Bridging the Gap between Planning Legislation and City Liveability in Papua New Guinea: Reality or Fantasy?

[1]Babarinde, J. A.,[2]Holis, S. S. and [3]Mcvie-Adu, R.

[1,2,3]Department of Surveying and Lands Studies, Papua New Guinea University of Technology, Private Mail Bag 411, Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea.

[1]jbabarin@hotmail.com; [2]sholis7@gmail.com; [3]rosemary.adu@pnguot.ac.pg

Abstract

This conceptual paper is an attempt at identifying the gap between physical (environmental) planning legislation and city liveability in Papua New Guinea, with a view to making recommendations for improved policy formulation and implementation to bridge the gap. The city of Port Moresby, which is the federal capital, mirrors the rest of the urban centres in the country in terms of physical conditions that are a collective reflection on the poor performance of stakeholders responsible for enforcing planning legislation and standards in the country's built environment with the resultant rating of Port Moresby as one of the five least liveable cities in the world. The paper adopts the dialectical method to present two opposing points of view for the discourse (the reality thesis and the fantasy anti-thesis) concerning the redeem-ability or otherwise of the observed gap between planning legislation and city liveability in PNG. The synthesis at the end of the discourse shows that there is light at the end of the tunnel for PNG given the right conditions. The conditions include an imbibed right attitude, concerted enforcement of existing planning standards and development control measures, massive infrastructure development, urban renewal to address the challenges of squatter settlements and steadfastness in stemming the tide of worsening rural-urban migration at the points of origin and destination of migrants.

Keywords: City liveability; sustainability; PNG; dialectical approach; physical planning legislation

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges facing Planning is its breadth of interest; hence, Planning is an extremely ambiguous and difficult word to define (Hall, 1992: 1).To avoid this ambiguity, this study focuses on Environmental Planning, i.e., "The planning of the scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities" (Canadian Institute of Planners, http//www.cip-icu.ca, accessed on 3 May, 2016).

At the heart of the profession is one conclusive fact: homogeneity is absent in the planning profession. The two major practitioner groups are those in the public sector and those in the private sector. Planners call themselves by many names: environmental planner, policy planner, social planner, infrastructure planner, spatial planner, etc.

Planners use a number of tools: public involvement (64%), conflict resolution (47%), site planning (44%), facilitation (40%), urban design (33%), financial analysis (31%), graphics (27%), public advocacy (26%), sustainable development techniques (25%), computer analysis (22%), GIS and Remote Sensing (17%), computer assisted design (14%), architectural design (11%), etc. (Witty, 2002).Therefore, planners are an eclectic lot who come into the profession with a mixture of interests and trainings: geography, geomatics, engineering, history, architecture, sociology, economics, science and real estate, among others. The good news is: All planners, whatever their background, aim at contributing their quota towards the achievement of city liveability and sustainability because they (planners) are public interest specialists.

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The recent (2015) release of rankings of liveable cities (Table 1) in the world sees PNG ranked as 138thout of 140 countries (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2015).

Table 1: The five least liveable cities in the world in 2015

Country	City	Rank (Out of 140)	Overall Rating (100 = ideal)
Libya	Tripoli	136	40
***Nigeria**	Lagos	137	39.7
****PNG**	Port Moresby	138	38.9
Bangladesh	Dhaka	139	38.7
Syria	Damascus	140	29.3

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2015

One defining characteristic of planners, which also has a bearing on city liveability, is that they work in a political culture where they frequently address allocation issues and interface on a regular basis with elected officials, their representatives, interest groups (e.g. NIMBY), and citizens. Therefore, planners must be sensitive to this dilemma that may adversely affect the quality of life in cities.

However, public participation mechanisms associated with environmental assessments is very limited to nonexistent in cities of PNG including Port Moresby and the Physical Planning Act 1989 lacks opportunities for the same (Walter, *et al.,* 2016:22). The preparation of development plans and the decision making process are characterised by "lack of easy access to relevant documents for public comment, limited access to appeal decisions, non-publication of decision-making processes, making it difficult to challenge the final decision, which limits the participation of the public, especially public interest groups" (Walter, *et al.* 2016:23).

Planning is often compromised by the politics of place, and more and more planning is facing conflicts of competing interests (Witty, 2002). Consequently, there is lack of understanding of planning by politicians and, by extension, lack of political support for planning. Yet, 94% of planners believe that their work contributes to an increased quality of life; 84%

believe that they can make a substantial difference to social, environmental and economic issues facing the society (Witty, 2002).

By 2030, it is estimated that more people will be living in urban areas than in the rural communities of the countries in the Pacific Region, including Papua New Guinea. *(UN Habitat, 2012).* Therefore the challenge to make the cities of Port Moresby (Figures 1a-d and Figure 2) and Lae to be liveable is daunting. A review by Walter, *et al.*(2016) of the Urban Developments Plans for Port Moresby and Lae paints a picture of both cities as "disorderly and dysfunctional" with poor planning resulting in "housing shortage, poor transport services, urban poverty, squatter settlements, environmental pollution, deteriorating infrastructure such as roads and sewerage, informal markets, high levels of unemployment, and a disproportionate provision of basic services such as health and education, sporting facilities and shopping centres." The authors went on to describe the cities as "no longer safe for employment, enterprise development and raising families."

Fig. 1a - A Scenic Spot for Tourists, 2012

Fig. 1b - Part of the CBD, 2012

Fig. 1c – Freeway: Port Moresby (2012):

Sign of Traffic Congestion

Fig. 1d - Koni/Habours City, 2012

Figures 1a-d: Fours Locations in Port Moresby Calling for Improved Physical Planning
Source: The Internet, 12 November, 2016

Ondopa and Badi (2014) described the problem as "a sad scenario" with "budding land shortages, never ending traffic congestion, the emergence of illegal building structures, the growing illegal population and illegal settlements, and waste management and pollution issues."

Figure 2 -Pollution in one of the settlements along the coastline within Port Moresby city
Source: Photo taken from UN-Habitat: Urban Profile of Port Moresby, 2010, p.25

The review by Walter, *et al.* (2016) concluded that the urban development plan for Port Moresby is "technically competent"; unfortunately it is "unable to direct and coordinate actual development" on the ground, and therefore the "gap between the reality and the plan visions is hugely wide" and recommended options and strategies intended to close the gap between the planning processes and the actual developments on the ground. This is supported by the observation by UN-Habitat highlighting that "building codes and standards, as well as zoning laws and regulations exist but are ignored*"* (UN-Habitat, 2012).

The Un-Habitat report on the urban profile for Port Moresby in 2010 gave a honest account of the National Capital District Commission, which is responsible for planning of the city, as facing real challenges including shortage of planning professionals, exclusion of community participation in planning processes, disintegration of physical plans and other city's social, economic and principal development policies in physical terms, political influence in planning decisions, and lack of environmental planning which undermines sustainability of the city and surrounding environments (UN-Habitat, 2010:12).

The challenge to make cities liveable is daunting, as summed up by Jones (2012:17), in his remarks: "The reality of PNG's cities' conditions, including economic mismanagement, bad governance, political instability, rising poverty levels, and increasing ethnic diversity in the urban setting (with strong connections to land tenure, social order and place of origin), make it difficult to systematically address urban issues."

In view of the above, this paper is designed to address three research questions as a means of contributing to the knowledge of the subject of city liveability and sustainability, as follows:

i) How can the poor link between planning and politics be improved so as to bridge the gap between physical planning legislation and city liveability in PNG?

ii) With the ranking of Port Moresby (PNG) as one of the five least liveable cities in the world (Tables 1) by the Economist Intelligence Unit Limited (2015), what is the way forward? Can this problem be resolved by PNG Vision 2050?

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on the theoretical lenses gleaned from the concept of *liveability*, which has a strong link with the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) (2010). Mercer (2016) defines *liveability* as a concept that assesses which locations around the world provide the best or the worst living conditions. Assessing liveability has a broad range of benefits, ranging from benchmarking perceptions of development levels, to assigning a hardship allowance as part of expatriate relocation packages. However, critics of this concept have argued that no city in the world is really excellent and that liveability is only a relative term.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit Limited (2015 and 2016), Melbourne in Australia remains the most liveable location of the 140 cities surveyed, followed by the Austrian capital, Vienna, and Vancouver in Canada, which was the most liveable city surveyed until 2011, in the second and third positions respectively. Although the top cities remain unchanged, the last year has seen a number of changes in city liveability scores.

Over the past six months 38 cities of the 140 surveyed have experienced changes in scores. This rises to 53 cities, or 37% of the total number surveyed, when looking at changes over the past year. Of these changes the majority have been negative, 38 in the past 12 months, reflecting deterioration in stability in many cities around the world, mainly due to terror attacks and other forms of insurgency.

The Economist Intelligence Unit's liveability rating quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in any given location, and allows for direct comparison between locations. Every city is assigned a rating of relative comfort for over 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: stability; healthcare; culture and environment; education; and infrastructure. Each factor in a city is rated as acceptable, tolerable, uncomfortable, undesirable or intolerable. For qualitative indicators, a rating is awarded based on the judgment of in-house analysts and in-city contributors. For quantitative indicators, a rating is calculated based on the relative performance of a number of external data points. The scores are then compiled and weighted to provide a score of 1–100, where 1 is considered intolerable and 100 is considered ideal.

The liveability rating is provided both as an overall score and as a score for each category. To provide points of reference, the score is also given for each category relative to New York and an overall position in the ranking of 140 cities is provided. We opine that New York has been used as a benchmark because it is the Headquarters of the United Nations. Mercer

(2016) evaluates local living conditions in more than 440 cities surveyed worldwide. Living conditions are analysed according to 39 factors, grouped in 10 categories (Table 2):

Table 2: A Liveable City's Ten Liveability Indicators.

Factor Category	**Description**
Political and social environment	Political stability, crime, law enforcement, etc.
Economic environment	Currency exchange regulations, banking services
Socio-cultural environment	Media availability and censorship, limitations on personal freedom
Medical and health considerations	Medical supplies and services, infectious diseases, sewage, waste disposal, air pollution, etc.
Schools and education	Standards and availability of international schools
Public services and transportation	Electricity, water, public transportation, traffic congestion, etc.
Recreation	Restaurants, theatres, cinemas, sports and leisure, etc.
Consumer goods	Availability of food/daily consumption items, cars, etc.
Housing	Rental housing, household appliances, furniture, maintenance services
Natural environment	Climate, record of natural disasters

Source: Mercer, 2015.

For the purpose of this study, the above-listed liveability factors are assumed to be indicators of the direct or indirect consequences of good or bad environmental (physical) planning in cities. Incidentally, these are some of the key issues addressed in Papua New Guinea's Vision 2050 and UNDP's HDI.

Table 3: Recommended Land Use Structure for Towns and Cities in PNG

Land Use Type	**Percent of Total**
Housing (Residential)	42
Commercial (Retail/Office)	12
Industrial/Warehousing	10
Public/Semi-Public/ Educational	10
Recreational/Open spaces	13
Transportation	10
Special	4
Total for City	**100%**

Source: Authors, 2016

To strengthen this conceptual framework, we would like to add that any liveable city should exhibit, at least in conceptual or hedonic terms, a balanced land use structure (Table 3), without which there would be a serious imbalance in the spatial transformations of the ten categories of liveability indicators.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was guided by five categories of previous studies, namely:

i) Studies on how environmental / physical planners add value to the built environment and make cities liveable through what they do, e.g. Witty (2002):

- prepare policy and plans (40%);
- advise politicians (32%);
- review development proposals (30%);
- undertake research (27%);
- advise senior staff (21%);
- administer policy (20%);
- facilitate community involvement (19%);
- prepare bylaws and regulations (13%); and
- conduct public involvement (13%).

For example, public involvement or public participation in the planning process (Figures 3a, b and c) may be facilitated through such strategies as letting people understand the benefits of land use planning, that blighted areas in cities are breeding grounds for diseases and epidemics and that good planning creates property values.

Fig. 3a - A community action planning (CAP) workshop in Yangzhou, China.

Fig. 3b - Stakeholder participation at a meeting in São Paulo, Brazil.

Fig. 3c -Slum dweller groups participate at a Cities Alliance Public Policy Forum in Durban, South Africa.

Figures 3a-c: Public participation in the planning process is a necessity for success

Source: Cities Alliance (2007)

ii) Studies on how planning legislation is administered by the government (local, provincial and federal) for development control in cities to prevent urban sprawl and sustain health and safety standards in communities, e.g. PNG Physical Planning Act (1989), through:
    - the exercise of police power to enforce the zoning bylaw; and
    - the use of the power of eminent domain to acquire property compulsorily (expropriation) and pay compensation to the dispossessed, or resettle the displaced people in lieu of compensation. These policies differ from country to country.

iii) Studies on City Liveability, City Sustainability and Climate Change, e.g. Gossop & Nan (eds.) (2011); UNEP (2012);

iv) Studies on Slum Upgrading and Urban Renewal, e.g. UN Habitat-Cities Alliance (2007); and

v) Studies on "Visionary Futures" for Human Settlements, e.g. Colman and Gossop (2013) & Papua New Guinea Vision 2050.

6. METHOD (THE DIALECTICAL APPROACH)

The 'Dialectical Approach' (Hegel, 1812) is adopted for this study. Dialectic or dialectics, also known as the dialectical method, is a discourse between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned arguments. The term was popularised by Plato's Socratic dialogues but the act itself has been central to European and Indian philosophy since ancient history. However, the term dialectic is not synonymous with the terms debate and rhetoric. Rather, Hegel's (Hegelian dialectic) (1812), usually presented in a threefold manner, comprises three dialectical stages of development: a thesis, giving rise to its reaction, an antithesis, which contradicts or negates the thesis, and the tension between the two being resolved by means of a synthesis.

We used a combination of secondary data obtained from previous studies, archival documents, publications released by the UN-Habitat, PNG's National Research Institute (NRI) and the PNG Government, our own field experiences and primary data gathered through random sampling conducted in the two cities of Port Moresby and Lae to generate our study findings presented in the next section of the paper.

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In line with the conceptual framework and the research method adopted in this paper, our findings have been split into three categories: Argument 1: *The Reality Thesis*, Argument 2: *The Fantasy Antithesis,* and Argument 3: *The Truth Synthesis*.

However, before proceeding to the dialectic arguments, it is necessary to show the responses we obtained from a field survey of 100 residents of Port Moresby and Lae (Table 4). What we did was to ask each of the respondents to rank the 10 indicators of liveability according to their perceptions concerning the severity of the indicator-problems in both cities.

Table 4: Perceptions of Residents of Port Moresby and Lae about Liveability Indicators

Factor Category	**Description**	**Ranking for Port Moresby City**		**Ranking for Lae City**	
		Score	**Rank**	**Score**	**Rank**
Political and social environment	Political stability, crime, law enforcement, etc.	**608**	**4**	**594**	**4**
Economic environment	Currency exchange regulations, banking services	**770**	**10**	**776**	**10**
Socio-cultural environment	Media availability and censorship, limitations on personal freedom	614	7	626	8
Medical and health considerations	Medical supplies and services, infectious diseases, sewage, waste disposal, air pollution, etc.	**552**	**3**	**576**	**3**
Schools and education	Standards and availability of international schools	632	9	630	9
Public services and transportation	Electricity, water, public transportation, traffic congestion, etc.	614	7	616	6
Recreation	Restaurants, theatres, cinemas, sports and leisure, etc.	610	6	610	5
Consumer goods	Availability of food/daily consumption items, cars, etc.	608	4	622	7
Housing	Rental housing, household appliances, furniture, maintenance services	**160**	**1**	**146**	**1**
Natural	Climate, record of	**340**	**2**	**300**	**2**

environment	natural disasters				

Source: Mercer (2015) and Authors' Survey, 2016

Survey findings indicate that the two cities of Port Moresby and Lae, which are the first and second largest cities respectively in PNG exhibit very similar liveability conditions, which mirror other cities in the country. Specifically, at the lower end of the scale, housing (rank 1), natural environment (rank 2), medical and health considerations (rank 3), and political and social environment (rank 4) are the four most serious challenges inhibiting city liveability in both cities (Table 4). At the upper end of the scale, economic environment (rank 10), and schools and education (rank 9) are the two least severe challenges facing the two cities. It is interesting to observe that consumer goods (availability of food and daily consumption items like cars, etc.) ranked higher or better in Lae (rank 7) than in Port Moresby (rank 4). This underscores the fact that food and many other consumer goods are generally cheaper and more available in Lae, which is the industrial hub and a major port city, than in Port Moresby that plays the role of the nation's federal capital where consumer goods could truly be very expensive.

i) Argument 1: The Reality Thesis

We argue that bridging the gap between Physical (Environmental) Planning Legislation and City Liveability in Papua New Guinea can be a reality. The following reasons are advanced for this position:

- **PNG has a standard administrative framework for physical planning, which is enshrined in the Physical Planning Act 1989 and the National Constitution, as follows:**

- Constitutional parliamentary democracy and a Commonwealth realm composed of 22 provinces are already firmly established in the country.
- The National Physical Planning Board (NPPB) under the Ministry of Physical Planning is in charge of matters of national and provincial interests.
- The 22 Provinces in the country are empowered to have Physical Planning Boards but the NPPB can intervene at this level if needed.
- The National Capital District has a separate Physical Planning Board (ideal for a Federal Capital with complex planning issues), while Local Physical Planning Boards only exist within the National Capital District; and
- Although municipalities do not have their own local planning authorities, they do rely on their respective provincial planning boards. This is questionable, though, because most municipalities around the world usually have their own planning boards (Babarinde, 2015). Yet, the system has been working positively for the country and it is contended that it will remain functional in the foreseeable future.

- **The main Planning Legislation is legally sound.**

- The Physical Planning Act No. 32-1989 establishes a comprehensive mechanism for physical planning at national and provincial levels of government.

- The Act provides powers for planning and regulation of physical development in the country. The Act binds the State and all lands in the country, whether alienated (state land) standing at 3% or customary land which accounts for 97% of all lands in the country. This is necessary for promoting uniformity in enforcement of development control measures across the country.

- **Planning implementation instruments are in place.**

- The main instruments of the Physical Planning Act 1989 are provincial development plans, local development plans or subject development plans.
- The Department of Lands and Physical Planning oversees all matters regarding land registration and physical planning, although this department (the DLPP) has been described by the Minister of Lands as the most corrupt civil service department in the country (PNG Government Media, 2015).
- In the same vein, the 'LAGIS' tool used as Land Information System (LIS) in PNG has been found to be fraught with problems, but recommendations have been made for its improvement (e.g. Tumare, Babarinde and Tagicakibau, 2015).

- **Development Control Measures**
- The Physical Planning Boards and the local authorities are in charge of development control.
- Development control measures include requirements compelling developers to obtain licences and permits, as well as completing required notifications and site inspections in the process of seeking approvals for development applications. However, some reports from the municipalities have indicated that the enforcement of development control measures in the country is facing some bottlenecks. It is contended that although PNG has a satisfactory legal framework in place for physical planning administration, the implementation of policies and plans is problematic and needs to be overhauled.

ii) Argument 2:The Fantasy Antithesis

We also argue that bridging the gap between Physical (Environmental) Planning Legislation and City Liveability in PNG is a fantasy. The following reasons are advanced for this pessimistic stand:

- **Sustainability and Urban Management**

- The DLPP is responsible for integrating environmental planning into physical planning and development, and for conserving natural resources. Is this possible when the DLPP has been indicted as being corrupt? We do not think so.
- Immediately after political independence in 1975, PNG declared "Integral Human Development" as the fifth Directive Principle in its National Constitution. However, in the past two decades, politics have largely been

defined by attempts to reconcile differing views of development. This conflict is a dilemma militating against progress.

- It is officially believed in PNG that development must occur in ways that preserve resources for the future and that respect the multiplicity of social and cultural groups in the culturally diverse country. However, there is a preponderance of evidence (e.g. Filer, 2011) indicating that the Special Agricultural Business Leases (SABLs) are ripping off the customary landowners (sharing a huge 97% of all lands) in the country.

- **Public Sector Budget Cuts**

- The Department charged with managing the PNG's Scientific Society promotes the sciences, exchanges of scientific information, preserves scientific collections, and establishes museums, while the University of PNG and the PNG University of Technology, among others, provide scientific and technical/technological training for high level manpower development in the country. However, it is no longer a secret that government has started implementing university budget cuts of about 40% p.a. due to the economic downturn facing the country. It is contended that these budget cuts are not healthy for the sustainable development of the country, particularly considering the acute shortage of physical planners who would be required to implement development control policies for the towns and cities (Walter, *et al.* 2016). The budget cuts also apply to other sections of the service sector, including infrastructure services, which constitute the engine of economic, social and environmental development.

- **Shortage of Manpower (Physical Planners)**

- Ideally, every province and municipality in PNG should have sufficient numbers of qualified planners to implement plans and policies in a cost-effective manner. This is not the case as none of the universities in the country is training planners who can help reverse the tides of blight and planlessness in the squatter settlements that continue to degrade city liveability in the country.
- However, the PNG University of Technology is currently developing a Master's program in Urban and Regional Planning in the Department of Surveying and Land Studies, which if approved should help turn things around for the better.

- **PNG Vision 2050**

- The idea of PNG Vision 2050 is clearly a very laudable step in the right direction. However, the Vision needs to be carefully monitored and evaluated periodically in order to ensure that its lofty goals are achieved. According to Ambang (2012), the Government's PNG Vision 2050 sets the overall

direction for the country to attain the nation's dream to be a 'smart, wise, fair, healthy and happy society' and one of the top 50 economies in the world by year 2050.The country, according to Ambang, can be transformed into an emerging developing country if all the directional statements under Vision 2050 are articulated, institutionalised and implemented efficiently and effectively by the government and by its development partners and agencies including the business sector.

- However, there are challenges ahead that must be overcome as the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) for PNG in 2011 indicates that PNG is among the group of low human development countries, being ranked 153 out of 187 countries and falling below most of its smaller South Pacific Island countries (Ambang (2012).
- In addition to this gloomy picture, the Liveability Index for Port Moresby (the nation's capital) is also rated as 38.9% (ranked 138 out of the 140 cities evaluated worldwide in 2015), according to the Economist Intelligence Unit Limited (2015). Specifically, some of the challenges facing the achievement of PNG Vision 2050 include the following (Ambang, 2012; Stephens (2011):

i) Corruption and bad governance – These are barriers to sustainable development, although it is acknowledged that corruption is a worldwide problem;

ii) Poor rating on the Corruption Index - For 2011, the index shows that New Zealand, Finland, Sweden and Singapore were ranked with scores of 9.2 to 9.5 and were perceived to be 'very clean' countries. In comparison, low scores for Pacific countries indicate worrying levels of corruption: Samoa 3.9; Kiribati 3.1; Tonga 3.1; Solomon Islands 2.7; and the worst score for PNG, 2.2;

iii) Political instability – Political instability can turn away investors and create an unattractive business environment and it causes investors to be concerned about its influence on major projects (The National, February 20, 2012);

iv) Law and order and security - Maintaining law and order is one of the major concerns for development that has already exerted an extra burden on the national budget and resources (Desmoulins, 2011; Tei, 2012);

v) Inadequate and poor infrastructure - particularly in the rural areas - Many of the country's roads including the national highways and the provincial roads are in poor condition (National, February, 10, 2011, p. 16). A good road network to connect villages, districts and provinces is essential to facilitate delivery of goods and services and improve the livelihood of the people (Kendeman, 2011; Gumuno, 2011).

vi) Low Literacy Rate – The UNDP (2011) gives a 60.1% literacy rating for PNG. Yet, more than a third of the more than 7.3 million population, most of whom live in traditional subsistence villages in rural areas (87.5%) are unable to read and write. According to Hukahu (2011), many school-age children are not attending school in both urban and rural areas because their parents cannot afford to put them and keep them in school. Furthermore, as argued by Sinebare (2011), the achievement of universal basic education is a *sine qua*

non for the future progress and development of the country and for the achievement of PNG Vision 2050.

vii) Investment– As reported by Ambang (2012), the report on UK business opportunities in the Pacific Islands in 2011 highlights PNG as enjoying exciting economic times, despite the challenges involved. The report also highlighted five sectors which potential business investors could tap into. These are mining, oil and gas, renewable and green technologies, tourism, agriculture and fisheries, although the report also highlighted the risks involved. These include corruption, political instability, deteriorating infrastructure, insecure land title and high crime rate.

8. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In this concluding section of the paper, our task is to present the *Truth Synthesis*, indicating what we believe is the truth based on our ensuing thesis and anti-thesis positions. The paper argues that bridging the gap between Physical (Environmental) Planning Legislation and City Liveability in Papua New Guinea is a possibility that can be achieved, given the right conditions that have been discussed. On the other hand, the paper also argues that bridging the gap between Physical (Environmental) Planning Legislation and City Liveability in PNG may remain a dream or fantasy if the right conditions are not allowed to prevail or are unsustainable. Given the challenges and opportunities facing PNG today, the question that urgently requires a frank answer is this: What is the Way Forward (the Truth) for PNG?

In our considered opinion, we are positive that there is light at the end of the tunnel. It is a reality that PNG can indeed turn things around if everyone in the country would just begin to dream big and remain resolute to reach the promised land (PNG Vision 2050), where all the villages, towns and cities in the country would become liveable and sustainable! However, this lofty goal is a joint responsibility requiring stubborn faith, commitment, self-denial, mass re-orientation, urban renewal, and the eradication of illegal settlements and blight, with adequate financial and institutional support by both the public and private stakeholders. Better results will be achieved if all the parties can collaborate through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP's), rather than acting individually.

Towards this end, the following specific recommendations, if thoughtfully implemented, would go a long way in bridging the gap between physical (environmental) planning legislation and the existing low level of liveability of towns and cities in Papua New Guinea:.

i. The Right Attitude - Everything we see physically in terms of low environmental quality in many towns and cities across the country can be turned around for the better, given the right attitude to confront the challenges currently facing the country. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." The challenges or mountains facing PNG today can be surmounted with the right attitude, which accepts the challenge that failure is never an option and that nothing is impossible!

ii. Review of Existing Urban Development Legislation
iii. Urban Renewal and Slum Upgrading
iv. Facilitation of Mass Literacy and Public Participation in Planning
v. Review of Alienated and Customary Land Tenures
vi. Infrastructure Development through PPP's
vii. Development of New Towns and New Estates
viii. Relocation and Decentralisation
ix. Improved Public Access to Affordable Housing Loans

Finally, it is our fervent hope that all the city stakeholders in and outside of Papua New Guinea would seize the opportunity highlighted in this paper based on the reality thesis to turn things around and make city liveability and sustainability a reality for all the towns and cities in PNG, rather than a dream, which no one can afford.

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Author Biographies

Jacob Adejare Babarinde (jbabarin@hotmail.com) is a Registered Urban & Regional Planner, Chartered Valuation Surveyor (FRICS), Registered Valuer, Licensed Realtor and Professor, Department of Surveying & Land Studies, Papua New Guinea University of Technology, Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea

Suman Steven Holis (*sholis7@gmail.com*) is a Lecturer, Registered Valuer and Section Head of Property Studies, Department of Surveying and Land Studies, PNG University of Technology, Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea.

Rosemary Mcvie-Adu (*rosemary.adu@pnguot.ac.pg)* is a Lecturer in Property Studies in the Department of Surveying and Land Studies, PNG University of Technology, Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. She is affiliated with the PNG Institute of Valuers.