceptance of the perceived urban planning ideology. The Department of Provincial and Local Government of South Africa (2003) reported that traditional leaders play an essential role in African life. Their roles in shaping people’s perceptions and acceptance of ideas and policies (planning standards in this context) cannot be ignored. Therefore it can be said that the steps taken by the LGA planning director above are worth commending.

Furthermore, from the data analysis on the history of involvement of respondents in projects in the LGA, Table 2 shows that 68.8% of the sampled household respondents have never engaged in project planning or execution in their respective LGAs of residence, while the remaining 31.2% have engaged in it. From the 31.2%, which is 78 respondents, that engage in project planning, 25 respondents engaged in programmes at the operational or implementation phase; 20 engaged at the planning phase; and 18 at the decision-making consultation phase, while the remaining 15 are not involved in the phases of programme development at their LGA of residence, but at different instances and LGAs.

Noted from the analysis is that despite the low history of involvement in project planning, rural dwellers identified some of the roles local planners have, some of which are development control/project monitoring, policy implementation and supervision, the development of plans, and planning approvals. This role identification is a reflection of the activities that exist within the rural space. However, when development control is taken into consideration, the frequency of dwellers coming in contact with planning officials during this exercise varies. An interview with an official of the Depart-

ment of Work asserted that planners had a poor understanding and ability to use development control tools, as against officials of the Department of Works. The findings establish inter-agency friction as a result of not following the stipulated planning standard. An officer of the Department of Works stated that:

*“I believe that, as a civil engineer, it is an insult for planners to come and demolish or mark buildings that lack planning approval ... the LGA gives the authority to engage in such project and I believe that is sufficient ... they (planners) don't know what the local people of our LGAs want like us (Engineers in the Department of Work) ...”* (Officer of Department of Works, 2018)

This finding presents a continuous bridge and neglect in the relevance of the development control planning tools by rural planners. Structured questionnaires administered to rural households presented in Fig. 2 show that 37.2% of the sample never or rarely noticed the planning officials during this exercise, while 33.2% see them patrolling the area monthly. At the same time, the remaining 18% and 11.6% see them on a daily and weekly basis, respectively. The normal curve analysis shows a mean value of 2.90 and a standard deviation value of 1.096. Planning official interviews reported a de-

partmental breach of responsibility, and federal and state planning agency neglect of the local planning agency when projects from the top (state or federal) are involved. Likewise, political representatives and officeholders at the state assembly and federal house of assemblies have limited the efficient deployment of the development control tools for effective and responsive planning. An official stated that:

*“... There have been many instances where the political office-holders (councillors, chairmen, house of assembly of representative members), top LGA (head of local government administration or directors) or superior officers from state or federal planning offices engage in the erection of buildings without plan approval. Some of the relatives of these people (political office holders, head of local government administration or directors, or superior officers from state or federal planning offices) even go ahead building without plans, based on the referral or assurances of these political people making use of their green pen with a letter reading 'Release the person or allow him to build without any further delay' ...”* (Planning Officer in the LGA, 2018)

The place of politics and planning has been overly investigated. Using Copenhagen and Stockholm as a case study, Koglin (2014) reported that transport planning in the area is a reflection of the po-

**Table 2.** Rural household participation in the planning and decision-making process

Perception of, or familiarity with local planning officials	Responses on the condition of familiarity with local planning officials				Total
	Building approval	A fellow working there	During conflict mediation	Others	
Yes	63	42	5	0	110
No	29	62	25	24	140
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>250</b>

Respondent involvement history in projects at LGA	Level/stage of involvement by respondents				Total
	Planning phase	Decision-making phase	Operation/ implementation phase	Not involved at all	
Yes	20	18	25	15	78
No	2	13	27	130	172
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>250</b>

Source: authors' analysis (2018)

litical alignment in the country. It was argued that the eagerness to plan for transportation in the study areas was more political than economic, cultural or historical. Bosworth (2016) states that, in situations where the public manager is a politician, the effectiveness of the policies introduced towards space management might not be well implemented or supported across all regions. Kamete and Lindell (2010) reported laxity in planning as a result of political undertones in planning process choices in Africa, with more focus on Harare and Maputo.

Iterating the politics of space and governance, MacLeod (2011) observed the class of power in the organising of space. This assertion also reflects in an example of a clash or duplication of responsibilities in which limited planning was reported at Ibarapa Central LGA, where the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development from the federal government office was engaging in a residential layout development without the knowledge of the local or state planning office. To this end, Ogu (2002) made it known that the value for planning will continually not be achieved in the face of political manipulation and influence in Nigeria.

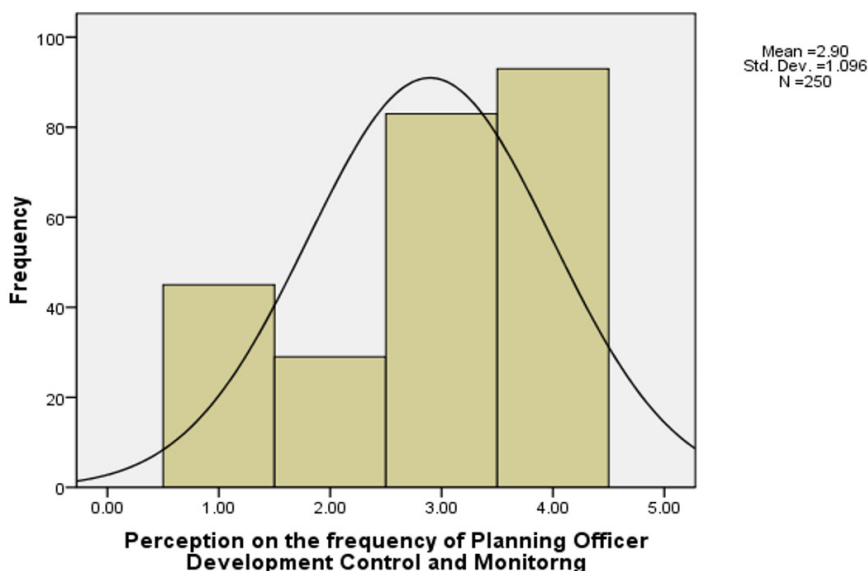
The continuous neglect of planning laws and ordinances will no doubt lead to haphazard development. Planning laws and ordinances are in place to control and regulate development and also to maintain the perfect health of society through their ef-

fective implementation. Specifically, development control as the most commonly used planning tool in the rural area is focused on physical development enforcement notices, the issuance of “stop work” orders for unauthorised development and contravention notices, and demolition notices. To prevent demolition is to have the necessary documents requested for such physical development.

Since the study is household-based, the study investigated the building permit applications amongst households. Study findings presented in Fig. 3 show that 70.4% (176 household respondents) have building permit approvals for their households, while the remaining 29.6% did not obtain building approval. The study further queries the awareness of the households of development control regulations. Findings presented in the same figure reveal that 56.8% of the 250 respondents are aware of the developmental control regulations, while the remaining 43.2% are not aware of the regulations. The findings above shows that 29.6% of the households without building permits are contained within the 43.2% not familiar with development control practices.

Inadequate awareness of the development control policies and rules has given rise to local miscreants called “*Omo-onile*” (literally meaning “the child of the landowner”) to manipulate the allocation of land for communal people, thus neglect-

**Perception on the frequency of Planning Officer Development Control and Monitoring**



**Fig. 2.** Frequency of local planning official visits to the community  
Source: authors' analysis (2018)



ing the relevance of development approval by the government. From the findings, 62% of the sample reported to have at one time or another been harassed by local land-grabbers, which has led to the loss of land, repayments for land already purchased, or the inflation of land prices in the area. Akinyele (2009) argued that the quest for space is the origin of the *Omo-onile* syndrome. These findings point to a weak sensitisation to development control policies and other planning laws and regulations that guide development in rural areas. This suggests that there exists a dichotomy between urban and rural spaces as far as planning activity is concerned (Kanbur and Zhang, 2003; Khan and Riskin, 2004; Yusuf and Tony, 2008).

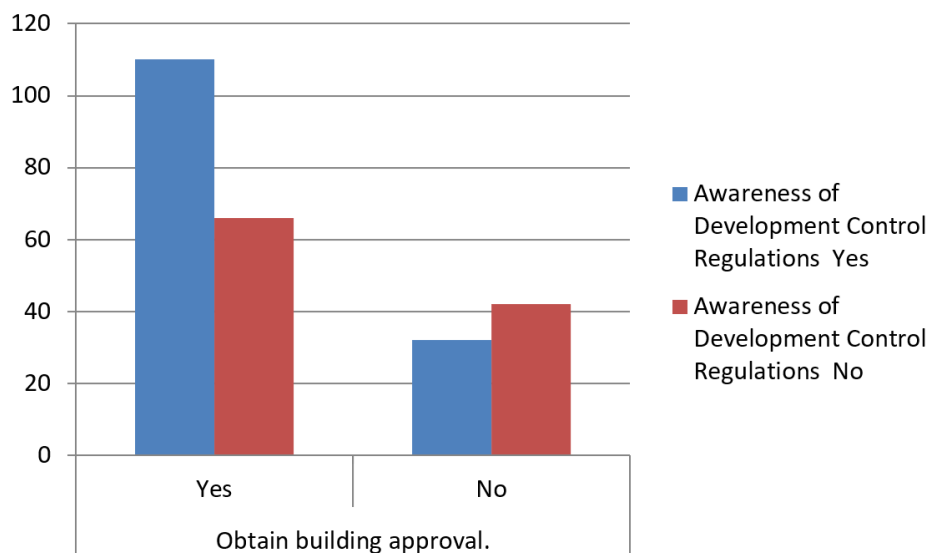
In Ogun State Nigeria, Alalade, Adedapo, Awoyemi and Adebo (2016) reported that land grabbing could be traced to weak planning mechanisms. This is because increasing informality in the land, which triggers crises between developers and *Omo-onile* can be attributed to poor spatial planning (Ayodele, 2017). Olujimi and Iyanda (2013) aver that, in a situation where site and services schemes were expertly planned for, land informality will be limited. In Latin America, the issues of land grabbing can be traced to weak land management and land capitalism (Costantino, 2014), which can be traced to the government increasing unplanned continuous calls for foreign investments and private sector participation (Kadiri and Oyalowo, 2011).

Identified by the respondents as factors that account for differences in planning activities between

the rural and urban areas are: proximity to government; economic reasons; preference for urban areas; population composition; infrastructure availability; limited understanding by rural planners of job descriptions; a concentration of planners in urban areas as compared to rural areas; compact space; inefficient communication; awareness of rules/regulations; urban civilisation and modernism; and rigid adherence to urban-oriented planning standards.

#### 4.2. Rural household definition of planner personality

The poor representation of what entails the public interest by rural planners has resulted in distrust amongst public and private stakeholders in the built environment (Johnson, 1997; Behera, 2006). Johnson (1997) observed that the politics of space and resources have turned planning into a tool for political gain for the few, rather than an instrument of social change. This study section attempts to understand rural people's views about local planning officials. Findings presented in Table 3 show that over 50% of the sampled two hundred and fifty respondents agreed that planners are mediators (62.0%), friendly (58.4%) pace-setters (52.0%), and settlement builders (52.0%). It should be noted that rural areas are places of property (land especially), crisis, and planners, along with surveyors, are usually subjected to the role of mediating between land-owners when such issues arise. Therefore, there was a 62.0%



**Fig. 3.** Building approval and development control regulations  
Source: authors' analysis (2018)

affirmation that rural planners were mediators and a friend to the rural people. However, when asked if local planning officials were corrupt or had any history of corrupt acts, 10.4% of the respondents agreed that local planners are corrupt; 52.0% disagreed, while the remaining 37.6% were indifferent about such an issue. This finding cast an element of doubt on the maintenance of professional ethics, as stated in the Urban and Regional Planning Law of 1992.

Responding to the inhumane and unfriendly perception of rural planners, a rural community dweller stated thus:

*“.. I so much dislike them, I was building a small shop in front of my house and it was removed. They waited till I was almost at the roofing stage before showing up to tell me I have infringed in to the community road and that the stipulated setback was contravened. Where were they (planners) when I started?...”* (Respondent, 2018)

This argument by dwellers points at the possibility of not having a survey plan that shows where his land ends, or the weak response of rural planners towards development, although findings based on field observation and interviews showed inad-

equately workers and a lack of vehicles to navigate the LGA’s spatial boundary towards efficient monitoring exercises by planners. In an attempt to explain planners in their planning duty, Sandercock (1999) called planners “anti-heroes” or “passionate pilgrims”. He stated that planning as a profession calls for “apolitical” behaviour and decisions. These actions can sometimes be tagged as inhumane. The roles of planners, as identified by Aluko (2011), Ashiru (2015) and NITP (2018), and the professional ethics expected of planners (Sandercock, 1999; Agbola, 2001) were re-coded into questions asked in this study. Findings from this study, as presented in Table 3, show that 22.8% agreed that planners in the local space are insensitive and inhumane; 47.6% disagreed with this fact, while the remaining 29.6% are indifferent or not sure of whether rural planners are insensitive or inhumane.

During an interview session, some planners narrated some of their inhumane experiences at the hands of some community in the study area. They have this to say:

*“... Can you imagine someone within the neighbourhood coming into your home with cutlass to harass you, chanting negative songs in your home just because you performed your duty as a planner using the development control? This is the*

**Table 3.** Analysis of rural perceptions of local planning officials’ responsiveness in their roles and professional ethics

Planners’ identity description	Agree	Disagree	Indifferent/not sure	Total	Mean (SD)
Local planners are mediators	155(62.0%) 1st	38(15.2%) 3rd	57(22.8%) 2nd	250	1.6080 (0.83494)
Local planners are friendly	146(58.4%) 1st	47(18.8%) 2nd	57(22.8%) 3rd	250	1.6440 (0.82947)
Local planners are pace-setters	137(54.8%) 1st	50(20.0%) 3rd	63(25.2%) 2nd	250	1.7040 (0.84572)
Local planners are settlement builders	130(52.0%) 1st	53(21.2%) 3rd	67(26.8%) 2nd	250	1.7480 (0.85288)
Local planners are corrupt	26(10.4%) 3rd	130(52.0%) 1st	94(37.6%) 2nd	250	2.2720 (0.63847)
Local planners are insensitive and inhumane	57(22.8%) 3rd	119(47.6%) 1st	74(29.6%) 2nd	250	2.0680 (0.72212)

Source: authors’ analysis (2018)

*situation we (rural planners) face most especially here (rural areas). Many of these rural people are quite emotional and dislike planners for doing their work ...”*

In the views of Forester (1998) and Vivant, Arab and Özdirlık (2017), studies identified planners as mediators within the context of solving planning problems and the idea that planners are often participatory activists of the shaping in space. A rural dweller reported that a planner service was sought by her family during a communal–family land crisis in her village. She iterated that the LGA planners rendered the service of evenly sub-dividing the family land between three households’ heads, and thus the land-related crisis was averted. Using experiences from Barbados, India, Jamaica, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Knox and Mosilola (1990) identified that planners as managers and technocrats within a local area are subjected to adopt mediating skills in planning practice. In Toronto, Luo (2019) reported that if planners are to successfully implement their neighbourhood (LGA) plans, they must be willing to execute their roles as negotiators and mediators. Negotiating with the culture of the people, the rural setting and leaders, and also mediating with the people for a sustainable rural settlement, are par for the course.

This, therefore, presents the notion that the experience of the people, which is often embedded in their culture or household activities and decisions, defines and dictates their perception of rural planners and planning activities. This was corroborated when a dweller reported that rural planners in her community often assists in solving many land boundary or ownership related issues as this remains a peculiar case and experience in the setting.

### **4.3. Difficulties rural planners face in terms of effective rural planning**

Difficulties facing rural planners in terms of effective rural planning remain undocumented extensively. This section examines the difficulties facing planning practice and professions in the study area. The perception of planning as a modern instrument of the government (local, state and federal),

as against a professional practice that incorporates the people, has limited the acceptance of rural planning and appreciation of the duty of rural planners in the study area. A planner stated this:

*“... one major issue is that the rural people see planning as an instrument and a department of the government alone. They (rural dwellers) ask why I (dwellers) should engage in plan approval on my ancestral land or land I (dwellers) bought with my money when the government (state and local) has not benefitted me in any way ...”*

It is now termed “government planning”, not “community” or “peoples’ planning”. This perception aligns with the “anti-hero/passionate pilgrim” writings of Sandercock (1999). In the view of Baxamusa (2008), people’s perception is born of the lack of community participation and appreciation for planning activities. The idea is that when the people are not involved, plans, planning and planners are perceived as “a tool, process and an officer” of and for the government. The conclusion was drawn that rural participation will assist in building trust or interest between the communities and rural planners and also bring about rural communal empowerment. This is considered imperative as the traditional society cannot be ignored in their choice of adaptation, needs and interests definition (Goonewardena, Rankin and Weinstock, 2004) owing to the dynamism and uniqueness of rural societies (Ambrosio-Albala and Delgado, 2008; Zhou, He, Tang, Yu, Xiao and Zhong, 2013; Gautam and Faruqee, 2016)

Further identified from interviews was the disjointed nature of activities amongst planning agency departments of the LGA and the tiers of government. Okpala (2014) reported that increasing overlapping responsibilities, coupled with the infringement of duties by various institutions, agencies and departments, leads to a conflict of ideas, which often results in the ineffectiveness experienced in spatial planning in Nigeria. Many of the departments engage in physical development without collaboration and approval from the mandatory planning authority. There was even a situation where a federal housing scheme was embarked upon without prior

notice to the local planning authorities. One of the local planners stated that “... *many of the planning laws stipulated by the federal and state government might not be feasible in the planning processes in this rural LGA. In most instances, we (rural planners) sometimes use planning, and in some cases, we (planners) abandon planning standards and make use of the cultural or societal set-out rules or expectations ...*”. Sometimes, the traditional heads are more respected than the planners when it comes to physical development. This explains why cultural planning is crucial in rural area planning – despite the formal training of planners, integrating the cultural norms and regulations of the rural areas remains a limitation that needs to be well adapted to and understood. Another planner said this:

“... *planners in rural areas are learned, but not all professional teachings are often applicable in the rural area owing to the cultural limitations, literacy and land tenure system ...*”

The planning apparatus remains inadequate and even unavailable. The evidence reported shows that the government does not provide mobility equipment (such as motorcycles or bicycles). Also reported were instances where private professional planners within rural areas perform the roles stipulated by law for public planners. Thus, there exists a jurisdictional breach of authority between private and public rural planners. Other factors that have limited efficient planning in the rural areas studied include: the terrain of some of the LGAs (hilly environments have limited general development and proper spatial arrangement of the LGA); poor and inadequate financing; weak political consciousness and will regarding rural planning; and a lack of working or proposed master, development and infrastructural plans.

Rural planners revealed that the cultural and traditional arrangement of rural areas, as much as it can be used for encouraging and sensitising rural dwellers about planning, remains a limitation towards effective and responsive planning in local areas. Findings from interviews revealed that traditional leaders like *obas* (kings) and *baales* (regents) often make use of their positions to dictate the ar-

rangement of space as against the conventional expectations as set by the planning standards. Planners in Oyo-East, Ido, Olorunsogo and Irepo LGAs have this to say:

“... *There was an instance where a new set of shops for commercial activities were erected right along the market road by the traditional council, we (planners) consulted with them (traditional leaders) but yet nothing was done, contravention notices were ignored by a rural leader. In such instance, planners will have to overlook such, if you don't want a clash with the rural dwellers ...*”

Further reported by another planner was the hiding of influential rural dwellers under the influence of the traditional council to dictate the location of facilities, as observed by a planner in Olorunsogo LGA, who said this:

“... *some rural social facilities meant for the general public and best to be located at another location have been influenced and directed to be located in front of the Obas (kings) palace, ignoring planning suggestions and standards ...*”

Keulder (2010) suggests that traditional leaders cannot be downplayed in communal African control. In his writing, Keulder (2010: 150) identified that the traditional leadership in Africa is an important relic of the pre- and post-colonial political order of the continent. It was identified using case examples from Namibia that traditional leaders are local custodians of order in rural communities. Within the African governance context, rural communities give much respect and emphasis to local culture, rules (verbal or non-verbal), indigenous ethnic arrangements (Azeez, 2009), norms, and values, which are often dictated by traditional leaders (Olusola and Aisha, 2013). Traditional leaders continue to control most of the critical rural survival strategies: allocation of land, natural resources, communal labour practices, and, in some instances, law and order (Keulder, 2010: 150). Bank and Southall (1996) reported that it would be vague to perceive that traditional leaders are not relevant

to developmental planning. Using South Africa as an example, they reported the African society as a mixed government, which identified that traditional leadership could not be functional without local leaders. Jegede (2007) reported that local and traditional African leaders are the trusted figures of the community. It was argued that traditional leaders are “architects of government” (Bank and Southall, 1996: 407). Thus, they can define the spatial arrangement, stability and development of their local environment owing to their political wits and ancient indigenous authority.

Planners also identified bureaucratic overlap between rural and urban planners to be a limitation towards efficient rural planning. The area of overlap of standards has limited the level of job satisfaction amongst rural planners in Oyo State. Evidence from observation reveals limited job satisfaction among rural planners. Many complained of being continually exposed to job-related hazards, which can manifest as physical attacks or emotional attacks, all of which result from planners’ attempts to bring about a liveable settlement. Further limiting rural planners’ efficiency and responsiveness as observed, the planners identified a lack of independence between the local planning bureau and the state. Evidence revealed that professional instruction as regards planning expectations is still shipped down from the Bureau of Physical Planning and Urban Development, with its headquarters located at the state capital of Ibadan. Many of the approvals are still subjected to state bureau control. Planners complained about the bureaucratic ladder towards performing their duties, coupled with the distance being travelled from their various LGAs to the state capital for meetings, information flow, and obtaining of documents such as planning approval.

Evidence as reported by the Director of Local Planning Office in two of the sampled rural LGAs (Irepo and Olorunsogo) revealed a shortage of staff and human resources. They have this to say:

*“... I (The LGA planning bureau director) have over time written a letter addressed to the headquarters (State Bureau of Physical planning and urban development) requesting for more staff to assist with the workload ... many of these officials under my command are engaging in planning duties well beyond or below their pay grade*

*and job description ... I have sometimes had to go for monitoring duties as a director owing to limited hands ...”*

The argument above further reinforces the need for improved human capacity building in the form of exposure to modern planning principles and approaches, and the employment of more hands to attend to planning needs within the rural areas of Oyo State. Field interviews with the officials on site revealed that many of the local planning officials are National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) certificate holders, many of whom graduated over five years ago and have not undergone any human capacity training as relating to their job description since then. Only a few hold a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech). Evidence revealed that the last recruitment for planners was done over ten years ago. This aligns with the views of Olajuyigbe and Rotowa (2011) that capacity gaps in conventional modern planning principles and practices exist amongst planners in Nigeria. The attributes of a lack of recruitment, redundancy on the part of the planners, lack of motivation, and dead political planning are the reasons for this.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendation

The study calls for improved planning activities within rural areas amongst rural planners. The study recommends that for a rural environment to be well-planned when compared to the urban, there is a need for a balance in the relationship between the planning, the community planned for, and the tools or instruments of planning (Fig. 4). Faludi (1983) stated that rural planning should represent the rural public interest in the face of a comprehensive planning process as this is the basis on which rural people can reach sustainability.

Identifying the essence of improved responsiveness to planning activity, Chien (2000) discussed the idea that planners must begin to be responsive not just to the goal, but to the future. This thus remains relevant to the place of improved professionalism amongst rural planners for the future effect of

their actions and planning output to the shaping of the rural space and outcome. Sage (2006) reported that in the built environment space, planners must be careful in their stand towards the achievement of a liveable settlement. It was identified that irrespective of the certain external (private sector and outside agency) and internal (fellow built-environment professionals) pressures, planners must be willing to maintain their sense of value in the delivery of that public good.

Studies iterating the experience from the UK housing delivery (Ball, 2011) and planners' responses in Chicago (Hoch and Cibulskis, 1987) emphasise the need for planning responsiveness towards the approval process by planners in a way that is devoid of nepotism, bias or politicking. This, therefore, suggests that irrespective of the local planning authority arrangement, it is imperative that rural planners are active and responsive in the delivery of their professional services. The overlap in the infringement of various rural planners on planning duties was identified in the case study example, as reported in Iseyin LGA. It was reported that in recent times, the Department of Works in this LGA, through LCDA funding, engaged in road construction (OJA Iseyin area) that led to the demolition of some buildings without planning consultation or approval. The interviewee, who was the director of planning in the LGA, approached the officers at the project site and asked how the department could engage in such a project without the knowledge of the Planning Office. The response given by the Officials of the Department of Works in the LGA on site was that the project was not within the work schedule of planners or the planning department as there was fore-knowledge by their department and team as to which buildings were to be demolished.

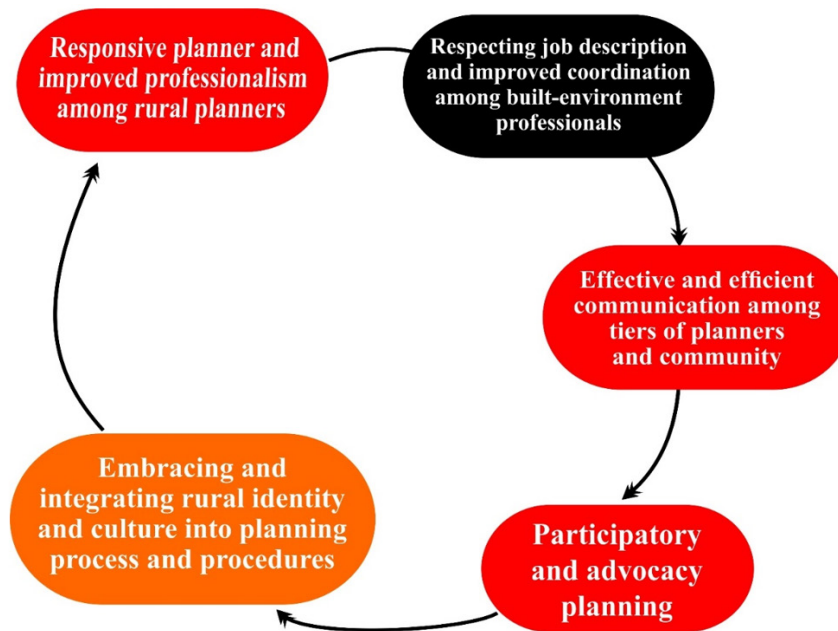
Despite the limited level of efficiency recorded in property documentation and development control activities, this study reveals poor performance by rural planners and weak involvement of rural dwellers in physical planning. When planning officials are not responsive, the process of planning will not be known amongst the people, nor well appreciated. Likewise, the tools of planning must be sustainable and reliable so that rural people can appreciate them. Irrespective of the perceived negligence of the planning profession in rural areas, they remain a force to be reckoned with in the built en-

vironment and the arrangement and configuration of any rural settlement towards sustainable liveability and enhanced household livelihood. Likewise, the complexity of rural areas should be considered.

Therefore, the trickle-down instructions from the superior tier of the planning body should be subjected to rural procedures to establish if they apply to the rural people and setting. This trickling down along the bureaucratic planning ladder, built-environment, and other auxiliary agencies and departments is necessitated in the plan for a sustainable space and efficient service delivery.

It is important to note that the need for cooperation between planners and other built environment professionals and departments dates to the 1990s. Using the planning of America as a case study, Peiser (1990) questioned who plans America between a planner and a developer (Department of Works in the context of LGAs in Oyo State on the political planning of the political class in power). A conclusion was drawn that as much as planners might be open to manipulation if too close to "LGA developers", they nevertheless depend on each other for advice and improved professional productivity for the public interest. Arimah and Adeagbo (2000) aver that, in Ibadan, Nigeria, the role of inter-agency coordination and cooperation in contributing towards effective compliance with planning regulations cannot be downplayed. It has been reported that as much as their objectives are different, a symbiotic and mutual relationship between professions cannot be ignored (Birch and Roby, 1984; Manley and Parnaby, 2000), as they are all interested in the preservation, development, sustainability and quality of the built environment (Hartenberger, Lorenz, and Lützkendorf, 2013).

The State and Federal government tier of agencies should provide equipment such as vehicles that will assist in the proper monitoring of physical development. Likewise, job satisfaction among rural planners must be well-articulated and examined. Continuous sensitisation of the rural public to the relevance of rural planning cannot be ignored as a route towards the development of the rural space. The roles played by traditional leaders in coordinating rural people's response to issues should also be maximised towards planning issues. The nexus between the culture of the rural people and planning needs to be further investigated. This is to provide



**Fig. 4.** Model summary towards effective rural planning  
Source: authors' construct (2018)

a balance for the culture of the people towards effective and responsive planning. The relevance of culture in the spatial arrangement of Europe was iterated by Kunzmann (2004). He identified that the culture of a place is relevant in the place-making of the settlement. This brings to light the idea that rural areas are dynamic, and thus the planning of rural areas should take into consideration the peculiarities of the area. Young (2016) further identified that for planning to be responsive and sustainable, it must be framed along cultural lines. The argument put forward was that the critical thinking of planners towards the solving of “wicked” spatial problems must continually take into consideration the cultural issues and literacy of the space being planned. Markusen and Gadwa (2010) concluded that participation and positive outcomes would be achieved if policy-makers and planners often respect the norms, ideology and culture of the people.

This study further recommends a good and improved working relationship between local planning authorities and the state and federal planning agencies such that no grassroots physical development embarked upon by the state and federal government agencies should bypass the local authorities. The study also suggests the need to embrace efficient and effective communication technology such as ICT-driven email as a way towards the smooth

flow of information. The study further suggests the need to encourage the hiring of more planning staff, to train existing ones, and to develop the human capacity of existing rural planners in Oyo State.

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