

Environment and Habitat Management in Pan-African Development Discourses and Strategies: A Critical Historical Overview

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ABSTRACT:

The place of environment and human settlements management has shown both changes and continuities in Pan-African development discourses and strategies in the post independence period. While colonial conceptions of nature, natural resources and institutional arrangements continue to structure the thought and praxis of policy makers and national development strategies in many countries, there have also been new approaches to environment and habitat management. Based on archival research, semi-structured interviews of officers in relevant global institutions and field experiences in the management of environment and human settlements at national and international levels, I argue that the emergence of Pan-African environment and habitat management paradigms and strategies has been based on the uncritical adoption and/or reflection of contemporary global discourses on the subject. Notwithstanding the significant increase in societal environmental awareness, environment and human settlements have essentially remained areas of public discourse with insignificant practical import. The series of Pan-African development strategies articulated in the post-independence period have neither succeeded in creating a coherent discourse nor an improved environmental and habitat management capacity.

INTRODUCTION

Africa's environmental and habitat management problems have been receiving increasing attention both at the discursive and material levels in national and international debates and development circles. The way Pan-African institutions and African governments construct and respond to the ever-increasing pressures emanating from a deteriorating environmental and habitat nexus has been influenced by international development agencies, national governments, investors, the media, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the broader