

# **CORRUPTION IN URBAN PLANNING**

**A guide for professional and trainee planners**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary	2
Introduction	4
Guide overview	6
The basics of corruption	9
Corruption risks in urban development and planning	21
Individual & organisational dynamics of integrity	33
The role of professional ethics in urban planning	37
Tactics & strategies for addressing urban corruption	51
Additional resources	63

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urban planners are entrusted with the power to make critically important, long-term decisions that determine the future development of cities and towns around the world. The decisions they take shape the urban environment and directly affect the lives and livelihoods of entire communities.

Unfortunately, planning systems are particularly prone to corruption. Decisions taken by planning professionals and departments are frequently made to secure private gains – whether for financial, political or social advantages – at the expense of the public good. There are many reasons for the planning system to be vulnerable to corrupt practices, including:

1. the high financial stakes of decisions that influence property and land values and that determine the viability of large-scale developments
2. the competing needs of various actors (state bodies, private sector interests and citizen groups)
3. the pressure applied by special interest groups (developers, landowners and political parties) and, critically,
4. the highly discretionary nature of the decision-making process

In many cities and urban environments across sub-Saharan Africa, corruption flourishes within the context of already highly challenging planning environments. Rapid urbanisation, socio-spatial injustice (fuelled by inequality and systemic deprivation), informality, outdated and overly complex legislation, overlapping (and often weak) land management systems, and significant gaps in the availability of up-to-date and reliable data – all of these factors create an environment in which corruption within the planning system can take root.

Corruption within the planning system has many negative consequences for people, communities and entire countries, including:

1. damage to the legitimacy and credibility of political and bureaucratic institutions
2. unjust spatial, social and economic outcomes, especially for disadvantaged and marginalised people, most notably women, children, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities
3. increased environmental degradation and hazardous land use
4. diminished efficiency of urban administrations

Corruption is a particular challenge where public sector decision-making intersects with private interests. The risk is especially acute where substantial power and discretion is granted to professionals who are afforded a high status within society, such as urban planning and development practitioners. As members of a profession that requires substantial formal education, specialised training and often registration with and continued vetting by dedicated professional bodies, planners are respected as skilled and knowledgeable experts, who presumably make well-informed and fair decisions. In other words, planning professionals enjoy a certain credit of trust from the public and are thus not immediately met with the same level of scrutiny as, for example, politicians.





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While the urban corruption challenge has many dimensions, two factors are particularly prominent in creating a permissive environment for corruption. Firstly, pressure on urban professionals to compromise their integrity is fuelled by intense urban real estate speculation. As real estate has become the world's biggest store of wealth, it has also become a key tool for money laundering and tax fraud.<sup>1</sup> Commercial interests in large windfall gains might thus induce planning professionals to take decisions against the public interest, which they are mandated to protect.

Secondly, planning decisions have both short-term repercussions and long-term implications for communities, businesses and socio-ecological environments within a city or town as they direct immediate spatial change and future development patterns. Yet there seems to be a lack of accountability in the urban planning sector, even though it disproportionately affects vulnerable people and marginalised groups, further exacerbating inequality and entrenching poverty. It is therefore essential that urban planners take informed decisions in the best interests of the city's residents and that the planning systems they operate in are transparent and accountable.

There is no silver bullet for fighting corruption, and interventions need to be nimble and attuned to the local socio-political, cultural, economic, legal and spatial context. At the same time, ongoing rapid urbanisation, especially in the global south, demands action now. Hence, this guide, from Transparency International's Land and Corruption in sub-Saharan Africa programme, outlines a number of starting points for how urban planners can build on popular anti-corruption approaches to tackle corruption in their sector, for example, through supporting institutional and legal reforms in their sector or campaigning for greater accountability within their professional associations.

Our goal is to equip prospective and established urban planning professionals – from the public, private and civic sectors – with the necessary knowledge, tools and tactics to recognise and push back against corrupt practices in their day-to-day work, and within the planning and urban development sector more generally.

# INTRODUCTION

Urban planning determines where public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads and public transport facilities will be located, and it controls the supply of land suitable for development through regulations and permissions. As a discipline, it resolves the location of rights and services within a spatial framework, which is intended to safeguard the public good and the long-term interests of the city and its inhabitants.

Decisions taken by urban planners can have a direct impact on land values and are, as a consequence, closely observed by private landowners and investors interested in extracting the maximum value from their properties. The practice of urban planning is not an exact science and, despite the many codes and frameworks that govern the profession, planning decisions remain subject to socio-cultural norms and personal biases. This leaves considerable scope for the interpretation of plans, policies and programmes in the hands of a small group of professionals and decision-makers. The highly technical yet discretionary nature of decision-making processes around urban land management coupled with the high financial value often associated with the outcome of decisions reached by urban planners creates opportunities and incentives to compromise the public interest in pursuit of personal gain. This is often further compounded by undue political influence, for example, when mayors or councillors lean on planning departments to change zoning or approve specific planning applications that do not conform with codified spatial development frameworks.

## Challenges across the African continent

Corruption in urban development is by no means a uniquely African phenomenon, as examples from the [UK](#),<sup>2</sup> [Italy](#)<sup>3</sup> and [Spain](#)<sup>4</sup> attest. Nonetheless, problems associated with corruption in planning processes

are particularly complex in African cities. Rapid urbanisation and land speculation, outdated master plans,<sup>5</sup> inappropriate legislation (often inherited from colonial periods), tensions between statutory and customary legal land administration systems, weak professional bodies, and scarce human and financial resources are just some of the systemic drivers of corrupt practices in many African cities.<sup>6</sup>

Compared to the size of the population, the urban planning profession in most African countries is very small and thus often unable to meet the sheer demand for planning services from the public and private sphere. For example, in a 2013 study, the African Planning Association and UN Habitat estimated that Burkina Faso has only 14 accredited planners serving a population of nearly 17 million people, while just 2,333 planners serve 162.5 million people in Nigeria.<sup>7</sup> This sits in stark contrast to the United Kingdom, which then had 23,000 planners for 61.1 million people. While these numbers are already a decade old and are likely to have changed due to general demographic dynamics or national interventions, they nonetheless illustrate the persistent lack of professional urban planning capacity. This also increases the possibility for conflicts of interest to arise as qualified planners are led to alternate between working on publicly tendered projects and private development commissions to meet the growing demand for planning expertise in the face of rapid urbanisation across the continent.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1: Ratio of population to planners** (UN Habitat and Africa Planning Association)<sup>9</sup>

Country	# people per planner
Burkina Faso	1,214,286
Nigeria	69,653
United Kingdom	2,656

Across the African continent, cities and towns are growing rapidly, expanding into peri-urban areas and densifying within urban cores at breakneck speeds. **In 2022, seven of the ten fastest growing cities in the world were located on the continent**, specifically in Nigeria, Angola and Burundi.<sup>10</sup> According to the OECD (2020), Africa's cities will be home to an additional 950 million people by 2050. While popular discourse views African urbanisation mostly through the lens of its largest megacities, such as Lagos or Kinshasa, it is important to point out that most growth is taking place in small and medium-sized towns.<sup>11</sup> Given these dynamics, the challenge with professional planning capacity is not merely the per capita shortage of trained planners in many African countries but also their distribution as the majority of planning professionals tends to concentrate in major agglomerations, leaving the emerging small and medium-sized towns further underserved.

Corruption in spatial planning and development can have both immediate and long-term consequences that can damage the environmental, social and economic interests of cities and their residents. Immediate consequences of corrupt urban planning decision-making can include the displacement of vulnerable populations with insecure tenure or the loss of valuable green or recreational spaces. For example, in 2015, after returning from the December school holidays, pupils and parents of a primary school in Kibera, Nairobi, found that the school playground had been fenced off by a private developer, despite the land being zoned as part of the school's public premises. Contrary to initial perception and despite the school's long-standing land use permission, this land grab had been officially sanctioned by the local land commission in an apparent quid pro quo between the private developer and the local planning authority. Only after widespread public outrage was the fence removed and the school's rights reaffirmed.<sup>12</sup>

Beyond these immediate consequences, the longer-term effects of corruption can plague cities for decades. When land use is determined by a small group of private interests looking for maximum capital gain instead of being based on public needs – which are supposed to be professionally mediated by urban practitioners through planning frameworks and integrated urban policy tools – then corruption can hardwire unsustainable and unequal development patterns into the city fabric. For example, if planning officials are pressured to move the urban edge – the boundary that demarcates the limits of an urban area – to accommodate a greenfield<sup>13</sup> housing development, this can put pressure on environmentally sensitive areas and intensify urban sprawl, not least because it discourages developers to realise infill developments within the existing city limits.<sup>14</sup>

A good illustration of these tensions and detrimental long-term urban consequences is provided by the late African-planning theorist Vanessa Watson in her discussion of WesCape,<sup>15</sup> a mixed-use development proposed to be developed on the outskirts of Cape Town in 2013. Criticised as an “anti-urban” strategy by local experts, one that would encourage sprawl, lock low-income households into a poverty trap due to its remote location and which stood in stark contradiction to the city's spatial development framework, the project was ultimately rejected following pushback from the public and the professional planning community.

In sum, corruption in urban planning is bad for the contemporary fabric of society and the future of African cities. Corrupt practices need to be identified and eradicated from the sector by addressing the causes, incentives and enabling factors at the systemic, professional and individual levels. The stakes are high, and the level of effort required to combat corruption in urban planning is equally great. This guide seeks to form part of this ongoing effort.

# GUIDE OVERVIEW

This guide has been created to provide prospective and established urban planning professionals with the knowledge, tools and networks needed to tackle corruption in their work.

Real-life case studies and links to key resources – ranging from documentaries and news articles to academic papers and reports – are included throughout. These can be found within box texts, footnotes and the recommended resources section at the end of each chapter. Several chapters include *reflection* activities for the reader to pause and consider particular scenarios and what actions they might take under the given circumstances. These reflections can be undertaken as an individual activity or, ideally, shared and explored with colleagues or peers.

Though the guide has been written with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa, where we have researched corruption within urban development and land use management most extensively, its practical examples and guidelines are relevant and applicable in many contexts outside the continent.

We hope that by reading this guide, urban planners will:


1. gain a deeper, evidence-based understanding of the nature, scale and scope of corruption and how it relates to their own experience
2. develop an increased awareness of the multidimensional nature of corruption in the planning profession and of how corrupt practices negatively affect society in general and the long-term sustainable development of cities, in particular
3. strengthen their sense of professional responsibility and moral agency despite the challenges posed by rapid urbanisation, increasingly polarised spatial development, political expediency, and so on
4. familiarise themselves with a range of practical tools, strategies and mechanisms to identify and act against corruption in their daily practice
5. understand the importance of using professional expertise to advocate for urban integrity and to systematically address corruption through professional bodies and peer networks



## Gender awareness

Gender affects various aspects of the urban planning profession and has a fundamental influence on everyday social encounters. Readers are encouraged to carefully consider the nexus of gender and corruption while engaging with this guide and to actively embrace a gender perspective with regards to urban planning.

## Recommended resources

This guide includes references to articles, academic papers, films and other resources that are highly recommended companion pieces to the content presented. Many of these resources are freely available to access online, while, unfortunately, others sit behind a paywall. Pay-to-read publications are clearly indicated by a  symbol.

**Table 2: Overview of a gender perspective in urban planning** (Adapted from UN Habitat)<sup>16</sup>

Having a gender perspective in urban planning does NOT mean...	Having a gender perspective in urban planning DOES involve...
focusing only on women	looking at the inequalities between men and women
treating women only as a vulnerable group	recognising that both men and women are actors in the planning process
treating women and men exactly the same	designing planning strategies that take the inequalities and differences of men and women into account
striving for numerically equal participation between men and women	moving beyond only counting the number of male and female participants to focus on the substance of their involvement as well as the impact planning has on men and women
assuming that all women (or men) will have the same interests, views or priorities	recognising the differences between different groups of men and women (based on age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.)
focusing only on employment equity issues within organisations	recognising that equal opportunities for women within organisations is only one aspect of gender equality
making gender-based assumptions about expertise, capacities and responsibilities	understanding the specific situation and documenting the actual conditions and priorities



photo: [Xelkoom/Unsplash](#)

# THE BASICS OF CORRUPTION

This chapter sets out a working definition of corruption, delves into the various forms of corrupt practices, details many of its corrosive effects on the integrity of urban governance and explains some common misperceptions surrounding the issue.

## Understanding corruption

Transparency International defines corruption as **the abuse of entrusted power for private gain**.<sup>17</sup>

- + Abuse = the misuse or mistreatment
- + Entrusted power = authority and trust granted to experts and decision-makers under the assumption that they are acting with integrity or serving the public good
- + Private gain = benefits that serve individual interests or those of specific interest groups (including political groups or parties)

Corruption occurs in both the public and the private sector. It is premised on the abuse of power within a fiduciary relationship and posits the pursuit of private gain (for financial, material, political or social advantage) over the collective strive towards the greater public good.

Professor Robert Klitgaard famously conceived of the following formula to describe corruption:

$$+ \text{Corruption} = \text{monopoly} + \text{discretion} - \text{transparency}^{18}$$

In other words, corruption tends to take place when an organisation or person has monopoly power over a good or service *and* the discretion over who will receive how much of it *but* is not accountable for these discretionary decisions.

While this equation is a good rule of thumb for considering different aspects that influence corruption, it is not a universally accepted formula. For example, whether reducing monopolies also reduces corruption<sup>19</sup> or whether more transparency leads to better accountability<sup>20</sup> are questions that are still debated. Moreover, the reduction of discretion in favour of more expansive and often formalised accountability mechanisms can create more red tape, which can slow bureaucratic processes and thus increase corruption pressures to circumvent and “speed up” the system.<sup>21</sup>

## Types of corruption

Corruption can be classified as grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the level at which it occurs.

- + **Grand corruption** describes acts committed at a high level of government that distort policies or the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders – political office holders or well-connected individuals – to benefit at the expense of the public purse and the greater good.
- + **Petty corruption** refers to everyday abuse of entrusted power by low and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, often as they attempt to access basic goods or services from hospitals, schools, police departments and other agencies.
- + **Political corruption** is a manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision-makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth.

## Mechanisms of corruption

There are various mechanisms through which corruption takes place, including:

- + **Bribery:** straightforward transactions in exchange for specific behaviour (quid pro quo).
- + **Patronage:** relationships of mutual benefit that enable undue influence or provide lucrative opportunities to the parties involved. For example, obtaining a government job, cash or public works projects in exchange for political support.
- + **Cronyism:** closely interwoven networks between political and business elites with multiple connections, common interests and mutual favours on many levels. Often includes familial ties, cross holding of business interests and the frequent movement of individuals between public and private spheres referred to as the “revolving door”.

## Contrasting dynamics

**Collusive corruption:** a collusive practice is “an arrangement between two or more parties designed to achieve an improper purpose, including to influence improperly the actions of another party”.<sup>22</sup>

When it comes to corruption, collusive practices typically involve coordination between “insiders” and their clients to obtain an undue advantage or to avoid an obligation. Examples include bid rigging during procurement processes, in which a favoured firm wins the tender in return for paying kickbacks to the procuring entity, or backroom deals between firms and planners to secure lucrative deals. Elected officials can also misuse their position to favour selected corporate interests in, for example, mining, infrastructure development or urban mega-projects.

While collusive corruption can doubtless be profitable for those party to the arrangement, it invariably entails a wider negative cost to others. As the phenomenon of corrupt land grabbing in areas inhabited by marginalised groups demonstrates, those at risk of discrimination are less likely to be the beneficiaries of collusive corruption and more likely to bear the cost.

**Coercive corruption** refers to extortive practices such as “impairing or harming, or threatening to impair or harm, directly or indirectly, any party or the property of the party to influence improperly the actions of a party”.<sup>23</sup>

Corruption is often coercive in nature, where corrupt actors leverage power asymmetries through the use of implicit or explicit threats and intimidation to extort goods, money, services or even sexual acts from their selected victims in return for access to entitlements such as health care, education or land ownership documents.

The literature indicates that marginalised groups suffer from an above average chance of being the victims of coercive corruption, in which corrupt actors intentionally target them for exploitation.<sup>24</sup> Growing attention to the phenomenon of sextortion – the abuse of power to obtain sex – shows how pernicious this can be, with enormous hidden costs for individuals and communities subject to these practices.

## Breaking the myths

There are many misunderstandings and misperceptions surrounding corruption that serve to downplay the prevalence of corrupt practices and undermine efforts to eradicate them from public life. The following are some of the most persistent and pernicious corruption related myths:

### **MYTH 1:** **Corruption is perpetrated by a few bad apples.**

This widely held belief assumes that corruption is limited to a few individuals acting immorally within an otherwise just and transparent system. This perception ignores the systemic nature of corruption within faltering bureaucratic systems. In reality, corruption can involve large numbers of stakeholders operating at various levels – whether in highly organised rackets or scattered practices of petty corruption, such as bribery, that are normalised in a specific setting.

Numerous international studies have shone a light on the systemic drivers that encourage corruption, including conflicting incentives, extensive discretionary

and monopolistic power arrangements, low/erratic payment structures, as well as a lack of accountability and a widespread culture of impunity.<sup>25</sup> Anti-corruption scholar Alina Mungiu-Pippidi even argues that, in many parts of the world, corruption is “an intrinsic part of a certain governance context, a social allocation mode”.<sup>26</sup> In other words, corruption is not a deviation from the norm but is deeply woven into the social order in question. The fact that, according to the 2017 Global Corruption Barometer,<sup>27</sup> 36 per cent of respondents around the world believe that public institutions such as the police are corrupt shows the systemic nature of corruption and disproves the myth of “just a few bad apples”.

Systemic corruption leads to entrenched mistrust in government institutions among citizens. For example, as Transparency International’s 2019 Global Corruption Barometer – Africa<sup>28</sup> shows, in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, this distrust in the public sector affected the public response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak.<sup>29</sup> High-level corruption involving Red Cross workers hampered emergency response efforts by diverting funds away from essential health care services, such as through paying “ghost workers”. In fact, in the case of Liberia, the population was so distrustful of its government that many people initially suspected that reports of an outbreak were fabricated by government officials to enrich themselves and embezzle international emergency aid.<sup>30</sup>

In India, low-level officials in the water sector share the bribes they solicit with their superiors, whom they bribed to obtain the job in the first place. Such elaborate pyramid schemes result in vast sums, consisting of countless small bribes, being passed up to officials at the highest level and into the coffers of the incumbent political party.<sup>31</sup>

In Brazil, one of the largest corruption scandals in the country’s history<sup>32</sup> – uncovered through “Operation Car Wash” – demonstrates how bribes for contracts with state-owned enterprises are extracted through intricate networks of financial service providers, political and business intermediaries, as well as shell companies. While the investigation initially focused on contracts with the state-owned oil company Petrobras, testimonies helped to uncover a complex network of collusion between lobbyists, major political party officials and the country’s largest construction firms. By 2016, 37 criminal charges had been brought against 179 people, mostly politicians and businesspeople. This included the director of Odebrecht, one of Brazil’s largest conglomerates, who was sentenced to 19 years in prison and – after negotiating a plea bargain – also admitted that his company had been running a “bribery department” that had paid bribes to government officials in 12 countries.<sup>33</sup>



## MYTH 2: Corruption cuts through red tape and greases the wheels of economic growth.

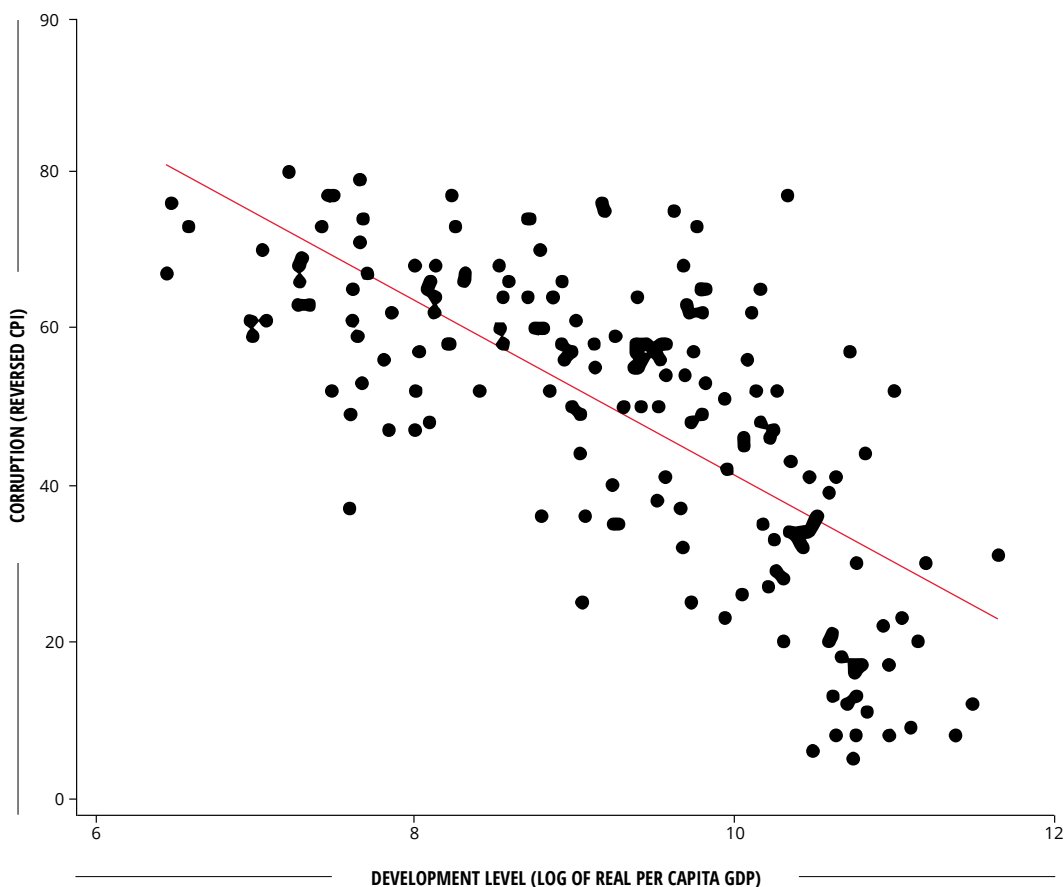
This myth commonly relates to the practice of “speed money” – the payment of additional fees to obtain government services or licences, such as building permits, more quickly. However, this myth overlooks the ripple effect and longer-term implications of corruption.

Those arguing in favour of corruption as a “facilitator” contend that government bureaucracy is so complex

and cumbersome that measures to circumvent it are, in fact, beneficial, that corruption actually “greases the wheels” of the economy. However, while paying for advantages in public services may benefit individuals in the short term, research has shown that corruption further undermines the integrity of existing regulations by incentivising officials to create ever more red tape and apply existing regulations inconsistently as a means of generating greater opportunities for extortion.

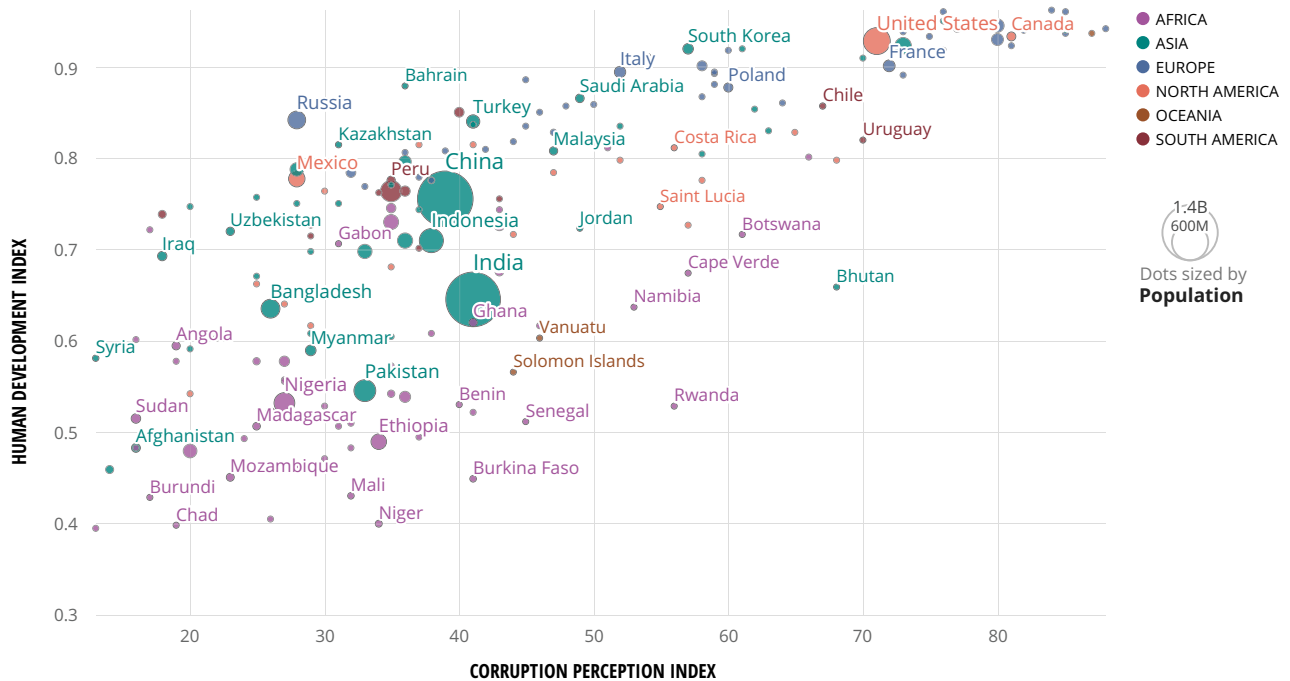
As economist Sergei Guriev notes, “[c]orruption either results in excessive red tape or makes the government withdraw from socially justified regulation. In both cases, corruption reduces social welfare”.<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 1: Corruption and development levels, 2018<sup>35</sup>**



Notes: The figure shows the correlation between corruption (measured via the reversed CPI) and the development level (measured via the log of real per capita GDP) for the year 2018. The coefficient of correlation is 70.51%. Over the whole period for which comparable data is available (2012-2018), the coefficient of correlation is also 70.52%.

Figure 2: Human Development Index vs. Corruption Perception Index, 2018.<sup>36</sup>



Source: UNDP, Human Development Report (2021-22); Transparency International (2018)

Furthermore, a plethora of studies<sup>37</sup> has shown that corruption regularly correlates negatively with long-term economic growth and competitiveness figures. It has been found to hamper business operations, discourage foreign investments, lead to

inefficient credit allocations, stymie entrepreneurship, limit competition, and lower the quality of public infrastructure and services that are conducive to economic development.<sup>38</sup>

**MYTH 3:**

**Corruption is a tax on rich individuals and businesses, but otherwise it's a victimless crime.**

Another stubborn myth about corruption is that – like in the tale of Robin Hood – corruption merely takes from “those who have” in a righteous act of redistribution which, morally, does not produce

victims. Contrary to this widely held belief, the social and financial costs of corruption are enormous and gravely affect the cost of living, political stability, business growth, job creation and even the right to life itself across the social spectrum. Research from around the world has shown that the poorest and most marginalised people in society are those most likely to fall victim to corruption, directly and indirectly.<sup>39</sup> Corruption negatively affects the equitable distribution of social welfare and government services because the benefits of corruption flow to the well-connected higher income groups, thus further increasing social inequality.

In 2011, a French research team found a significant link between high levels of child mortality and high levels of corruption. Their conservative estimate was that the deaths of 140,000 children (under the age of five) every year were related to corruption. The report noted that this number “largely exceeds the conspicuous pooled total of cholera, rabies, Ebola and combat-related deaths”.<sup>40</sup>

In Bangladesh, more than 600 people died (and more than 1,000 were injured) in 2013 following the collapse of a building that housed several garment factories in Savar. The majority of the victims were women and their children, who were kept at a nursery facility within the building. Subsequent investigations found that several building codes had been violated and that the four upper floors of the eight-story building had been constructed illegally.<sup>41</sup>

photo: Yury Birukov/[Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com)





**MYTH 4:**  
**Women are less  
corrupt than men.**

According to International Relations scholar Anne Marie Goetz, this myth surged in the early 2000s, with some international donors proposing that countries with larger number of women in politics and in the workforce had lower levels of corruption.<sup>42</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that liberal democracies with lower levels of corruption have more women in public office than less liberal regimes, this statement also perpetuates the essentialist idea of women as being of higher moral nature and thus, by default, their presence in public life would be an antidote to corruption.

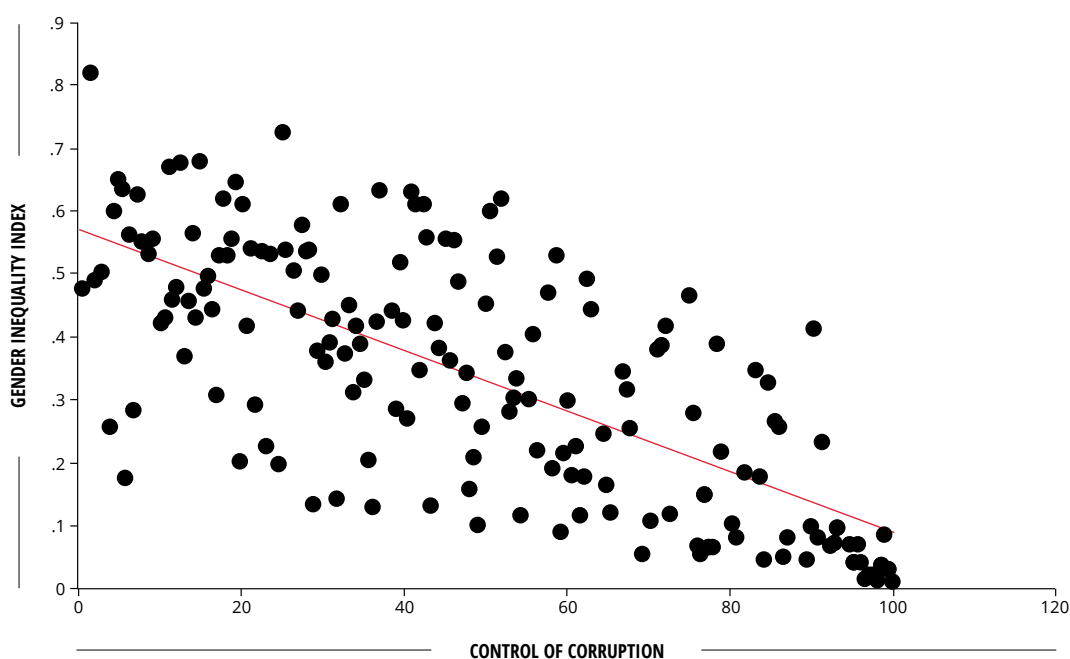
While high levels of gender inequality and corruption can indeed be observed together, to date studies

could not confirm that the number of women in government or its increase had any significant impact on the prevalence of corruption.<sup>43</sup> While Goetz argued that gender inequality and the challenges it creates for women to reach positions of authority simply limits the *opportunities* for corrupt behaviour, some other studies found that women are more risk averse and have a lower tolerance towards corruption.<sup>44</sup>

While experimental studies have observed some further differences between men and women when it comes to corruption – for example, that when it comes to bribes, women are offered lower amounts<sup>45</sup> – these have been attributed less to nature and more to socio-cultural circumstances.

What has however been confirmed by several studies is that gender diverse individuals are more likely to be affected by corruption – both directly as, for example, victims of sexual extortion and indirectly because, for example, they are more vulnerable to the negative effects of public service corruption on the poor.<sup>46</sup>

**Figure 3: Gender inequality index and control of corruption, 2021.**



Source: Author; based on the UN's Human Development Report and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators.

**MYTH 5:****Corruption is part of Africa's urban culture.**

This myth suggests that corruption is endemic to the continent; that it is a kind of primordial phenomenon and thus is impossible to fix. While in some contexts, the act of giving gifts to authorities (such as traditional leaders) has historic roots – and colonialism has certainly played a prominent role in institutionalising corruption in many places<sup>47</sup> – any attempt to generalise corruption as a continent-wide cultural phenomenon ignores the rich diversity of African societies that defy such easy categorisation and lazy stereotyping.<sup>48</sup>

In fact, a 2006 Afrobarometer survey showed that most Africans think that corruption such as bribery and nepotism is wrong and should be punished.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, many African countries that share similar cultures and systems of traditional governance actually vary significantly in the types of corruption they experience, its prevalence within society and people's attitudes towards corrupt practices.<sup>50</sup> After all, it only takes one look at the latest [Corruption](#)

[Perception Index \(2021\)](#) to notice that corruption is a truly global phenomenon, and high-profile scandals – like VW falsifying their pollution emissions – to show that western countries are by no means immune to egregious forms of corruption.

Framing the problem of corruption as one of culture – often vilifying customary practices in the process – not only essentialises corrupt practices and justifies their persistence, it also wrongfully implies that things cannot, and will not, change. Giving the opening address to the 1994 African Leadership Forum seminar on corruption, democracy and human rights in East Africa, Nigeria's former President Olusegun Obasanjo said,

*"I shudder at how an integral aspect of our culture could be taken as the basis for rationalising otherwise despicable behaviour. In the African concept of appreciation and hospitality, the gift is usually a token. It is not demanded. The value is usually in the spirit rather than in the material worth. It is usually done in the open, and never in secret. Where it is excessive, it becomes an embarrassment and it is returned. If anything, corruption has perverted and destroyed this aspect of our culture."*<sup>51</sup>



In the United States, 75 per cent of the population regards corruption as widespread throughout its government structures, according to a Gallup poll.<sup>52</sup> Political corruption and collusion between high-ranking politicians and lobby groups are frequently uncovered, particularly in periods prior to elections, and numerous state senators have been indicted for bribery in recent years. This includes a California senator who was arrested for involvement in an international gun smuggling ring.<sup>53</sup> The widespread lobbying that is common in the global north is not a corrupt activity per se, but it can lead to bribery and political corruption when it is opaque and disproportionate.<sup>54</sup> In fact, lobbying and corruption are substitutes rather than complements; a firm's decision whether to lobby politicians or simply bribe them is dependent on the strength of a country's democratic institutions.<sup>55</sup>

## Summary

- + Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.
- + Corruption has many guises, but the outcome is always negative for society at large.
- + Corruption is not caused by a few "bad apples".
- + Corruption does not "grease the wheels".
- + Corruption is not a tax on the rich and not a victimless crime. In fact, it often affects the most vulnerable the most.
- + Corruption is not engrained in culture and can be overcome.

## Reflection

Take some time to consider how corruption has affected you personally. Try to recall a time when you experienced corruption personally or it has affected someone you know. Alternatively, try to recall a story of corruption you have heard or read about. Consider the following questions:

1. How would you categorise this type of corruption (grand, petty, political)?
2. What were the means of corruption used (bribery, patronage, cronyism)?
3. Was the corruption collusive or coercive?
4. How do you know corruption was involved?
5. What were the causes of this corruption?
6. What are the effects of this corruption?
7. Which social groups (women, children, urban poor, people with disabilities, the elderly, etc.) were affected, directly and indirectly?
8. What measures were taken as a result?
9. What measures could have been taken?

## Recommended resources

### Culture and corruption: 10 reasons why it is the wrong topic and one idea how it could be made exciting

Zinnbauer, D. (2015)

<https://dzinnbauer.medium.com/culture-and-corruption-e67b4e513ecc>

A short essay that enlists a set of arguments and empirical insights to suggest that the link between culture and corruption is weaker than often thought.

### Eight questions about corruption

Svensson, J. (2005) *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19(3), 19–42

<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/089533005774357860>

A succinct and accessible run through of corruption concepts and empirics.

### Africa: Cultural dimensions of corruption and possibilities for change

Egbue, N.G. (2006) *Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(2), 83-91  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09718923.2006.11978361>

This paper takes a closer look at the perceived “culture of corruption”, as well as trends in probity, accountability and efficiency within public service provision across the continent. Using examples from Nigeria, it provides a rich picture of the complex connections between cultural practices and corruption. 💰

### Capture and corruption in public utilities: The cases of water and electricity in sub-Saharan Africa

Auriol, E. and Blanc, A. (2009) *Utilities Policy* 17(2), 203-216  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0957178708000830>

This paper focuses on public utilities in poor countries, paying particular attention to capture and corruption issues. 💰

### Corruption. A very short introduction

Holmes, L. (2015) *Oxford University Press*

This seminal text provides a clear overview of the most common types and arrangements of corruption, as well as their detrimental societal effects. 💰

### Corruption. What everyone needs to know.

Fisman, R. and Golden, M.A. (2017) *New York, NY: Oxford University Press*

An accessible overview on the causes of corruption and the social, political and economic damage it can do, drawing on examples from across the world. 💰



## Audio-visual resources

### Kickback – The global anti-corruption podcast

<https://soundcloud.com/kickback-gap>

Well-known podcast series that features in-depth interviews with a range of international anti-corruption experts on issues such as state capture, procurement fraud or reputation laundering. ▶▶

### Living with corruption

Samara, S. (2007) *Insight News Television*

Award winning documentary that showcases how ordinary people are victimised by corruption in Kenya and Sierra Leone. 💰 ▶▶

photo: Dynamoland/Shutterstock.com







photo: Namnso Ukpanah/Unsplash

# CORRUPTION RISKS IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

This chapter focuses on the specific ways in which corruption plays out within the context of urban planning and its impacts on the future of cities. It explains why corruption is such an important issue for those working in urban planning and demonstrates how corruption manifests in the context of rapidly urbanising African cities.

## An introduction to urban planning

From a technical perspective, urban planning is concerned with three core activities:

1. making plans and visions for the future development or redevelopment of urban areas (“forward planning”)
2. regulating land use, spatial development and the built environment
3. coordinating and aligning infrastructure investment to support a long-term spatial development framework or vision

The intention of these activities is to protect the public good and ensure possible negative consequences of land development, such as urban sprawl or environmental degradation, are mitigated and controlled.

## Good practice planning

Friedmann argues that there is no one practice or concept of urban planning but rather a “plurality of planning cultures” that coexist and frequently compete.<sup>56</sup> There are nonetheless a few general pointers of what good practice in urban planning should be informed by:

1. reliable data and projections on urban processes, needs and trends<sup>57</sup>
2. a well-researched and grounded long-term vision of environmentally sustainable, economically vibrant and socially inclusive urban development<sup>58</sup>
3. a solid grasp of the broader urban policy landscape<sup>59</sup>
4. outcomes of public participation processes and inclusive stakeholder consultations<sup>60</sup>

*Note: countries across Africa have chosen different approaches to development with implications for the extent to which participation is seen as important, and the level of government at which decision-making powers are located (centralised versus decentralised).*



## Planning is political

Urban planning is often viewed as a highly technical and bureaucratic process. However, decisions about planning rights (when, where and to whom they are granted), where and when infrastructure is installed or upgraded, and broader city-visioning and plan-drafting, result from a highly political and contested set of processes. As eminent planning theorist Vanessa Watson has aptly argued, “planners can frequently find themselves in situations characterised by conflicting rationalities”.<sup>61</sup>

While some scholars view urban planning is merely another tool to assert dominant politico-economic interests, Roy has contended that planning practices offer a site for “social struggle and mobilisation for justice”.<sup>62</sup> In other words, socio-cultural practices that govern everyday life cannot be separated from urban planning, and thus neither can different ideologies, forms of power and politics.<sup>63</sup>

While planning as a discipline aims to serve the long-term interest of the public, planning decisions will always have winners and losers. Some individuals, companies and communities will directly benefit from the planning decision while others will not. In many countries, this decision is significantly shaped by party political considerations, including economic blueprints and maintaining popular support. For example, during Zimbabwe’s 1999 land reform, the planning and land administration sector became a key battleground for controlling and distributing resources to political supporters.<sup>64</sup>

## Planning reflects the wider society

Good planning aims to increase equity, justice and sustainability. However, in practice, decisions often reflect existing inequities within the wider society as the more powerful and more wealthy sectors of society are able to influence planners to act in their favour. Individuals, communities or entire suburbs may be systematically disadvantaged because of:

1. **Gender and sexual orientation:** planning decisions can reproduce patriarchal visions of urban space with a lack of awareness for gender specific needs of women and those with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. This has been particularly visible in the discussion around urban design and the lack of safety for women, children, and gender diverse individuals, among others.<sup>65</sup>
2. **Cultural or religious identity:** planning legislation, particularly in African cities, is often still based on outdated and ill-fitting European planning paradigms that fail to account for cultural differences and their dynamic evolution.<sup>66</sup>
3. **Socio-economic status:** planning practice has a historic track record of systematically dispossessing the urban poor, for example, through slum clearance legislation.<sup>67</sup>
4. **Disability:** while inclusive urban planning is essential for the ability of persons with disability to fully take part in public life, their perspective remains largely absent in both planning practice and scholarship, leading to continued systematic exclusion.<sup>68</sup>
5. **Political affiliation and/or ethnicity:** ethnically or politically discriminatory planning laws can lead to the restriction of access and ghettoisation of certain groups. For example, in Kibera, Nairobi’s largest informal settlement, the proposal for the establishment of a “homeland” for the Nubian community sparked protests in 2014.<sup>69</sup>

While planning decisions that disadvantage groups or individuals based on their identity or status may not at first appear to be examples of corruption, plans and planning systems must consider and challenge the implications of entrenching existing unequal societal patterns within the urban system.

## Why urban planning is prone to corruption

The planning system is prone to corruption in many cities and urban areas around the world. Planners are entrusted with the power to make decisions that affect the future development of the urban environment and, by extension, the lives and livelihoods of people and communities. Unfortunately, planning decisions frequently favour private gains (including financial, political or sexual advantage) at the expense of the public good. There are three core reasons for this:

1. **High stakes.** The value of an individual plot is determined by several factors including the location relative to infrastructure and the development rights of the plot; for example, whether it is zoned as urban or rural. Planning departments wield power over such high-value decisions and the larger the gains at stake, the greater the incentive for corruption. As Chiodelli and Moroni observe, “corruption in the planning field is largely tied to the opportunities that land use planning generates by allocating development rights and land uses (following a discretionary and differentiated logic).”<sup>70</sup> In turn, urban planning decisions are part and parcel of intricate land speculation dynamics.<sup>71</sup>

A 2001 international study found that serviced land (sites with basic utilities already in place) in southern Africa was, on average, four to five times more expensive than unserviced land.<sup>72</sup> Given the rapid rates of urbanisation, it is likely that this differential has increased dramatically over the past 20 years. Moreover, when land is serviced and has been allocated rights, this differential increases even more. It is therefore widely accepted that urban planning decisions can create a substantial financial windfall for landowners and others.

2. **Competing needs and pressures.** Planning sits at the nexus between differing state systems, private sector interests, the demands of citizen groups and the public good. Thus, planners need to strike a delicate balance between different and often competing interests and forced to make trade-offs between conflicting objectives such as environmental protection, social provisions and economic development. In turn, planners often come under pressure from developers, landowners, political party representatives, other departments, civil society and many other actors to compromise the principles of their planning practice in favour of specific interests. Depending on the level of state centralisation, pressure might also be exerted by the national government on local municipalities, particularly in cases where local government is represented by the opposition.<sup>73</sup>

Large-scale investors and developers can put pressure on local political representatives to support their projects by threatening to relocate to other cities offering more favourable conditions. For example, an international investor seeks to finance a large residential estate and shopping mall complex, but the construction will encroach on sensitive wetlands and is located far from existing public transport infrastructure. The investor claims the development will create significant economic opportunities and release pressure from the congested city centre. In this case, politicians may put pressure on the planning department to approve the development despite the environmental destruction involved and infrastructure requirements it would impose. This risk of undue political interference is naturally heightened where those politicians have received illicit inducements from the developers in exchange for their support.

3. **Discretionary and complex decision-making processes.** Planning decisions are ultimately discretionary in nature. Since there is no single “public good”, there is not always a “right way” to draft or implement plans. To make matters more complex, many existing plans and regulations do not serve the public good and are in urgent need of revision. It is, therefore, hard to ascertain the basis for decisions and uncover corruption in the decision-making process.

In Cape Town, a large development called WesCape was put forward by a development consortium. The proposed “new city” included 200,000 households outside the perimeter of the existing city limits. While the city’s spatial development framework required densification within the existing boundaries, there is a widely accepted need for the city to provide additional housing for poor and disadvantaged residents. The plan to expand the urban edge was granted, making way for the development, despite a backlash from the professional planning and urban development community, which was concerned the development would create “sprawl”. Given the complexity of planning decision-making, it was near-impossible to determine whether private or political interests influenced the decision-making process.<sup>74</sup>

## **Corruption in urban planning beyond the local planning department**

Planning decisions are not only the domain of local government and municipal officials, although municipal planners are often responsible for daily practices of land use regulation. Corrupt planning decisions may also be taken in:

1. national departments (particularly those concerned with urban infrastructure plans)
2. mayoral offices and other political entities
3. private planning practices and consultancy firms

## **Corruption throughout the planning cycle**

Given that reducing fraud and increasing transparency in public procurement are important mainstays of global anti-corruption programming,<sup>75</sup> one could easily assume that the risk of corruption is at its highest during the tendering phase of the planning process. However, different risks are present throughout the planning cycle.

**Figure 4: Examples of corruption during the planning project cycle.**

Inspired by the Anti-Corruption Training Module of the Global Infrastructure Anti-Corruption Centre.<sup>76</sup>

### > DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Witnesses, experts, arbitrators or judges may be bribed to give false evidence in a dispute proceeding, or to give a favourable opinion or verdict.

Competing parties threaten or inflict violence on one and other in efforts to win disputes.

### > PROJECT SELECTION

Unnecessary or unviable projects may be selected for corrupt reasons.

### > PLANNING

Planning permission may be granted in exchange for a bribe.

Plans may be drafted with the intention of personal gains which benefit particular interest groups or communities.

### > OPERATION/MAINTENANCE

There may be corruption in the tendering and execution of operation and maintenance contracts.

### > DESIGN

Designs may be slanted to favour certain contractors or interest groups.

### > EXECUTION

Defective works may be carried out and concealed.

Fraudulently inflated claims may be submitted.

Bribes may be paid or extorted for approval and validation of false claims.

Bribes may be extorted to have legitimate claims and payments approved.

### > FUNDING

Bribes may be paid to obtain financing or other development inputs such as bulk infrastructure, subsidies or land.

### > TENDERING

Bribes may be offered or extorted to win or award contracts.

Bidders may collude to agree which of them will win the contract or push up prices.

### > PRE-QUALIFICATION

Bribes may be paid by a bidding contractor to ensure that key competitors of the contractor are eliminated from the shortlist on artificial grounds.

## Examples of corruption in the planning sector

The three fictional examples below demonstrate some of the ways corruption manifests within urban planning practice, across three key areas:

1. city planning and policy corruption
2. project level corruption
3. planning system corruption

There are many variations on these scenarios and the “currency” of corruption (what is gained and by whom) also differs widely.

## City planning and policy corruption

- + zoning or tax breaks applied to particular areas, in line with political or personal interests
- + public infrastructure investment plans or informal settlement removals that prioritise political or personal interests

**Example:** Mr Brown is a property developer. He is investing heavily in properties on the southeast of his home city. Mr Brown has purchased 30 dilapidated buildings over the past five years, which have even been cut off from municipal services and are being occupied rent-free. Mr Brown’s brother is mayor of the city. Mayor Brown campaigned for election on a platform to “clean up the city”, which he intends to achieve through tax relief schemes for (previously unspecified) neighbourhoods, together with investment in public parks, a public swimming pool and a new police station.

With a limited budget, he can only choose two neighbourhoods to receive this “special zone” status. Knowing that his brother owns numerous properties in the southeast of the city, Mayor Brown chooses this neighbourhood as one of the two improvement areas, ignoring the priority areas defined in the city development plan. The initiative now serves the private interests of the mayor’s family but fails to address the needs of the broader community, present and future.



photo: Antoine Plüss/Unsplash



## Project level corruption

- + receiving or soliciting personal benefit (monetary, sexual, professional, etc.) in return for planning approvals (permits, subdivision, rezoning, etc.)
- + receiving or soliciting personal benefit (monetary, sexual, professional, etc.) in exchange for accelerating approval processes

**Example:** Ms White works for Global Design, a company that supports property developers to obtain planning permission for their projects. She is working with a developer to secure a rezoning order to allow the construction of a hotel on a residential plot. Ms White previously worked in the local planning department, so she understands the planning system very well. Ms White submits the application and prepares to wait for the response of the planning department. A few weeks later, she receives a phone call from her former boss at the local planning department inviting her for dinner at an upmarket hotel. When Ms White politely declines the invitation, he reminds her of the application lodged with his department and suggests it would be in her (and her company's) best interests if she joins him for dinner.

## Planning system corruption

- + nepotism or receiving bribes for planning related contracts (for example, hiring private companies to create plans or implement planning projects)
- + non-competitive public procurement and tender manipulation
- + insider trading of information on future plans or projects

**Example:** Mrs Grey is the head of a city planning department. The current master plan for the city was created in the late 1970s, and a revised plan is long overdue. She decides to hire a company to draft a new master plan and receives the necessary approval from the local government. A few weeks before the terms of reference for the new master plan are publicly circulated, Mrs Grey sends them to an old university friend who runs a design and planning company. She suggests that her friend's company ought to submit a bid and hopes the advance notice would enable them to submit the best bid. Mrs Grey also offers to send the draft tender document, to help both parties align the document to the company's specific profile.

Some common variations on this form of tender manipulation include:

1. splitting a large, high-value contract into smaller contracts to ensure they fall below the value threshold of open and competitive public procurement
2. bundling contracts to guarantee the tender is so complex that only a particular company (or consortium) is able to deliver

## What fuels corruption in African cities?

While corrupt planning practices are prevalent in countries and continents around the world, recent trends in urban development policy and practice across sub-Saharan Africa have created particularly fertile grounds for corruption. This is within a context where the planning challenges are already particularly acute. Although the types of corruption vary significantly across urban contexts, countries and regions, the following themes are common across many African cities and urban areas:

**Urban land challenges.** Rapid urbanisation, dramatic increases in property/land value and the conversion of land from rural to urban, all create opportunities for large-scale value captures and aggressive land speculation.<sup>77</sup>

**Unequal cities.** Planners face an immense task in addressing socio-spatial injustices in the context of extreme inequality and high levels of deprivation among vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and so on.

**Dated plans and laws.** Unreformed legislation and urban development plans (often inherited from colonial periods) frequently conflict with modern social and economic models. This undermines the primacy of urban plans, leading many planners to make decisions without agreed frameworks or legal guidance.

**Complex legislation and processes.** Overlapping and/or conflicting legislation (typically arising from dual systems of state and customary law) leads to confusion and a lack of transparency.

**The challenge of informality.** Failure of codified planning systems to address the realities of developing cities, especially the intertwined challenges of poverty and informality, means the system – and the secure rights it bestows – often only applies to high-income enclaves.

**Lack of data.** Evidence-based decisions cannot be made where significant gaps in the collection and accessibility of reliable data, on urban trends and processes, persist.

**The elusive “market”.** Existing planning processes are often insufficiently dynamic to respond to changing market conditions. Planners will often bend the rules to meet market demand because there is uncritical enthusiasm for attracting and supporting investment/development.

**Status of planners.** Planners are part of an elite and comparatively small professional class. It is also a profession that continues to be heavily male dominated, especially on the African continent where there is already a dire shortage of trained planning professionals.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, planners move frequently between public service and private practice; a phenomenon known as the “revolving door” that allows planners to develop personal, professional and political alliances with those in the upper echelons of power.

**Weak rule of law.** Planning decision-making sits within a broader legal and political system where accountability and transparency systems are often weak or non-existent. This can render the planning system exposed to manipulation by powerful interests and unable to resist political pressures.<sup>79</sup>

## The negative impacts of corruption

The continued presence of corruption within urban planning systems negatively affects the people, governance and development of cities and urban environments around the world. These are just some of the impacts arising from corrupt practices by urban planning professionals:

1. Damage to the much-needed legitimacy and credibility of political and institutional systems.

In 2014, UN Habitat Programme Manager in Malawi, John Chome, argued that Malawians have a decreased sense of obligation to apply for planning permission, land titles or building permits due to a lack of ethics in the city planning environment.<sup>80</sup> In essence, he argues, many citizens have lost faith in the formal institutions of the state.

2. Diminished efficiency of urban administrations, in a context where effective governance is most needed.

The World Bank's Doing Business 2015 report states that, "firms confronted with demands for bribes wait about 1.5 times longer to get a construction permit, operating license or electricity connection as firms that did not have to pay bribes",<sup>81</sup> which imposes a substantial cost on the local economy.

3. Unjust spatial, social and economic outcomes, especially for vulnerable and already disadvantaged groups.

In Zimbabwe, Operation Murambatsvina (translation: urban clean-up) forcibly evicted 700,000 people between May and July 2005. The government squarely targeted already vulnerable groups, namely the unhoused, informal vendors – many of them women and children trying to contribute to their families' livelihood – and people with precarious tenure status in both formal and informal areas. Those whose dwellings and livelihoods were destroyed were told to return to their purported "rural origins" in a forced effort to reverse-engineer the country's post-independence urbanisation.<sup>82</sup> As urban scholar Amin Y. Kamete has aptly laid out in his in-depth research into the operation, planners were deeply implicated in the operation, not only in its realisation but also in its justification through "modernist planning doctrines of order, economy, aesthetics and health".<sup>83</sup>

4. Increased environmental degradation, for example, through permitting housing or industry developments on protected natural sites such as wetlands,<sup>84</sup> water catchment areas or peri-urban land. The latter can also negatively affect a region's food security as the example of urban encroachment on the Philippi Horticultural Area in Cape Town shows.<sup>85</sup>

In Kenya, public land is often used as an instrument of patronage and sold by state officials illicitly to well-connected individuals and companies. Often, this public land had originally been reserved for important social and environmental purposes such as schools, parklands or nature conservation. Once sold, it is very difficult for the state to regain the rights to the land, resulting in a lack of basic public services and green spaces in many areas.<sup>86</sup>

## Importance of combating corruption within urban planning

The funding made available for urban development almost always comes under significant strain because competition for public budgets is intense and construction costs almost always exceed initially budgeted funds. Meanwhile, the opportunity costs arising from poor decisions are equally immense. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that decision-making is rigorous, ethical, transparent and reflects the best interests of the urban area and its residents.

While the short-term effects of planning corruption, such as immediate dispossession and displacement of vulnerable groups or environmental degradation, already warrant taking action, it is the long-term effects that make action pivotal. The typically irreversible and concrete nature of planning decisions, which can seriously decrease the functionality of an urban system for decades, means that the public good (rather than personal or professional interests) must be upheld at all times.

It is also important to note that corruption in urban planning disproportionately affects already vulnerable parts of the population, namely women and children, the urban poor and people living with disabilities. The decisions taken by planners can determine whether small businesses can survive and whether families have land and shelter, access to food, water, sanitation, education, a clean and healthy environment and basic amenities – or not.

## Recommended resources

### Anatomy of urban corruption: A review of official corruption complaints from a Mexican city

Grajales, A., Lagunes, P. and Nazal, T. (2018) *Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy*  
<https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/106078/mex-pub-corruption-lagunes-121318.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Based on a large data set of corruption complaints from an urban district government in Mexico, this study develops a novel typology of urban corruption and shows vulnerabilities to corruption across the local urban development sector.

### Corruption risks and mitigation measures in land administration

Wheatland, B. (2016) *U4 Expert Answer*  
<https://www.u4.no/publications/corruption-risks-and-mitigation-measures-in-land-administration>

Focusing on land administration, this report provides a well-structured overview of different corruption risks in the land administration sector. It also gives insights on possible mitigation measures for different groups of actors involved in land administration and land justice.

### Leveraging the role of the urban planning profession for one of the central policy challenges of our times

Zinnbauer, D. (2019) *African Centre for Cities*. Cape Town  
[https://www.africancentreforcities.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GI\\_ACE\\_WORKING\\_PAPER\\_1\\_DZ.pdf](https://www.africancentreforcities.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GI_ACE_WORKING_PAPER_1_DZ.pdf)

### Report of the fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe to assess the scope and impact of Operation Murambatsvina

Tibajjuka, A.K. (2005) *UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe*. New York.  
<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/ZIM%20UN%20Special%20Env%20Report.pdf>

Based on a case study from Zimbabwe, this text gives a first-hand account of state-sponsored corruption and its detrimental effects on urban development.

### Tools to support transparency in land administration

Asiama, S. et al. (2013) *United Nations Human Settlements Programme*

<https://unhabitat.org/tools-to-support-transparency-in-land-administration-trainers-guide>

A training package published by UN Habitat to strengthen the capacity of those working in the land sector to deliver robust and efficient land administration services. Chapter one (Land Governance Concepts and Principles) includes background information on the impacts of corruption, the benefits of transparency and its relationship to the land sector.

### Towards an urban land resource curse? A fresh perspective on a long-standing issue

Zinnbauer, D. (2015) *Social Science Research Network*

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2689236](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2689236)

Urban land governance is one of the central challenges not just for urban but also more broadly for global development in times of rapid urbanisation. This paper advances a fresh perspective to look at urban land by exploring to what extent it could be characterised as a resource curse problem.

### Urbanisation, informality, and corruption. Designing policies for integrity in the city.

Zinnbauer, D. (2020) *MI Chr. Michelsen Institute (U4 Issue, 6)*

<https://www.u4.no/publications/urbanisation-informality-and-corruption.pdf>

Looking at urbanisation and informality, a defining nexus for local development in much of the global south, this text provides some concrete answers to why and how corruption can hold back cities. It also shows why today's cities should be at the centre of the global fight against corruption.

### Corruption in land-use issues: A crucial challenge for planning theory and practice

Chiodelli, F. and Moroni, S. (2015) *Town Planning Review* 86(4), 437-455.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24579486>

In this seminal piece, the authors show the impact of corruption on urban planning and land use management and make a compelling argument for a future research and policy agenda. 💰

## Audio-visual content

### Corruption and housing issues in Zimbabwe

*Transparency International Zimbabwe (2016).*

This short documentary, produced by TI Zimbabwe, describes several corruption issues around public housing and urban development in the country. ▶️

### What is land corruption?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I\\_BfmdPginA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_BfmdPginA)

Short, animated explainer on land corruption – what it is and why it matters. ▶️





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# INDIVIDUAL & ORGANISATIONAL DYNAMICS OF INTEGRITY

Chapter three focuses on issues of morality and the “slippery slope” towards corrupt practices that individuals and organisations, including professional planners, planning departments and businesses, encounter around the world.

Notwithstanding the salience of systemic drivers of corruption laid out in the previous chapters, this chapter focuses on questions of personal agency and the role integrity plays in the professional conduct of urban planners. Drawing on insights from social psychology, it delves into the key areas of moral reasoning and moral disengagement.

## **An introduction to morality and integrity**

Morality refers to the principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong, or good and bad behaviour. Integrity is the quality of being honest and of having strong moral principles. In public administration, integrity refers to honesty or trustworthiness in the discharge of official duties. Morality and integrity are personal traits that, among planning professionals, require particular attention due to the impact of their actions and decisions on wider society.

## **Basics of moral reasoning**

Our orientation to the world is socially learned and adapts over time; it is not something that anyone is born with or that they naturally receive from their parents. The act of moralising is the process by which we determine whether an activity is good or bad, whether a person is behaving well or behaving badly. In this way, we deem actions immoral (for example, killing is wrong) rather than merely disagreeable, unfashionable or imprudent.

The widely used term “moral compass” does not infer that there is only one right/wrong decision or direction, nor that there is only one path by which to moralise, but that people must work to give direction to their morality through their personal and professional values. The difficult moral choices are not between good and bad but between which option appears most compelling in a particular context and in line with your professional and personal values.<sup>87</sup>

## Moral dilemmas

Moral dilemmas involve making choices between conflicting moral requirements, such as loyalty and honesty. Recognising a moral dilemma means acknowledging a tension between two conflicting, yet equally important, values. The magnitude of the dilemma increases with the degree to which both conflicting values are strongly held by the individual.<sup>88</sup>

### Example: The Robin Hood Dilemma

You are a law-abiding citizen and in your spare time volunteer to help those most in need in your community. You discover that a man from your community has robbed a bank; however, rather than keeping the money for himself, he donates it all to an impoverished local orphanage. The stolen money ensures the orphanage can feed, clothe and care for the children. You know that if you tell the authorities there is a good chance the money will be taken and returned to the bank, leaving a group of orphans in desperate need.

*What would you do?*

Moral dilemmas are common in planning, though they are rarely as clear-cut as the example above. The enduring presence of moral dilemmas within the world of urban planning is perhaps unsurprising given the complexity of building cities and the many social and economic imperatives that urban planning seeks to address.

## Understanding moral disengagement

The following description of the slippery slope of moral disengagement is based upon *Moral Disengagement in Processes of Organisational Corruption* by Celia Moore.<sup>89</sup>

Moral disengagement happens when people convince themselves that their personal moral values do not apply or are useless. People with high levels of moral disengagement can persuade themselves that their actions are acceptable, even if they know they are probably doing wrong from a moral perspective. This leads to the person suspending their self-regulatory processes (moralising) that govern individual moral behaviour.

When it comes to engaging in corrupt practices, high levels of moral disengagement also correlate with high levels of corruption permissiveness, in other words the willingness to justify acts of corruption in society.<sup>90</sup>

## Cognitive mechanisms of moral disengagement

Moore identifies eight cognitive mechanisms through which we morally disengage from the potentially negative consequences of our actions. These are the mechanisms we use to persuade ourselves that our actions are right, even when we suspect or know they are not.

1. **Moral justification** is when someone persuades themselves that a bad action is actually a good one. For example, convincing oneself that selectively disclosing information is critical to protecting the public image of one's company or department.
2. **Euphemistic labelling** renames harmful actions so that they appear benign. For example, claiming that a swimming pool constructed at the president's private residence, but paid for by public funds, is a "reservoir for firefighting purposes".<sup>91</sup>

3. **Advantageous comparison** draws on even more harmful activities to make the action in question seem innocuous in contrast. For example, arguing that the construction of a school on a contaminated site is better than having no school at all. Moral justification, euphemistic labelling and advantageous comparison all serve to facilitate the cognitive restructuring of immoral acts to appear less harmful by reframing the act as somehow beneficial.
4. **Displacement of responsibility** describes the act of attributing responsibility for our actions, and their consequences, to those who may have tacitly condoned or explicitly directed the behaviour ("My boss made me do it").
5. **Diffusion of responsibility** happens when blame is apportioned across members of a group, rather than assigned it to a particular individual ("My part was so small, I can't really take any blame for this"). The displacement and diffusion of responsibility serve to minimise the role and culpability of the individual in the harm caused by their actions.
6. **Distortion of consequences** seeks to minimise concern by subverting perceptions (of scale or scope) of the consequences arising from the action taken; for example, describing corruption as being a "victimless crime".
7. **Dehumanisation** obscures the human consequences of the action by "othering" the victims to make them seem less human ("Beggars and vagrants make our city centre unattractive to visitors so they should be forcefully removed").
8. **Attribution of blame** is when responsibility for the negative impacts of an act is shifted onto others, frequently to those most affected ("It's the fault of the urban poor that they do not make enough money to pay for better housing"). Distortion of consequences, dehumanisation and the attribution of blame all serve to reframe the effects of particular actions, to downplay the true consequences or shift blame onto others.

## Moral disengagement within organisations

Moral disengagement eases the psychological discomfort; in other words, the feelings of guilt or remorse, of corrupt actors, particularly if an individual stands to be rewarded by their organisation for their corrupt actions. As a consequence, moral disengagement may enable individuals to take unethical decisions that are in their organisation's interest more readily and with greater ease.

Unethical decision-making within organisations can be sanctioned and even encouraged by the actions of those who lead by (bad) example. Furthermore, those who are able to morally disengage and take part in corrupt practices (to the advantage of their organisation) are often rewarded with career advancement.<sup>92</sup> In other words, prioritising organisational goals above everything else and being able to "do whatever it takes" is often regarded as a valued leadership skill, even if it requires high levels of moral disengagement. At the same time, while acts of corruption may be committed by such "rogue individuals", it can also be "an expression of a corporate culture that tacitly condones, or at least tolerates wrongdoing".<sup>93</sup> Another qualitative study has also observed a close link between a corrupt organisational culture where the ends justify the means and individual employees act unethically.<sup>94</sup>

While the existence of a universal moral code continues to be subject of debate, there is general consensus around the idea of some foundational moral concerns that unite people around the world:

1. **care over harm:** avoiding harm to others and giving help instead
2. **fairness over cheating:** reciprocating favours and serving justice according to shared rules
3. **loyalty over betrayal:** standing with family/ community/group
4. **authority over subversion:** deferring to legitimate authorities and paying due respect
5. **sanctity over degradation:** valuing purity, cleanliness and sanctity over defilement, contamination and carnality<sup>95</sup>

## Recommended resources

### Business versus ethics? Thoughts on the future of business ethics

Dacin, M.T., Harrison, J.S., Hess, D., Killian, S. and Roloff, J. (2022) *Journal of Business Ethics* (180), pp. 863-877.  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-022-05241-8>

In a collection of short commentaries, invited scholars think about the future of business ethics and provide relevant mediations on questions such as “If it’s legal, is it ethical?”.

### Moral disengagement

Bandura, A. (2011) in D.J. Christie (ed.) *The encyclopedia of peace psychology*. Eq-Po. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9780470672532.wbepp165>

Explains and illustrates the basic points of Bandura’s concept of moral disengagement.

### Moral disengagement in processes of organisational corruption

Moore, C. (2008) *Journal of Business Ethics* 80(1), 129–139.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-007-9447-8>

This paper explores Albert Bandura’s concept of moral disengagement in the context of organisational corruption. The construct of moral disengagement is firstly defined and elaborated, then hypothesised to play a role in the initiation of corruption by both easing and expediting individual unethical decision-making that advances organisational interests. 💰

### The normalisation of corruption in organisations

Ashforth, B.E., and Anand, V. (2003) *Research in Organisational Behaviour* (25), pp. 1-52.

[https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0191308503250012?casa\\_token=Zdbod\\_UUKr8AAAAA:MMomjZOw4D2UEyQV1r9HaRuFwv-J1I54ydC7IbUFXw\\_I17ILE0wbufj11\\_0qOichR53BdAM-ZA898](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0191308503250012?casa_token=Zdbod_UUKr8AAAAA:MMomjZOw4D2UEyQV1r9HaRuFwv-J1I54ydC7IbUFXw_I17ILE0wbufj11_0qOichR53BdAM-ZA898)

A great overview of the mechanisms that normalise corrupt practices within organisations, this text helps to understand why otherwise morally upright individuals can routinely engage in corruption without experiencing conflict and shows how systematic and individual corruption dynamics are mutually reinforcing. 💰

## Audio-visual content

### Four myths about morality and business

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPhi0UAfuQg>

A video recording of a keynote address given by Professor Nick Epley at the Ethics by Design conference in 2016. Epley describes four misconceptions that often misdirect organisations around managing ethics, told through a high-speed journey through the latest thinking on these issues. ▶️

### The truth about dishonesty

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBmJlay\\_qdNc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBmJlay_qdNc)

A short, animated lecture by Dan Ariely, one of the world’s leading voices on human motivation and behaviour. Ariely explains how easy it is to morally disengage and embark on a journey towards dishonest behaviour and explores the impacts of these decisions on society at large. ▶️



# THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN URBAN PLANNING

Chapter four delves into the issue of professional ethics in planning. Using research on values and principles in the planning profession, this chapter addresses key questions surrounding professional integrity and presents some common ethical dilemmas found within everyday planning practice.

## An introduction to professional ethics

Ethics are the moral principles that govern the behaviour of a person or group. They are the standards which guide the behaviour and actions of governments, legal entities and society at large. As Stanley J. Hallett, an American urban planner and community development specialist, has aptly put it, “planning deals with choices and politics deals with choices, while ethics, on the other hand, deals with choices”.<sup>96</sup> Put simply, we are the choices that we make.

## Ethics, values and integrity

While ethics reflect personal and professional standards, it is values that give meaning to the term ethics. It is also values that define what we view as right or correct. Ethics and values are, therefore, connected and indicate how one should behave in any given situation or under a particular set of circumstances. They are also normative, meaning that right and wrong are determined by societal

norms and not by universal truths. As mentioned in the previous chapter, integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. In public administration, having integrity is the antithesis of engaging in corruption (the abuse of entrusted power for private gain).

## Ethical decision-making

Ethical decision-making requires:

1. recognising and showing awareness of moral or ethical issues
2. making moral judgements about issues
3. establishing intent by prioritising moral concerns above others
4. acting with moral and ethical behaviour

## The role of ethics in planning

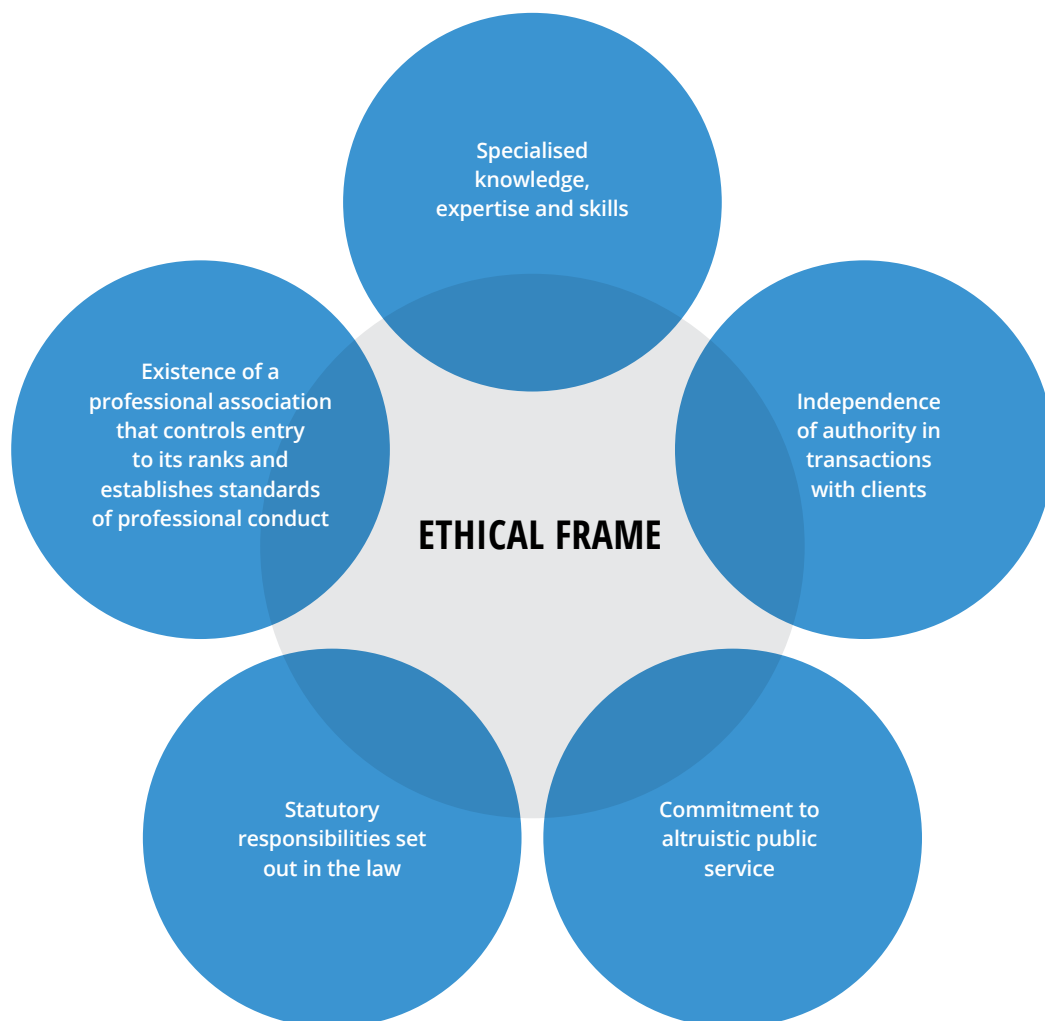
Ethics are crucial to planning practice because moral judgements and ethical choices pervade a planner's daily practice. John Forester believes that, whether they like it or not, planners are "practical ethicists" and their work demands they make ethical judgements.<sup>97</sup>

At some point in their career, most planners will work for, or come into close contact with, the public sector. The citizens they serve have the right to expect that

planners working for the public sector will strive to elevate the standards of urban governance. Even those planners who work entirely within the private sector have ethical responsibilities to the sector, their profession and to the wider society in which they operate, as well as to colleagues, clients and the communities affected by their decisions.

The Ethical Frame of Planning represents the five key traits of the planning practice, put forward in the seminal work of urbanist Peter Mancuse.<sup>98</sup>

**Figure 5: The Ethical Frame of Planning. Source: Stephen Berrisford Consulting based on Marcuse (1976) (see footnote 94)**



## Ethical principles for planners

The following are some basic ethical principles to which all professional planners ought to uphold in their practice:

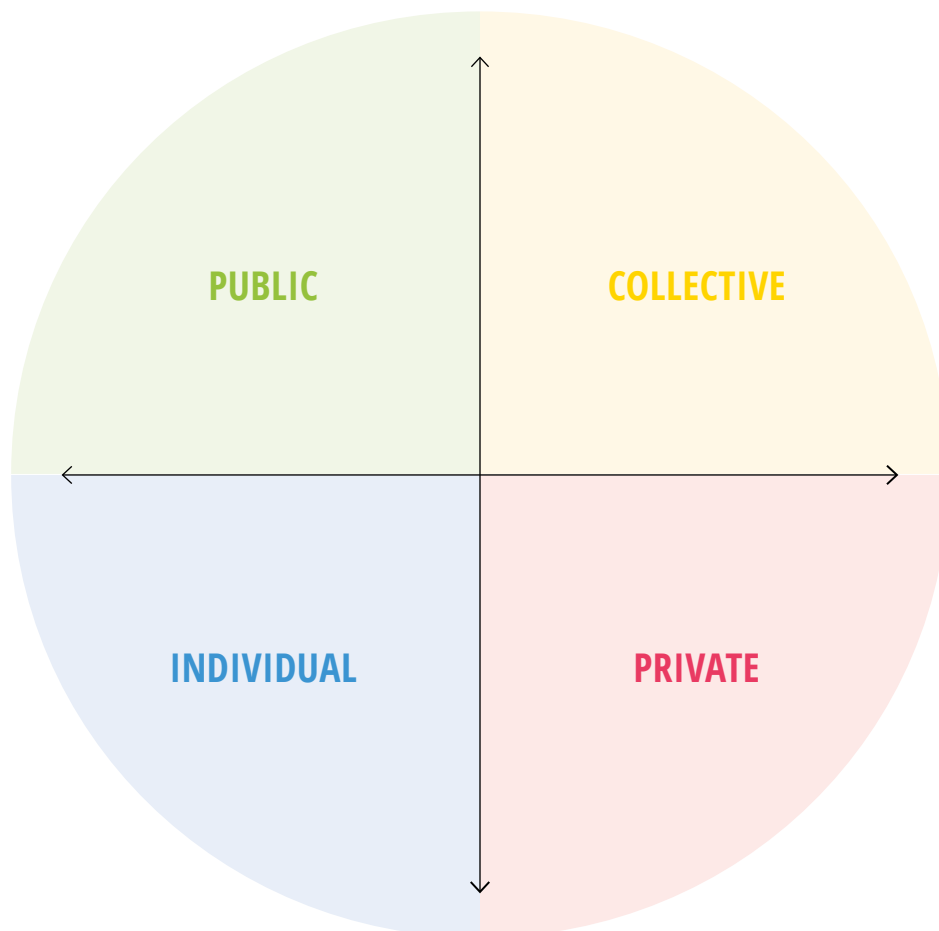
1. Planners should primarily serve the public interest, against which a client or employer's interests should be weighed.
2. Planners should be conscious of both the short and long-term consequences of their actions.
3. Planners should deal fairly with all participating parties in a planning process.
4. Planners should assess and communicate existing, emerging and anticipated social problems to the relevant political leadership, government departments and civil society.
5. Planners should strive to expand choice and opportunity for all people – recognising a special responsibility to work in the interests of disadvantaged groups and people – and should urge changes to policies, institutions and decisions that do not uphold social justice principles.

photo: Ground Picture/Shutterstock.com

## Reflection

Take a moment to consider the principal reasons why you became, or began studying to become, a professional planner. Try to list four or five different

reasons and write these onto pieces of paper, with one reason on each piece. Plot your reasons on the following continuum:



Next, consider what you regard as the most important roles for planners. Choosing three roles from the following list:

1. a non-partisan actor
2. a non-political actor
3. a voice for the oppressed

4. a guardian of balanced development
5. a rational manager
6. a development facilitator

Finally, consider whether you see any ethical conflicts or competition between these roles.

## Ethical behaviour in everyday practice

Many eminent scholars have observed that moral and ethical proscriptions struggle in the face of actual planning practice. According to Marcuse:

*“in most cases, even the rules for telling right from wrong are not clear. Obligations to clients conflict with obligations to the public; following professionally accepted standards of conduct produces results repugnant to most laymen; professional integrity and democratic decision-making seem to conflict; the bounds of professional concern are hazy.”*<sup>99</sup>

Furthermore, numerous case studies have demonstrated that, in spite of professional codes and ethics, planners cannot be relied upon to act independently from the broader development industry, political landscape and their own social status as defined by class, gender, ethnicity, education and background.<sup>100</sup> As Mazanti and Pløger observe, “planners constantly find themselves having to choose between the ethical principles they hold and the ethics of ‘real’ politics.”<sup>101</sup>

The following lists a few of the reasons why urban planning and development processes in African cities are vulnerable to corruption:

1. Varying standards and quality of public service: this refers, for example, to a lack of alignment and productive exchange between different spheres of government or departments (“silo mentality”).<sup>102</sup> It can also refer to geographical divisions, for example, between urban areas which are usually perceived to be better serviced than rural areas.
2. Lack of moral leadership.<sup>103</sup>
3. The tendency to praise people who have amassed wealth quickly, regardless of how it was acquired. Sometimes referred to as “big man rule”,<sup>104</sup> it is particularly pertinent in highly unequal societies where the majority of the population has very limited economic prospects.
4. Erosion of systems of control and accountability, particularly in countries suffering from political instability or civil war: this often goes along with a culture of impunity for those abusing public office and, consequently, a loss of trust in and legitimacy of public service.
5. Failure to fight red tape and streamline processes in urban planning. Obtaining a planning decision or development permit is an often lengthy and thus costly process, which can, for example, invite bribes for expediting the process.
6. Lack of ethics training included within planning curricula: most planning education remains purely technical and does not pay sufficient attention to important socio-political dynamics, for example, the role of gender in urban development.<sup>105</sup>

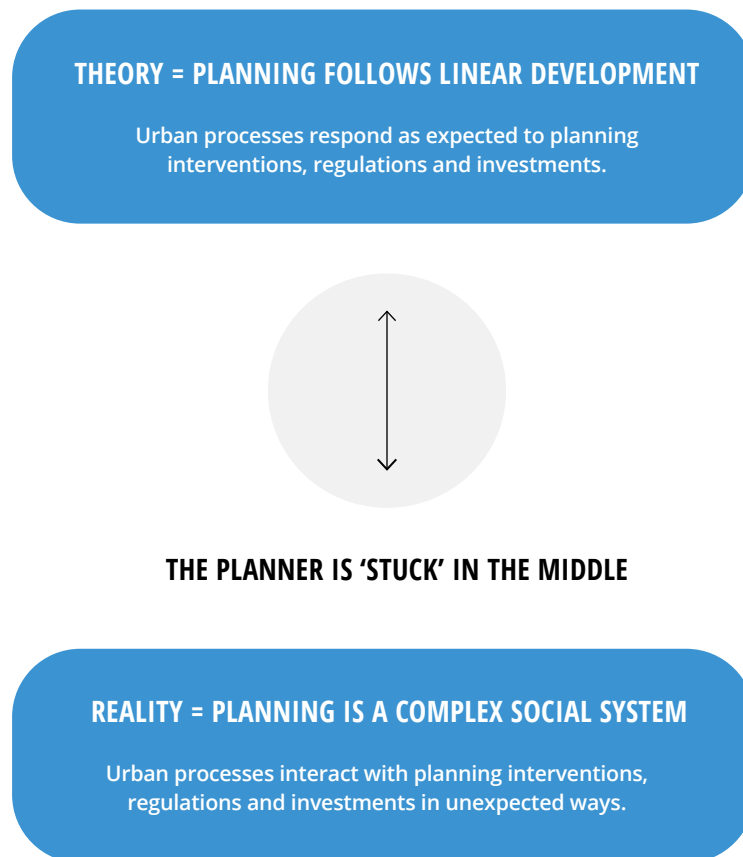


## Contemporary moral dilemmas in planning

Planning is an exercise in controlling complexity. For planners to be responsible for their decisions and actions, they must negotiate this complexity in a variety of contexts. Many of the dilemmas that arise

within public service derive from the tension between what an organisation defines as the public interest and what an individual professional perceives to be in the public interest.<sup>106</sup>

**Figure 6: Theory versus reality in planning**



Source: Stephen Berrisford Consulting

The following are some examples of the moral dilemmas that face modern planning practice.

### The regulation dilemma: protecting rights vs flexible procedures

Planning is always selective and, particularly in the context of limited resources and competing service delivery needs, it is often hard to prioritise where to direct one's planning efforts. On one hand, there is a desire among many planners to proactively drive positive change that helps to realise more just and inclusive cities. On the other hand, there is a prevailing belief that planning should merely focus on enabling a society's ability to organise itself and its cities.

If planning follows this second – more hands-off – approach, it allows for greater spontaneity and creativity to emerge, yet it is also unlikely to directly stir collective urban change. In addition, more flexible procedures might increase discretion and make accountability and oversight more difficult. However, if planning is more prescriptive – precisely setting out the socio-spatial outcomes and pathways to achieving them – it can quickly become selective and exclude new and potentially innovative outcomes from emerging. Moreover, this could also create more red tape, which can increase the likelihood of bribery to speed up or deviate from the prescribed process.

In sum, the **regulation dilemma** lies in the paradox that spatial planning exists as a combination of two different components:

1. ensuring legal certainty (to avoid undesirable outcomes) and defining desirable land uses
2. meeting the need to provide space for unplanned innovation and creative adaptation

In the African planning context, this dilemma is probably best highlighted by how municipalities deal with different forms of urban informality. While it is argued that proactively engaging with the informality of everyday life and the nature of entrepreneurialism is beneficial for planners, they are nevertheless officially mandated to safeguard municipal planning ideals and enforce land management laws. This dilemma is also closely associated with the tension between top-down and bottom-up planning approaches, with many planning systems in African cities clearly biased against informality.<sup>107</sup>

### The investment dilemma: supply-led vs demand-led development rationales

At present, the supply oriented approach to urban development prevails, meaning that urban transformation projects are viewed as an “investment” in the improved future condition of the urban environment. Federico Savini et al. argue that:

*“Along this logic, both land use planning and strategic planning are instrumental in managing the prices of land, manipulating earnings, and strategically governing the urban land market to control both public and private investment returns.”<sup>108</sup>*

However, since the global economic downturn in 2008, attention is increasingly shifting towards the need for a more demand-led planning logic: one that understands and mobilises local demand before establishing the necessary financial arrangements.

As a consequence, Federico Savini et al. observe that:

*“[t]he investment dilemma in planning stems from the need to cope with the problems of a pure supply-led approach by achieving more demand-responsive plans, but without sacrificing the capacity of developers and investors to generate revenue streams that could sustain other projects.”<sup>109</sup>*

Cities across the developing world are often hailed as the “last frontier” in urban development and major cities are witnessing huge increases in domestic and foreign investment. The desire of local and national governments to attract foreign investment and secure short-term profit can create undue incentives for corrupt activities and end up rendering services and building infrastructure that is not responsive to the needs of the public.

For example, large-scale satellite developments – often on the outskirts of existing cities and catering to middle and upper-income residents – have become increasingly prevalent. In the capital cities of Luanda (Angola)<sup>110</sup> and Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo),<sup>111</sup> for example, there is an excess supply of luxury housing because uptake from middle-class buyers was significantly overestimated. In stark contrast to the supply-led model, the demand-led rationale bases decisions on a careful assessment of the existing demand and responds with developments that are often smaller in scale and therefore less likely to be attractive to investors.

## Professional conduct for planners

In general terms, there are four areas of professional conduct that need to be embraced by urban planners around the world:

1. **Conduct that is legal:** publicly employed planners should not accept “compensation” in the form of moneys, gifts or other inducements from external bodies or individuals, must scrupulously avoid prohibited communication with decision-makers, and should seek advice from colleagues or ethics advisers if unsure about the legal compliance of decisions<sup>112</sup>
2. **Conduct that is truthful:** planners must not misrepresent cases or findings, should never make misleading claims and must always disclose a conflict of interests
3. **Conduct that increases public confidence:** planners should not make use of confidential information obtained from a previous employer or client for private gain, must not sell services based on their ability to influence decisions, and always ensure their decision-making processes are open and transparent
4. **Conduct that is professional:** planners must always provide adequate, clear and accurate information, should never engage in “moonlighting” and must not accept work outside of their professional competence

### Reflection

The following scenarios describe some common moral dilemmas experienced by many professionals working within planning practice. After reading each scenario, consider what actions you might take under these circumstances and the reasons for your choices.

#### Scenario One

You are a planner in a local spatial planning department. You have responsibility for reviewing the site plan of a large mixed-use development. The proposed development will substantially increase property tax revenues for the city and will provide much-needed residential housing and commercial units. During your review, you notice the development significantly exceeds the storm water drainage limits, as set out by environmental authorities. The head of your department specifically instructs you *not* to mention this fact in the report and contends that the development size is necessary to “make the deal work”. You are also aware that a review of the environmental standards is long overdue and that, if changes were introduced, a revised code might allow for higher density developments, new technologies and updated designs to address the challenges of runoff and drainage on such sites.

*Consider: what is the ethical course of action?*

### Guidance notes

In this scenario, the planner knows their employer (a public body) is not acting in the best interest of the public but is being compelled to support unethical practice. The planner may also feel an obligation to support colleagues and avoid dissent, due to a sense of loyalty and/or concern for their professional wellbeing. Nevertheless, the planner in this scenario has an ethical obligation to refuse the instructions of their department head and disclose the concerns, based on the following grounds:

**The public is the employer:** the planner’s primary responsibility is to the public, not to formal superiors.

**The importance of whistleblowing:** employees have an obligation to report and/or publicly disclose any known violations of criminal law or actions that may be injurious to the public.

**Organisational flexibility:** internal dissent and the right to dissent are essential ingredients in a responsive and creative organisational structure.<sup>113</sup>

It is recommended that, in this scenario, a planner should adopt the following course of action:

1. engage the department head on concerns over density standards and recommend raising the issue with the respective authorities as a matter of urgency
2. refuse to omit details about the storm water drainage limits as doing so would constitute a misrepresentation of facts
3. make explicit in the report that the existing density standards are outdated and recommend an urgent review and/or special approval by the relevant authorities

### Scenario Two

You are a consultant planner who has been contracted by a city to develop a local transport plan. During your work, you learn that the chairperson of the local transport committee, and a prominent city councillor, privately owns a fleet of minibuses. You also discover that the drivers' association of the fleet is submitting a tender to provide a new minibus route. The councillor has close personal connections to the city mayor and has many other political supporters in city government. You fear retaliation from the councillor and their powerful allies if you raise your concerns publicly.

*Consider: as a certified planner, what should you do?*

### Guidance notes

Professional planners have a moral responsibility (sometimes also legally reinforced) to report any illegal conduct, as are citizens. In this scenario, the planner would be advised to gather as much evidence as possible before making any accusations, public or otherwise. A planner facing such circumstances might consider submitting evidence anonymously to local anti-corruption bodies.

### Scenario Three

A tender for a comprehensive local plan is published by a city. The tender stipulates that the plan needs to be prepared within a six-month timeframe. You know from previous experience that a review process alone will take four to five months, leaving just one month for public participation and preparation of the plans. As the director of a company, you want to secure the contract to develop the local plan, but you know the timeframe is unrealistic and could not be delivered in practice. You also know that your competitors are likely to bid for the project and you suspect they will agree to deliver within the specified timeframe, even if they also realise it is untenable.

*Consider: what should you and your company do?*

### Guidance notes

Submitting a tender without disclosing concerns about the viability of the timeframe would constitute unprofessional behaviour. In this scenario, the company should disclose these concerns as a "challenge" within the tender document and recommend a more realistic timeframe.

**Scenario Four**

You are a mid-level planner at a local planning department and your unit is preparing a comprehensive spatial development framework. The mayor of the city has been in office for more than 10 years. She has indicated that a significant landowner, who is also one of her most important political supporters, has submitted an application to evict people from a large informal settlement. Your department has recently installed basic services in this community. While you are aware that the settlement contravenes the future urban development trajectories set out in your development framework, you are also aware of the urgent need to provide shelter and basic services to the urban poor.

*Consider: how do you respond?*

**Guidance notes**

Providing housing for the urban poor falls within the broader scope of public interest, particularly given that a mass eviction would not address the issues but rather relocate the people and challenges to other areas of the city. At the same time, employees of planning companies need to acknowledge and accept the objectives and nature of the professional services determined by their employers. While evicting disadvantaged citizens may not be illegal (if it follows legal procedures), it may well be inconsistent with the primary obligation of planners to serve the public interest and protect the rights of the most vulnerable citizens.

**Scenario Five**

You work for a private developer for several years before joining the planning department in a large city, together with a colleague from the private developer. After two years at the department, your colleague – with whom you now have an intimate personal relationship – returns to the private sector.

*Consider: how does this affect your personal and professional relationship?*

**Guidance notes**

A professional planner facing a scenario such as this would need to disclose a personal relationship of this nature to their organisation/department, preferably in writing. Furthermore, it would be prudent to ask a colleague to liaise with your former colleague in relation to, for example, building plans or development questions. It would also be necessary to refrain from discussing confidential work matters with your former colleague.

**Scenario Six**

You are a municipal planner with responsibility for enforcing local building codes. You have noticed that several of your neighbours have sealed off the alleyways between their houses with gates and fences. They cite fear of crime and illegal dumping as the reason for blocking the alleyways. However, you are aware they are, in effect, privatising public land and blocking access for emergency vehicles.

*Consider: how would you balance your role as a public servant with being a property owner and a neighbour?*



## Guidance notes

Professional planners facing this scenario would be advised to bring the matter to the attention of their superiors within the planning department and disclose that the violations relate to properties in their own neighbourhood. Ideally, the matter should be pursued by a colleague, not by someone with a direct personal interest. Open communication and public disclosure need to be prioritised at every step. This should include notifying the property owners that have violated the code, giving them an opportunity to seek legal representation and ensuring any (actual or perceived) conflicts of interest within the planning department are duly noted.

### Scenario Seven

You are the head of urban development in a South African municipality during the apartheid era. In 1950, your national government passes the Groups Areas Act (GAA) that makes it illegal for different racial groups to reside together and prohibits access to urban areas for the majority black population. As a committed supporter of the National Party, you enthusiastically set out to restructure the spatial make-up of your (previously multi-racial) municipality according to the specifications of the GAA.

*Consider: are you acting ethically? What are your ethical responsibilities?*

## Guidance notes

While the GAA made the spatial segregation of racial groups formally legal, it did not make it morally right or defensible. The law only served the interests of a few (the white minority) while severely disenfranchising the (non-white) majority. It is the responsibility of a professional planner to advocate for necessary reforms irrespective of personal or political beliefs/allegiances.

### Scenario Eight

You are a public sector planner working in the city council. You have recently hired a consulting company to carry out a redevelopment plan for the area in which you live. After several weeks, the head of the company offers you a job based on the good relationship developed over the course of planning process.

*Consider: are there ethical considerations that would prevent you from accepting the job?*

## Guidance notes

It is important that planners immediately disclose their intention to transfer (into the private sector) to their current employer. They should also recuse themselves from any projects that might constitute a conflict of interest. Once working for the new employer, the planner should be strictly prohibited from working on projects associated with their time in public office or sharing knowledge obtained during that time, which might constitute an unfair advantage for the new employer.

### Scenario Nine

Over the course of your work for the municipal planning office, you form a friendship with a local developer. The developer calls you periodically with questions about planning and zoning and on one occasion offers to buy you lunch at an upmarket restaurant.

*Consider: is it ethical to accept the invitation?*

### Guidance notes

There is nothing in this scenario that suggests the developer has applications pending, which would constitute a conflict of interests. If there were applications in process, then the planner ought to decline the invitation outright. In general, planners engaging in informal interactions with developers need to exercise caution over the nature of such meetings, the location, attendees and the content of discussions. For example, interactions between planners and developers at an industry focused conference would be unlikely to raise concerns due to the professional nature and limited social value of the context. By contrast, a round of golf played together between planners and developers is likely to raise significant concerns given the substantial recreational value of the context and limited professional significance.

### Summary

When it comes to making ethical decisions within professional practice, a useful rule of thumb to follow is that anything you would not want to see reported in the newspaper is probably not the right course of action. The following general principles should also be considered when grappling with scenarios such as those described above:

1. Be open and honest with yourself, your employer, the public and to your clients.
2. Disclose any possible conflicts of interest and recuse yourself if necessary.
3. Calling for more legal regulations is not necessarily the answer. Increasing the legislation surrounding and issue does not mean justice will be served and may result in a reduction of public confidence and trust.<sup>114</sup>

### Recommended resources

#### Built environment, ethics and everyday life – special issue

Kärholm, M. and Kopljär, S. *Urban Planning* (2020) <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/urbanplanning/issue/viewIssue/204/PDF204>

Open-access collection of 13 papers that look at issues of planning ethics from a range of case studies and practice based vantage points.

#### Deep difference: Diversity, planning and ethics

Watson, V. (2006) *Planning Theory* 5(1), 31-50 [https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1473095206061020?casa\\_token=PpoZNIIIEfT0AAAAA:n6roqtkzS435B9p-gH0f3uGSTN31SdxCPXcze0Q9AqANB9Yanm20wVPDbGS1-SqH5f8IRvMOHP2zz-Y](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1473095206061020?casa_token=PpoZNIIIEfT0AAAAA:n6roqtkzS435B9p-gH0f3uGSTN31SdxCPXcze0Q9AqANB9Yanm20wVPDbGS1-SqH5f8IRvMOHP2zz-Y)

This paper argues for the need to revisit and reform contemporary planning ethics with deepening social differences and the increasing promotion of neoliberal value systems. It also provides a good discussion of the role of social values in deliberative planning processes.

### Introduction: Planning ethics in the 21st century

Schweitzer, L.A. (2017) *Journal of the American Planning Association* 83 (2), pp. 159–160  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01944363.2017.1290496>

Short introductory texts that summarise some of the key questions and challenges of professional ethics in contemporary planning practice.

### 'Planning ethics' and rediscovering the idea of planning

Campbell, H. (2012) *Planning Theory* 11(4), 379–399  
[https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1473095212442159?casa\\_token=MMeO2VLzoaMAAAAA:jmG6K3Do6RjqSqimLz3WkrGFZYX2wS5xE4b9LWOcZg4-V42QebGLCJkL0x9P18QQKBwMqUDWDUuFA4A](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1473095212442159?casa_token=MMeO2VLzoaMAAAAA:jmG6K3Do6RjqSqimLz3WkrGFZYX2wS5xE4b9LWOcZg4-V42QebGLCJkL0x9P18QQKBwMqUDWDUuFA4A)

This paper examines how ethical concerns have been understood in planning and the profound questions posed about past, present and future intellectual and professional priorities.

### Planning experience and planners' ethics

Lauria, M. and Long, M. (2017) *Journal of the American Planning Association* 83 (2), pp. 202–220  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01944363.2017.1286946?needAccess=true>

An update of the seminal 1979 study by Elizabeth Howe and Jerome Kaufman on the ethics of American planning professionals. It charts the changing role of planners today and finds that "today's planners tend to make virtue-based choices when concerned with ideological and legal issues but revert to rule-based or utilitarian choices when faced with the dissemination and quality of information and segments of the population receiving special advantages". (p. 202)

### Restorative planning ethics: The therapeutic imagination and planning in public institutions.

Schweitzer, L.A. (2016) *Planning Theory* 15 (2), 130–144  
 This article deals with a crucial question of spatial justice in planning practice: how should planners in public institutions restore relationships after they have done things that cause harm to communities?

### The ethics of planners and their professional bodies: Response to Flyvbjerg

Watson, V. (2013) *Cities* 32, 67–168.

A short article exploring planners' ethics and the ethics of professional bodies that represent planning, with a specific focus on examples from apartheid era South Africa.

### Towards cities of integrity: The role of urban planners

Zinnbauer, D. (2019) *U4 Brief*  
<https://www.u4.no/publications/towards-cities-of-integrity-the-role-of-urban-planners>

An open-source report that directs the attention of anti-corruption efforts to the professional community of planners, including its self-image, purpose, values, and ethical responsibilities.

### Everyday ethics for practicing planners

Barrett, C. (2002) *Routledge*.

This book explores many of the challenges facing planners and concludes that many of the conflicts faced are not between good and bad but rather between competing goods. The real world scenarios included cover many of the toughest moral dilemmas that face modern planning practitioners. 💰

### Professional ethics and beyond: Values in planning

Marcuse, P. (1976) *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 42(3), 264–274

This seminal paper argues that current ethical standards are frequently contradictory and inconsistent with the public image projected by professional planners. 💰



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# TACTICS & STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING URBAN CORRUPTION

Corruption is a pervasive global problem with countless local and national permutations, each requiring targeted responses. The challenge of combating corruption often appears insurmountable to individuals, communities and even entire nations.

There are, however, a wide variety of tools that can citizens, organisations and states can deploy to limit opportunities for corrupt practices to occur (preventive measures) and facilitate corruption reporting after the fact (punitive measures) that can be followed up by further mitigating measures.

This concluding chapter first provides a general overview of anti-corruption approaches and tools. It then goes on to offer a few concrete suggestions for planners and urban development professionals on how to tackle corruption in their daily practice and become champions of urban integrity.<sup>115</sup> While further research into city-level corruption and how it can be dealt with most effectively remains crucial, ongoing rapid urbanisation across the African continent also demands action now. In turn, the below is an invitation to consider and try out some of the approaches in your own professional context.

**“ Letting the sun shine on government operations is a powerful antidote to corruption.”<sup>116</sup>**

## Key anti-corruption approaches

While there is no “one size fits all” anti-corruption approach and any measure needs to take account of the specific local context, the approaches described below have generally proven to be effective in combating corruption.

These approaches can be broadly clustered as follows:

1. The classic approach: making corruption more difficult, risky and costly
2. The pressure approach: inspiring more public outrage over corruption
3. The systemic approach: reducing opportunities for corruption
4. The incentive approach: making personal and professional integrity more appealing and rewarding than engagement/involvement in corrupt activities

## The classic approach

The classic approach to curbing corruption involves making corrupt practices more difficult, risky and costly for perpetrators, including imposing high penalties and other legal sanctions, domestically and internationally.

A standard setting example is the **United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)**, which entered into force in December 2005.<sup>117</sup> It is built on four pillars of intervention:

1. **Prevention:** encouraging states to draft and enforce preventive anti-corruption measures, such as greater transparency.
2. **Criminalisation:** requiring states to establish criminal offences to sanction a wide range of corrupt practices, unless already proscribed under domestic law.
3. **International co-operation:** binding states to engage in gathering and transferring evidence for use in the prosecution of corruption cases, and to cooperate on the recovery of assets.
4. **Asset recovery:** providing asset recovery mechanisms to redress the worst effects of corruption. This includes the tracing, freezing, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of corruption.

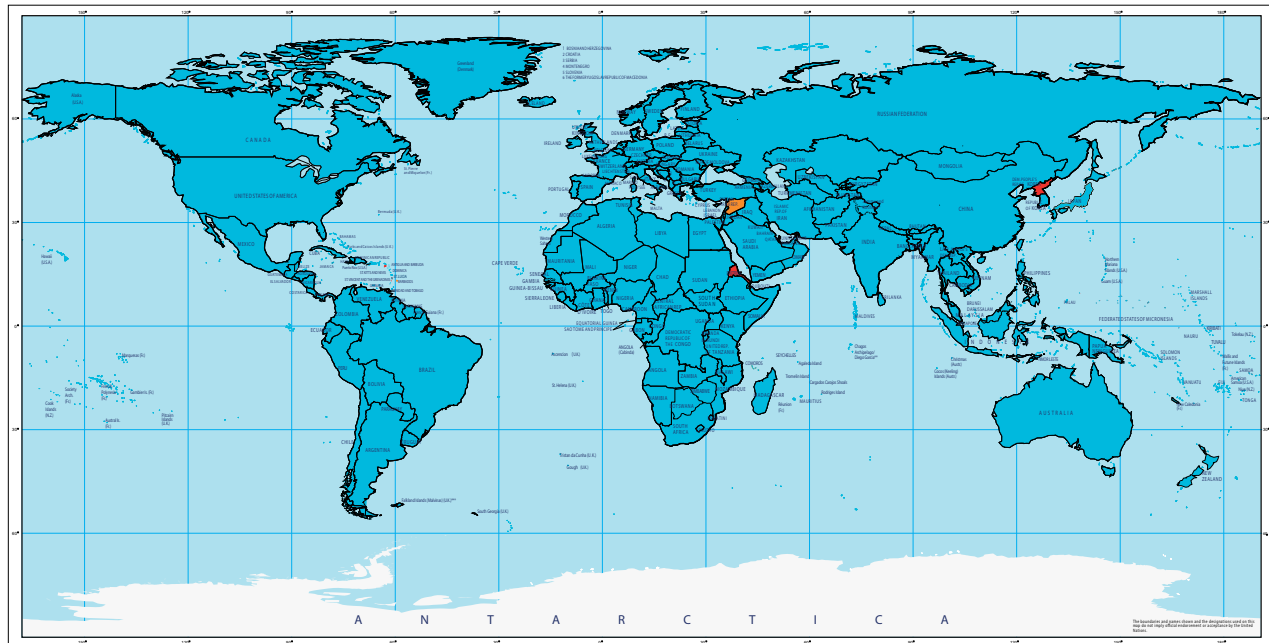
In the United States, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) penalises international acts of corruption committed by foreign companies. In 2008, an investigation into the business practices of the Siemens AG (Europe's largest engineering conglomerate) uncovered a staggering 4,200 alleged bribes – amounting to a total of approximately US\$1.4 billion – paid to foreign officials from numerous countries over the course of just six years.

The payments uncovered by the FCPA investigation related to activities as diverse as an infrastructure project in Argentina, telecommunications projects in Bangladesh and Nigeria, the installation of electricity lines in China, the construction of power plants in Israel, the design and construction of municipal transit systems in Venezuela, and the sale of medical devices in China, Russia and Vietnam.<sup>118</sup>

While cases such as that brought against Siemens AG have demonstrated that corruption can be prosecuted globally, the greatest challenge to realising the intentions of UNCAC is in ensuring its provisions are properly enforced across all signatory countries. In the past, this has been hampered by a sense of impunity of leaders in countries with weak and politically malleable institutions, but also a lack of cooperation from some western countries regarding the return of stolen assets. For instance, in the case of the lengthy negotiations on the return of an estimated US\$5 billion of public funds embezzled by former Nigerian leader General Sani Abacha.<sup>119</sup>



**Figure 7: UNCAC Signature and Ratification Status (as of 18 November 2021)**



- STATES PARTIED
- SIGNATORIES
- COUNTRIES THAT HAVE NOT SIGNED OR RATIFIED THE UNCAC

**PARTIES: 189**

## The pressure approach

The pressure approach to preventing and fighting corruption is focused on raising public awareness to the debilitating effects of corruption through a variety of monitoring and reporting tools.

At an international level, the Sustainable Development Goals raise awareness to corruption by promoting “just, peaceful and inclusive societies”.<sup>120</sup> Some of the SDGs directly relate to the fight against corruption and the creation of more transparency, including:

**Table 3: Targets for Sustainable Development Goal 16**

<b>Target 16.5</b>	Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
<b>Target 16.6</b>	Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
<b>Target 16.7</b>	Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
<b>Target 16.10</b>	Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

In the **New Urban Agenda** (arising from the Habitat III conference in 2016), the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (UN Habitat) recognised corruption as a major obstacle to sustainable urban development and calls for local leaders to tackle the issue.<sup>121</sup>

As Dieter Zinnbauer points out:

*“Raising public awareness about the dismal consequences of corruption and offering easier ways to report it can make a big difference. However, this process needs to be aligned with a commitment by the political leadership to root out corruption, instil a sense of professional ethics, and recruit and promote civil servants on the basis of merit and integrity.”<sup>122</sup>*

## Public monitoring mechanisms

1. **Public expenditure tracking surveys (PETS)** present financial information that enable stakeholders to track the source of money and where it is being dispensed. PETS are recognised as effective diagnostic tools for improving accountability in public finance and service delivery.

The first public expenditure tracking survey was conducted in Uganda in 1996 in response to a large “leakage” of funds from within the education sector. It was observed at the time that, despite large increases in funding to the primary education sector, there did not appear to be significant or observable improvements in enrolment or the standard of services provided in the nation’s primary schools.

The findings of the PETS pointed to a weak system of controls and poor quality financial record-keeping, which meant that the funds allocated were not reaching the schools. After the survey findings were published, the Ugandan government conducted a public information campaign, and the ministries of local government and finance began publishing data on monthly transfers of school grants in national and local language newspapers.

Furthermore, district headquarters and schools were required to post public notices to inform communities when government funds were received. A follow-up survey in 2002 showed that, as a consequence, more than 80 per cent of the funds transferred to the schools from central government had been received by the schools.<sup>123</sup>

2. **Journalism training** is a crucial step to fostering an independent media sector capable of pushing for accountability. At its best, journalism acts as a public watchdog, exposing the abuse of power and monitoring leadership at all levels. By drawing public attention to issues of corruption, a well-trained and independent media can provide citizens with the information they need to hold the leadership and public officials accountable. Local media outlets and journalists very often need help to understand local planning systems and even basic regulations, and require support to monitor and report on irregularities in local planning decisions.

In Cape Town, the NGO Ndifuna Ukwazi (Dare to Know) together with grassroots housing and anti-eviction activists launched the Reclaim the City campaign to highlight the lack of affordable inner-city housing. Working in cooperation with local residents, journalists, academics and young planning professionals, a multi-media campaign highlighted significant irregularities in numerous sales of government-owned, prime inner-city land. The campaigners argued that the land should have been considered for the development of mixed-income housing instead and ultimately managed to have several sales reviewed and set aside in court.<sup>124</sup>

3. **Empowering citizens and civil society** with information and increasing the awareness of people's rights and entitlements is a powerful anti-corruption approach. While such campaigns have traditionally been led by activists, civil society organisations, and local and international NGOs, often in collaboration, government agencies are increasingly using similar tactics to raise awareness among citizens on a range of issues.

In India, the national Ministry of Housing and Poverty Alleviation is currently trying to institutionalise social audits as a form of public engagement, transparent information gathering and participatory planning. Social audits can, for example, highlight shortcomings in housing programmes and can help to redefine the objectives and modes of implementation according to the needs of the local community.<sup>125</sup>

## Reporting and complaints mechanisms

There are various forms of corruption reporting and complaints mechanisms in use around the world. Many have proven to be highly effective methods for increasing public pressure against corrupt practices at all levels. Principle among these reporting and complaint mechanisms are:

**Ombuds office:** an ombuds office can be established within a government department or may operate as a separate entity within municipal structures. In either scenario, an ombuds office must be a wholly independent position that functions as a link between citizens and officials.

**National anti-corruption commissions:** beyond departmental ombuds structures, several African countries – such as Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia – have established national anti-corruption commissions, whose primary mandate it is to receive, investigate and address corruption complaints. Their effectiveness, however, is dependent on the level at which they are able to realise their status as independent entities in terms of funding and political oversight.<sup>126</sup>

**Hotlines, complaints centres and victim support groups.** Anti-corruption hotlines and complaints centres are important for the safe and anonymous reporting of corruption. However, they are only effective if backed by sufficient capacity to follow-up on complaints. In addition to government hotlines, NGOs such as Transparency International provide independent and anonymous reporting services through their advocacy and legal advice centres (ALACs) in over 60 countries.

## The systemic approach

The various tools for fighting corruption at the systemic level primarily focus on reducing opportunities for corrupt practices, particularly through institutional reforms. Key examples of such interventions include:

1. strengthening the socio-economic position of municipal officials through, for example, improvements to salary structures<sup>127</sup>
2. simplifying rules and regulations to reduce red tape and bottlenecks
3. reducing discretion within bidding/contracting processes and increasing the opportunity for auditing actions and decisions by individuals and/or departments through, for example, compulsory independent audits or third-party review mechanisms<sup>128</sup>
4. institutionalising conflict of interest laws through, for example, the introduction of cooling-off periods for those moving between public and private sector jobs<sup>129</sup>

## The incentive approach

Relatively new in the field of anti-corruption interventions, the incentive approach seeks to make personal and professional integrity more appealing and rewarding than corrupt behaviour. Some notable examples include:

**Award schemes and integrity dividends.** The act of publicly honouring individuals or organisations that demonstrate high levels of transparency and accountability has succeeded in curbing corruption and can help incentivise greater integrity among recipient's peers and competitors.

**Integrity Icon** is a global campaign run by citizens in search of honest government officials. It aims to generate debate around the concept of integrity, demonstrate the importance of honesty and personal responsibility, and inspire a new generation to be more effective public servants. Integrity Idol began in Nepal in 2014, spread to Liberia in 2015, and has now evolved into a global campaign.<sup>130</sup>

**Collective actions.** The trend towards collective action is premised on the idea that, when corruption is normalised, people are less likely to abstain or implement sanctions/reforms. Anti-corruption collective actions are based on sustained collaboration between different stakeholders (businesses, governments and NGOs) to change the collective mindset and tackle systemic corruption through public innovation. Common forms include:

1. anti-corruption declarations<sup>131</sup>
2. integrity pacts and principle-based initiatives<sup>132</sup>
3. labelling or certifying business coalitions<sup>133</sup>



The Open Contracting Partnership is a US-based organisation dedicated to using structured and standardised information about public contracts to make these transactions more transparent and accessible to the general public. Open contracting encompasses the entire chain of government deal-making, from natural resource concessions through to the procurement of goods, works and services for citizens. It starts at the planning stage before moving through the tendering, awarding and implementation stages of public contracts. The full publication of government contracts has been shown to help expose wasteful spending and fraud, while also lowering the time needed to process bids.<sup>134</sup>



**The future is hope-filled as the tide is turning against corruption.**

Thuli Madonsela, public protector (Republic of South Africa) and winner of the Transparency International Integrity Award 2014

photo: MOIZ HUSEIN STORYTELLER/Shutterstock.com



## Tackling corruption as an urban planner

As set out throughout this guide, the urban planning sector faces a variety of corruption risks which it must address with urgency and commitment. Moreover, the sector has a pivotal role to play as champions of urban integrity in the fight against corruption. Planners must use their specialised expertise and direct involvement in infrastructure projects to shape a positive (and corruption free) future for urban environments across Africa and beyond. Still, more research is needed to understand the specificities of corruption dynamics in urban planning and development, and what tools and interventions are most effective in tackling it. In the absence of such comprehensive research, the below also draws on insights and takes inspiration from promising anti-corruption actions taken in adjacent sectors, namely land management, construction and public works.

The following section details four important ways in which urban planners can get involved in tackling corruption.

### Be responsible and professional in daily practice

First and foremost, planners need to be aware of their personal and professional ethical standards and routinely put them into practice. Here are some possible techniques:

**Publicise your anti-corruption credentials:** ethical planners should use every opportunity to make it known that they do not take, or offer, bribes of any kind. Research in India has shown that those openly displaying a commitment to integrity, for example, through the prominent posting of a service charters or individual integrity commitments onto their office doors, are less likely to be asked for, or offered, bribes. Adding “moral symbols”, such as an integrity commitment within an email signature, also reduces the likelihood of being approached with corrupt propositions.<sup>135</sup>

**Apply professional standards:** planning professionals have a responsibility to:

1. serve the **public interest**
2. **be conscious** of both the short and long-term consequences of their actions
3. **deal fairly** and engage in proper consultation with all participating parties
4. **not misrepresent** data or manipulate standing procedures
5. properly **assess and communicate** existing, emerging and anticipated social problems to all levels of government, as well as to civil society actors
6. strive to **expand choice and opportunity** for all people and recognise planners’ special responsibility to support disadvantaged and marginalised individuals/groups/communities
7. follow the principle of **free, prior and informed consent**<sup>136</sup>
8. **report and speak out** – planning professionals aware of, or affected by, corrupt practices are obliged to report the facts to senior colleagues and/or use reporting mechanisms such as hotlines or ombuds offices

**Be aware of and manage the revolving door:** especially in context where planning expertise is scarce, it is very common that planners move between the public, private and civic sector several times over the course of their career, or even work on both sides of the decision-making process as consultants.<sup>137</sup> While this has benefits in terms of sharing expertise, building trust and improving communication, it also increases the risk for conflicts of interest to arise.<sup>138</sup> Possible measures to mitigate this include requiring conflict of interest declarations upon hiring, as well as establishing a four-eyes principle<sup>139</sup> as well as recusal protocols for executive planning decisions.



## Campaign for accountability, transparency and integrity within your professional environment

Planners should actively encourage a culture of accountability and integrity within their professional practice, and support mechanisms for upholding those principles. This includes joining a professional association, subscribing to its code of conduct and

actively engaging in upholding it, for example, through setting up and serving on a disciplinary committee. The following is a list of professional planning associations in Africa:

**Table 4: List of professional planning associations in Africa**

<b>Africa</b>	African Planning Association & Association of African Planning Schools
<b>Algeria</b>	Association des Urbanistes et Aménageurs Algériens
<b>Benin</b>	Association des Urbanistes du Bénin
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	Association of Town Planners of Burkina Faso
<b>Cameroon</b>	Ordre National des Urbanistes du Camérout
<b>Ghana</b>	Ghana Institute of Planners
<b>Ivory Coast</b>	Ordre National des Urbanistes de Côte d'Ivoire
<b>Kenya</b>	Kenya Institute of Planners
<b>Malawi</b>	Malawi Institute of Physical Planners
<b>Mali</b>	Association of Urban Planners of Mali
<b>Morocco</b>	Association Marocaine des Aménagistes Urbanistes
<b>Namibia</b>	Namibia Council of Town and Regional Planners
<b>Nigeria</b>	Nigerian Institute of Town Planners
<b>Senegal</b>	Association Sénégalaise des Urbanistes
<b>South Africa</b>	South African Association of Consulting Professional Planners, South African Council for Planners, South African Planning Institute
<b>Tanzania</b>	Tanzania Association of Planners
<b>Togo</b>	Association des Urbanistes du Togo
<b>Tunisia</b>	Association Tunisienne des Urbanistes
<b>Uganda</b>	Uganda Institute of Physical Planners
<b>Zambia</b>	Zambia Institute of Planners
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	Zimbabwe Institute of Regional and Urban Planners

In some African countries, such as Zambia, the existence of a professional planning body is legally mandated, and membership is a precondition for being able to practice as a planner. This provides planning associations with a powerful position to regulate access to the profession, control the quality and frequency of training, sanction irregular planning practice and thus promote integrity.

As further argued by Nkula-Wenz et al. (2022), the national convening power of such professional associations offers a range of possibilities to foster professional integrity and mitigate corruption. Firstly, they can play a central role in creating communities of practice that are able to regularly engage around context-specific corruption risks and possible mitigating measures, for example, through dedicated newsletters or chat groups in popular messaging services like WhatsApp. Secondly, through their mandated continued professional development programmes, they are able to offer regular and practical integrity training. Thirdly, due to their regulatory and disciplinary function, planning associations are well-positioned to set up effective reporting and grievance channels to deal with cases of corruption related to planning.<sup>140</sup> Of course, this is premised on planning associations having the sufficient capacity through a robust legal mandate as well as the provision of personnel and financial resources to follow up on complaints and cases.

## Support institutional and legal reforms in the urban planning sector

**Review and amend outdated planning legislation and policies.** Planning legislation is out of date across many African cities, which means it fails to reflect current demographic growth patterns, social, economic and environmental needs and urbanisation trajectories. Conflicting and outdated legislation creates opportunities for corrupt practices. By reviewing, amending and streamlining legislation and policies, opportunities for corrupt practices are mitigated and it becomes clearer when corrupt decisions have been made.

**Draft credible plans.** Planners will struggle to make informed planning decisions without credible plans and zoning schemes. Their absence opens space for planners to make decisions based on personal agendas, either their own or those of third parties that exert undue pressure and influence. A credible plan is one which is built from available data, is feasible given local political and economic constraints, and is informed by a publicly supported vision for the city created through extensive consultation with marginalised groups.

**Develop and implement mechanisms for equitable land rights and planning permissions.** Some innovative practices in this regard include:

1. Auctions of development rights: these are public auctions organised by the planning department for landowners and developers to compete for developable quotas. The administration chooses bids based upon the financial value and potential advantages to the city as a whole.
2. Levying of development charges: development charges are taxes levied when planning permission is granted for projects that increase the value of the land. These charges enable the municipality to benefit from the increases in value and re-invest the funds obtained in public service provision such as infrastructure or housing.

## Become an engaged urbanist

Unlike legal professionals in many countries, urban planners are not required to dedicate a fixed proportion of their time to **pro bono** cases. However, the professional expertise of urban planners is of great value to the wider society, and there are many opportunities to engage with social enterprises and NGOs to contribute time and expertise to support the creation of more just, inclusive and sustainable urban environments.

The ethical planner should consider:

1. Support and engage in local integrity pacts: developed in the 1990s, integrity pacts have since gained considerable traction in public contracting. They are usually agreements between a government entity and a bidder to commit both parties to comply with best practices in business transparency. These agreements are usually also monitored by civil society organisations or other concerned third parties. Integrity pacts have been credited with increasing transparency and thus trust in public decision-making.<sup>141</sup>
2. Support social accountability projects: this refers to citizen led actions that hold public officials and service providers accountable, for example, for the level and quality of service delivery. Commonly known tools are social audits and public revenue monitoring mechanisms.<sup>142</sup> As a planner, your expert knowledge of planning laws and procedures is invaluable for educating the public and helping citizens understand and assert their rights within the complex dynamics of the fast-pasted African urban development.
3. Provide expertise for monitoring public works projects, for example, through establishing peer-to-peer review mechanisms and learning environments. This could be as simple as establishing a regular inter-departmental learning and sharing meeting within your municipality to discuss and share information and data on specific projects.
4. Contribute to or initiate open land data projects: international open data projects such as the Land Portal have shown that access to land information is key to just and fair land governance and can help marginalised and vulnerable groups assert their rights.<sup>143</sup>

In 2014, the Social Justice Coalition successfully conducted a community-based audit that involved mapping the provision of public toilets in informal settlements around Khayelitsha, Cape Town's largest township. This crowd-mapping exercise contributed significantly to building greater awareness around better planning, provision and maintenance of sanitation facilities in informal settlements.<sup>144</sup>

In Kenya, the NGO Muungano wa Wanavijiji (MWW) is a nationwide federation of slum dwellers and regularly works with planning professionals, such as Professor Peter Ngau from the University of Nairobi. Professor Ngai believes that local governments need to invest as much in the capacity of communities as they do in physical outputs of urban planning such as basic services, land and housing, saying:

*"Those that are learning to develop and invest in partnerships with community-based groups and organisations, especially those that constitute themselves at the city-wide level are well able to deliver on the projects they engage in because they are community driven and success rates are almost 95 percent. This is not the simple decentralised model of private-public partnerships, but an approach to partnership that leverages the strategic strength of the grassroots to strengthen public institutions in their ability to perceive and adapt to the rapid changes of urbanisation."*<sup>145</sup>

Several NGOs across Africa regularly draw upon the expertise of local planning professionals in their respective drives to achieve greater accountability, transparency and equitable distribution of urban services. These include Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI), Architects without Borders, Habitat for Humanity and local chapters of Transparency International.

## Recommended resources

### Mapping evidence gaps in anti-corruption: Assessing the state of the operationally relevant evidence on donors' actions and approaches to reducing corruption

Johnsøn, J. et al. (2012) *Anti-Corruption Resource Centre U4* (7).

A succinct but also highly technical overview of the anti-corruption landscape and what we know about the efficacy of current tools.

### Reforming urban laws in Africa: A practical guide

Berrisford, S. (2017) *African Centre for Cities*

<https://unhabitat.org/reforming-urban-laws-in-africa-a-practical-guide>

This award winning guide provides hands-on guidance for officials, practitioners and researchers working on improving urban legislation in the sub-Saharan region.

### Trading places: Accessing land in African cities

Napier, M. et al (2013) *African Minds*

[http://www.urbanlandmark.org.za/downloads/ULM\\_book\\_2013s.pdf](http://www.urbanlandmark.org.za/downloads/ULM_book_2013s.pdf)

Explores the ways in which local practices, land governance systems and markets interact to influence how those at society's margins access land to support their livelihoods.

### Understanding success and failure of anti-corruption initiatives

Heeks, R. (2011) *CMI Chr. Michelsen Institute (U4 Brief, 2)*

<https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/3978-understanding-success-and-failure-of-anti.pdf>

An accessible brief that uses the gap between design and reality to explain why many anti-corruption initiatives fail, what can be learned from this and how success often depends on specific circumstances.

### Challenges and opportunities of curbing urban corruption and building professional integrity

Experiences of planners in South Africa and Zambia

Alexander, C. et al., *Habitat International* 122, p. 102541.

DOI: 10.1016/j.habitatint.2022.102541. 💰

### Understanding and preventing corruption

Graycar, A. and Prenzler, T. (2013) *Palgrave Macmillan*

An accessible guide to issues of public and private sector corruption, including a chapter covering approaches to designing-out corruption within the urban planning sector. 💰

### Why it is difficult to change urban planning laws in African countries?

Berrisford, S. (2011) *Urban Forum* 22(3), 209-228

This article highlights the importance of understanding the political, economic and personal dynamics that underpin the operation of a planning system before designing a legal reform initiative. In discussing the potential for adapting principles of UK planning law reform for the African context, the author shows that such processes are by no means a straightforward affair and argues for a practical methodology that is conscious of local differences. 💰

## Audio-visual resources

### Addressing land corruption in Cameroon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCqRSypYmbg>

A short video following the work of Transparency International's advocacy and legal advice centre (ALAC) in Cameroon as they pursue justice for those affected by land corruption. ALACs provide free and confidential legal advice to witnesses and victims of corruption. Offering a simple, credible and viable mechanism for citizens to pursue their corruption related complaints, the advice centres help to empower citizens in the fight against corruption. ▶▶

### Cities of integrity playlist

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6YKlvsHY3r-44POEB457uMbf0o768ZOBH>

Includes three animated short films that explain the challenge of urban corruption and how it can be tackled in city planning. ▶▶

### Reforming urban laws in Africa: A practical guide

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYcIIBTKIINZtlgRssBEb4A>

This is the corresponding video series to the above-mentioned, award winning book by Stephen Berrisford. ▶▶

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Local integrity system assessment toolkit

*Transparency International*

The Local Integrity System (LIS) Tool assesses the internal governance and capacity of each of the core local government actors and their role in promoting integrity in the system as a whole. It also assesses the capacity to perform, and the effectiveness of, each of the oversight and accountability functions. The LIS Tool is designed to conduct an in-depth assessment of a small number of local government units in a given country. It is not designed to compare the state of integrity in all (or even the majority of) local government units in a country. When used repeatedly, the LIS Tool can monitor and evaluate the progress of the LIS over time.

## A blueprint for transparency: Integrity pacts for public works

*Centre for Public Impact*

A case study describing the use of an integrity pact in El Salvador where corruption is a major problem and all three presidents from 1999-2014 have been charged with corrupt practices. Corruption has also deeply affected the country's infrastructure projects and has been endemic in the Ministry of Public Works that oversaw them. In 2009, Transparency International and several other NGOs introduced integrity pacts with project contractors to clean up procurement and delivery.

## Empowering our whistle-blowers

*Open Democracy Advice Centre*

This publication looks at how to create an enabling environment for whistleblowers to act by not focusing on the law alone but also understanding that interventions are required at multiple points in the whistleblowing process if people are to feel supported enough to disclose. Including a range of case studies from South Africa.

## Guide to combating corruption & fraud in development projects

*International Anti-Corruption Resource Center*

This guide provides step-by-step instructions on how to detect and prove corruption, bid rigging, collusive bidding and fraud in international development projects. Includes a well-selected resource collection.

## Inclusive and sustainable urban planning: A guide for municipalities

*UN Habitat*

This series of publications reflects an inclusive and strategic approach to planning, emphasising the dynamic character of the planning process, engagement of stakeholders and the importance of the development of action plans and securing financial outlays for the implementation of selected priority projects.

## Anti-corruption evidence research program

*Global Integrity*

A programme that conducts practical research in three priority areas: international architecture; integrity systems; and subnational and sectoral corruption to generate actionable evidence for designing and implementing more effective anti-corruption initiatives. Relevant sub-projects for urban practitioners include Cities of Integrity and Harnessing Informality.



# ENDNOTES

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- 2 Transparency International (2020) 'Permission accomplished. Assessing corruption risks in local government planning'. Available at: <https://www.transparency.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/publications/Permission%20Accomplished%20-%20TIUK.pdf>
- 3 Chiodelli, F. (2019) 'The illicit side of urban development: Corruption and organised crime in the field of urban planning' in *Urban Studies* 56 (8), pp. 1611–1627. DOI: 10.1177/0042098018768498.
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- 132 For a range of case studies, visit the Integrity Pacts Open Database on <https://collective-action.com/explore/integrity-pacts/database/>
- 133 See, for example, the case of Morocco and the central role of business coalitions local anti-corruption efforts: <https://www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness/Global-lessons-on-collective-action-against-corruption-Case-of-Morocco.pdf>
- 134 <https://www.open-contracting.org/>
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- 136 Hill, C. et al. (2010) *Guide to Free Prior and Informed Consent*, Oxfam Australia.
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