

# Integrating the Green City Concept in Retooling the City in Africa - A Neo-Mercantile Planning and Plant Science Partnership

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### Editorial

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## Editorial

Since mid-fifteenth century the African city context has altered progressively following concerted effort to install global economic orthodoxies. As the African city context evolved the culture-specific, pre-industrial and pre-capitalist context withdrew gradually and a capitalist-industrialist context grew. The transition from the context of culture to the context of economy is continuing and currently leading to the perception of cities as engines of growth (however growth that delivers neo-liberal economy). Incidentally the golden thread that runs across the transitory period (covering approximately five centuries) is urban productivity decline and increase in environmental vulnerability. Besides environmental challenges arising from climate change, this trend remains resilient due to existing legacies of epistemological foundations and ideologies. At the moment these legacies leverage planning tuition to deliver neo-liberal urbanism meaning urban design for the delivery of neo-liberal economy.

The general ethical precepts of neo-liberalism as development ideology suggest techno-centric use of the environment. Thus its disregard for green growth is common knowledge. The science of green space planning is not necessarily a subject of neo-liberal planning. This is because green growth has no market processes hence unfit for neo-liberal strategies. Neo-liberal planning is focused on the economic growth of the city for private profitability. Environmental integrity, social equity and

spatial justice are in contention in neo-liberal planning as such sustainable growth is threatened. The neo-mercantile planning theory emerged to make a case for sustainable growth through green planning. Ab initio this theory rejects neo-liberal planning and sought to leverage the heritage of eco-centrism in the development of traditional garden cities, which cradled the civilization of African societies.

The neo-mercantile planning theory seeks to retool the city in favor of serving the function of well-being [1]. By virtue of its disposition as a creative planning concept, it addresses the green city concept by means of delivering ecosystem services for sustainable urbanism [2]. Thus it posits to develop green infrastructure, which explores the link between the built and ecological environment. For this purpose it adopts the perception of the urban environment as a spatial system that comprises three functional spaces and as a system of relationships between three functional layers. This concept of the urban environment will be explained later. Meanwhile it aids neo-mercantile integration planning paradigm to address urban green space planning. As it is the case with integrated planning in France, the integration planning paradigm is based on the scale of time and space.

As an eco-centric concept with capacity to foster green growth in the urban environment, neo-mercantile planning is related to plant science. Plant science that seeks to understand the biology of plant and the meta-science of plant as contained in culture and traditional

worldviews provide the bases for the relationship. However, the relationship is traditionally built on the role of vegetation in providing ecosystem services for urban sustainability. Ecosystem service is expected to improve urban well-being through better understanding of the interactions of the components of the built environment, vegetation, and human activities. Hence it drives better knowledge of the roles and interactions of individual plants and plant species in urban landscapes and the influence of human activities and social structures on the ecological services that these landscapes provide for well-being in the urban environment. This knowledge base, which leads ultimately to better landscape and community designs, is required for Africa. Current tuition is largely based on global north environment and framed on neo-liberal planning scholarship.

The partnership between neo-mercantile planning and plant science commits to integrating the green city concept in retooling of cities in Africa. But the rationale for retooling the city in Africa extends beyond environmental issues. This will be addressed later in the process of establishing the partnership. Suffice it to say that the retooling of the city recognizes that the city once served a cultural function, is now serving economic function, and successively will serve well-being function. This paper argues that neo-mercantile planning is committed to secure the well-being function of the city. It adopts the determination of the approach of providing ecosystem services for the delivery of the well-being function of the city as the core research problem. The research question is: how will neo-mercantile planning collaborate with plant science to deliver ecosystem services? In other words, how would plant science interact in neo-mercantile planning intuition for managing green growth in the urban environment? At this juncture the global aim of the research is to appraise neo-mercantile planning as an instrument of modern environmentalism for delivering green cities. The green cities will be resilient to the challenges of proxy governance, socio-economic and environmental adversities [3]. The specific aim is to espouse the green city model for enhancing the resilience (sustainability) of urbanized areas in Africa. The model will leverage independent ecosystem services to secure well-being for the urban population in Africa.

The research objective is in two parts: first, to examine the characteristic elements of neo-mercantile planning for the delivery of ecosystem services in the urban environment; and second, to determine the elements and determinants of urban design for green growth in neo-mercantile planning dispensation. The second objective

implies the determination of design protocol in neo-mercantile dispensation for urbanized areas. The design protocol is the interface that provides the integration with plant science at the city level. This consolidates the anticipated function of plant science in the wider context of the delivery of ecosystem services.

The purpose of the research is to develop appropriate green planning tool fortified with plant science intuition for the delivery of green infrastructure that will enhance well-being urban Africa. But this expectation is faced with challenges especially epistemological foundations and ideologies, which are found to render cities in Africa vulnerable to the adversities of global political economy. These adversities are often associated with the resilience of domination to plunder as it is the case with the Niger Delta in Nigeria. The resultant city structure is known to be vulnerable to environmental adversities. Vulnerability to epistemological and environmental adversities tends to share a causal relationship (with governance as the dynamic element).

The significance of this research points in three directions: first, it suggests a partnership between planning and plant science for the delivery of green city and for addressing issues of well-being in the development of the urban environment. This suggests that the partnership compels the components of the urban environment to provide ecological, biological, social and economic services. To these end innovations for securing green growth are abstracted into working tools [4]. These working tools make a case for integrating plant scientists into development control mechanisms for urbanized areas. Second, it initiates green city scholarship based on the rethink of planning intuition in Africa. Third, it introduces the meta-theoretical element of development ideology, which integrates proxy governance, into green growth discuss.

## Methodology

The research sets out with the hypothetical statement that vulnerability to the adversities of political economy drives city structure that is vulnerable to environmental adversity. It reviews theoretical frameworks in green planning scholarship as well as the heritage of green growth instruments in Africa. Subsequently desktop and case study approaches were adopted. The desktop study examined the environmental elements in neo-mercantile planning theory. It also explored the redefinition of the urban environment. The case study proposes to diagnose the biogeography of Enugu urban environment (region) in Enugu State, South-eastern Nigeria. This will serve as

entry point to espouse the green city model - using multi-disciplinary approach.

### Result

It is anticipated that the research will succeed in anchoring the green city vision on spatial planning roadmap that is provided in plant science and neo-mercantile planning partnership. This partnership is found to be a basic requirement for the delivery of independent ecosystem services for green city development in the urban environment. Notwithstanding spatial planning and green growth policies in Nordic countries, the research contributes the link between spatial (physical) planning in partnership with plant science and green growth for well-being in Africa.

### References

1. Ormondroyd (2016) Well-being is inextricably linked with the surrounding environment, and natural landscapes have a potent positive effect.
2. Ormondroyd (2016) Ecosystem services involves shading, cooling, control of storm water run-off, and CO<sub>2</sub> fixation Ecosystem services lie at the core of green city concept. The green city concept means a new way of enhancing the sustainability of urbanized areas.
3. The proxy nature of governance is seldom considered as a factor in resilience studies. It is often taken for a given as laws of nature.
4. OECD (2009) Such tools encompass: local climate change action plans, ecosystem planning, green development codes and zoning ordinances, subsidizing green architecture, building materials, and roofs, pedestrian and bicycle planning, energy-efficient street lighting, urban landscaping, densification, and the greening of schools and government buildings.

