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CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS IN PHYSICAL PLANNING

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KNOWLEDGE

A. O. Sulyman

26.1 Introduction

Man, from the onset, has always thought about evolving new ways of doing things. He constantly has to search for more knowledge to better understand certain phenomena, what they mean, how they come about, their advantages and disadvantages, and most especially how to use the ideas or knowledge got from them to better his life and the environment at large. As man tries to understand and relate better with these things, he learns and acquires knowledge on the particular subject matter.

According to *Wikipedia* (2015), knowledge is familiarity, awareness or understanding of someone or something, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by

perceiving, discovering, or learning. It sees knowledge as an experience or education which may not have been taught by a third party. It also sees Knowledge as that which can refer to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. It can be implicit (as with practical skill or expertise) or explicit (as with the theoretical understanding of a subject); it can be more or less formal or systematic. In philosophy, the study of knowledge is called epistemology. The philosopher Plato defined knowledge as "justified true belief."

Knowledge is the only meaningful resource today (Drucker, 1993). Knowledge is one of the most important assets for an organization to create values and, hence, sustainable competitive advantage. Knowledge acquisition involves complex cognitive processes: perception, communication, and reasoning, which have to involve a person's conscious attempt of acquiring it or acknowledging the receipt of same. Other aspects of knowledge include:

- multi-perspective
- context-specific, relational and dynamic
- created in social interactions
- aesthetic with regard to values
- Endless in pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty

Hence, it could be defined as: "A dynamic human process of justifying personal belief towards the truth" (Nonaka and Toyama, 2006).

26.2 Meaning and Definitions of Knowledge

Although the term "knowledge" itself has continued to elude a generally accepted definition, as scholars have over time tried to understand its concept based on their various fields of specialization. Several theories exist on knowledge. So, one has to be careful not to lose sight of what one truly aims to achieve as far as knowledge is concerned.

Darwin (2003) posits that knowledge is a concept – like gravity. You cannot see it, but can only observe its effects. Because knowledge is an invisible, intangible asset and cannot be directly observed, many people and organizations do not explicitly recognize the importance of knowledge, in contrast to their more visible financial and capital assets (Sveiby, 1997). Sveiby (1997) suggests that knowledge is invisible because it lacks a generally accepted definition and a measurement standard. Sveiby (1997:37) defines knowledge as "a capacity to act; this makes the important distinction between the behavioural potential, which cannot be directly observed, and the observable performance or behaviour."

The eventual demarcation of philosophy from science was made possible by the notion that philosophy's core was "theory of knowledge," a theory distinct from the sciences because it was their foundation. Without this idea of a "theory of knowledge," it is hard to imagine what "philosophy" could have been in the age of modern science.

The definition of knowledge is an ongoing debate among philosophers in the field of epistemology. The classical definition, described but not ultimately endorsed by Plato, specifies that a must meet three criteria in order to be considered knowledge: it must be justified, true, and believed. Some people claim that these conditions are not sufficient, as Gettier case examples allegedly demonstrated. There are a number of alternatives proposed, including Robert Nozick's argument for a requirement that knowledge "tracks the truth" and Simon Blackburn's additional requirement that we do not want to say that those who meet any of these conditions "through a defect, flaw, or failure" have knowledge. Richard Kirkham suggests that our definition of knowledge requires that the evidence for the belief necessitates its truth.

In contrast to this approach, Ludwig Wittgenstein observed, following Moore's paradox, that a person can say "He believes it, but it

isn't so," but not "He knows it, but it isn't so." He goes on to argue that these do not correspond to distinct mental states, but rather to distinct ways of talking about conviction. What is different here is not the mental state of the speaker, but the activity in which they are engaged. For example, on this account, to *know* that the kettle is boiling is not to be in a particular state of mind, but to perform a particular task with the statement that the kettle is boiling. Wittgenstein sought to bypass the difficulty of definition by looking to the way "knowledge" is used in natural languages. He saw knowledge as a case of a . Following this idea, knowledge has been reconstructed as a cluster concept that points out relevant features but that is not adequately captured by any definition.

26.3 Evolution of the Concept of Knowledge

Knowledge has been experiencing evolution since the early 1990s. Studies in knowledge management started off with high expectations of boosting efficiency and effectiveness of business processes, forcing up outcomes and profits to unknown heights by applying ideas of engineering and machine dynamics, and bringing the blessings of information technology to the world of knowledge, information and thinking. Knowledge was assumed to be a kind of object that could be managed like other commodities as well. The slump was quite sharp and sobering. As one writer of knowledge management puts it, there was no other incidence in industrial history, where such a lot of resources was invested in a new development and the outcome was so pathetic – in any other area, efforts would have been cut short much earlier.

The initially blind faith in the new world of the Internet, networking, knowledge reengineering and the like was so dominant, that it took quite some time to rediscover the missing factor: the human-thinking, being entirely forgotten and omitted among all the machines, database,

nowledge mines" and networks. While certain efforts even tried to bstitute this "working animal" (which was considered more as messy, nerable, slow, risky) it turned out that it could not be rendered obsolete, but that systems, processes and technology actually must sustain and support the thinking being to soar. Knowledge management has been put back into the place it belonged: an auxiliary discipline at the workplace, serving the "worker."

Quickly, it became apparent that the individual and his/her knowledge (and, thus, the "hosting" institution) benefit strongly from the interaction with others – obviously a truth that builds the basis of all forms of learning and teaching. It was acknowledged that, in many situations, the interaction with peers had tremendous effects on creativity, lateral thinking, innovation, efficiency and effectiveness. The true potential of knowledge management did not lie in accessing the individual "expert" (in the broad sense of an ingenious, experienced, knowledgeable person) but in helping him/her to overcome his/her "isolation": the idea of community became key.

The most recent expansion of the concept and scope of knowledge management (KM) is systemic thinking: the turning point was to accept that it is actually living systems that contain and embody knowledge. It is key to recognise that knowledge is not confined to individual brains. In opposition to the initial assumption of knowledge being an object, it is recognised that knowledge has very much a volatile characteristic; it is a process, in constant flow and morphing and that it actually rather appears in the interaction and relationship between individuals and, thus, is property of a system as a whole. As much as this may appear a rather academic discussion, as much is it a real-world issue with concrete practical implications. In fact, it was the observation of failing practical concepts being below expectations in terms of impact (e.g., the

aforementioned "black hole" of the first days of knowledge management) that drove the knowledge management evolution. And as source of "frustration," wrong conceptual assumptions were identified, like the one of knowledge having a shelf life like any object, which turned out not to be the case. As Kurt Lewin put it, there is nothing so practical as a good theory – however, if the theory is wrong, then the practices would not work out.

In concrete terms, this evolution has been framed in three generations of knowledge management. Different authors have defined them in different ways. Peter Senge, the chair of the Society of Organisational Learning (SoL), had nicely described the first shift:

> The first generation of knowledge management has come and gone. The second generation, which promises both deeper insights and greater impact, will be less about data and more about the social nature of knowledge, less about 'capture and retrieval' and more about innovating and sharing, and ultimately more about know-how rather than know about – the only knowledge that ultimately matters in any pragmatic institution.

The next shift from the second to the third generation could be described analogous, promising deeper understanding of the holistic functioning of social systems. While our machine-based ideas of society, organisations, communities and other institutions with their mechanistic perspective have largely failed in being helpful and having real impact, the organic perspective is looking more at complex dynamics, that rely on probabilities rather than certainties, on sense-making rather than reductionism, on facilitating interaction and collaboration of social entities and human beings rather than command and control.

Table 26.1: Evolution of the Knowledge Concept

	Knowledge Concept
The First Age	Information for Decision Support (Prior to 1995: computerisation of major applications)
The Second Age	The Humanisation of KM (The human side of KM was emphasised)
The Third Age	The Organic Age of KM (Complexity theory, understanding of organisations as learning and living, complex entities)

Source: Ungerer, Herholdt and Uys (2006)

With this shift from generation to generation, knowledge management also closed up more and more with its twin disciplines of change management and system transformation – based on the insight that, in a pragmatic institution, learning on the basis of knowledge sharing must be an inherent part of effective change processes, while each knowledge sharing process must lead to actual change if it does not want to turn out pointless.

System improvement and change management have come a long way, recognizing that the best and most effective way to improve impact in complex social systems is to have all the members ("view holders") of a system jointly and collaboratively working on it in order to ensure seizing its complexity and diversity. Yet the most effective way is not by addressing the issues ("problems") as individual parts, but by gaining an understanding of the system and its interactions/dynamics as a whole and by identifying opportunities, possibilities and potential.

26.4 Principles and Philosophy of Knowledge

Several theories have been postulated on knowledge as a concept by

different scholars based on their areas of specialization. They are discussed below as found in *Wikipedia*:

26.4.1 Communicating Knowledge

Symbolic representations can be used to indicate meaning and can be thought of as a dynamic process. Hence the transfer of the symbolic representation can be viewed as one ascription process whereby knowledge can be transferred. Other forms of communication include observation and imitation, verbal exchange, and audio and video recordings. Philosophers of language and semioticians construct and analyse theories of knowledge transfer or communication. While many people would agree that one of the most universal and significant tools for the transfer of knowledge is writing and reading (of many kinds) argument over the usefulness of the written word exists, with some scholars sceptical of its impact on society. In his collection of essays Technology, Neil Postman demonstrates the argument against the use of writing through an excerpt from Plato's work Phaedrus (Postman, 1992).

Classical early modern theories of knowledge, especially those advancing the influential empiricism of the philosopher John Locke, were based implicitly or explicitly on a model of the mind which likened ideas to words. This analogy between language and thought laid the foundation for a graphic conception of knowledge in which the mind was treated as a table (a container of content) that had to be stocked with facts reduced to letters, numbers or symbols. This created a situation in which the spatial alignment of words on the page carried great cognitive weight, so much so that educators paid very close attention to the visual structure of information on the page and in notebooks.

Media theorists, like Andrew Robinson, emphasize that the visual depiction of knowledge in the modern world was often seen as being

'true' than oral knowledge. This plays into a long-standing analytic ason in the Western intellectual tradition in which verbal mmunication is generally thought to lend itself to the spread of sehood as much as written communication. It is harder to preserve cords of what was said or who originally said it – usually neither the urce nor the content can be verified. Gossip and rumours are examples evalent in both media. As to the value of writing, the extent of human owledge is now so great, and the people interested in a piece of owledge are so separated in time and space, that writing is considered ntral to capturing and sharing it.

Major libraries today can have millions of books of knowledge (in dition to works of fiction). It is only recently that audio and video chnology for recording knowledge has become available and the use of ese still requires replay equipment and electricity. Verbal teaching and nding down of knowledge is limited to those who would have contact th the transmitter or someone who could interpret written work. Writing is still the most available and most universal of all forms of cording and transmitting knowledge. It stands as one of mankind's primary technology of knowledge transfer down through the ages and to all cultures and languages of the world.

36.4.2 Situated Knowledge

Situated knowledge is knowledge specific to a particular situation. It is a term coined by Donna Haraway as an extension of the feminist approaches of "successor science" suggested by Sandra Harding, one which "offers a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others' practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that makes up all positions." This situation partially transforms science into a narrative, which Arturo Escobar explains as

"neither fictions nor supposed facts." This narrative of situation is historical textures woven of fact and fiction, and as Escobar explains further, "even the most neutral scientific domains are narratives in this sense," insisting that rather than a purpose dismissing science as a trivial matter of contingency, "it is to treat (this narrative) in the most serious way, without succumbing to its mystification as 'the truth' or to the ironic scepticism common to many critiques."

Haraway's argument stems from the limitations of the human perception, as well as the overemphasis of the sense of vision in science. According to Haraway, vision in science has been "used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere." This is the "gaze that mythically inscribes all the marked bodies that makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation." This causes a limitation of views in the position of science itself as a potential player in the creation of knowledge, resulting in a position of "modest witness". This is what Haraway terms a "god trick," or the aforementioned representation while escaping representation. In order to avoid this, "Haraway perpetuates a tradition of thought which emphasizes the importance of the subject in terms of both ethical and political accountability."

Some methods of generating knowledge, such as trial and error, or learning from experience, tend to create highly situational knowledge. One of the main attributes of the scientific method is that the theories it generates are much less situational than knowledge gained by other methods. Situational knowledge is often embedded in language, culture, or traditions. This integration of situational knowledge is an allusion to the community, and its attempts at collecting subjective perspectives into an embodiment "of views from somewhere."

Knowledge generated through experience is called knowledge "a

posteriori," meaning afterwards. The pure existence of a term like "a posteriori" means this also has a counterpart. In this case, that is knowledge "a priori," meaning before. The knowledge prior to any experience means that there are certain "assumptions" that one takes for granted. For example, if you are being told about a chair it is clear to you that the chair is in space, that it is 3-Dimensions. This knowledge is not knowledge that one can "forget," even someone suffering from amnesia experiences the world in 3-D.

Even though Haraway's arguments are largely based on feminist studies, this idea of different worlds, as well as the sceptic stance of situated knowledge is present in the main arguments of post-structuralism. Fundamentally, both argue the contingency of knowledge on the presence of history; power, and geography, as well as the rejection of universal rules or laws or elementary structures; and the idea of power as an inherited trait of objectification.

26.4.3 Partial Knowledge

One discipline of epistemology focuses on partial knowledge. In most cases, it is not possible to understand an information domain exhaustively; our knowledge is always incomplete or partial. Most real problems have to be solved by taking advantage of a partial understanding of the problem context and problem data, unlike the typical math problems one might solve at school, where all data is given and one is given a complete understanding of formulas necessary to solve them. This idea is also present in the concept of bounded rationality which assumes that in real-life situations people often have a limited amount of information and make decisions accordingly.

Intuition is the ability to acquire partial knowledge without inference or the use of reason. An individual may "know" about a situation and be

unable to explain the process that led to his/her knowledge.

26.4.4 Scientific knowledge

The development of the scientific method has made a significant contribution to how knowledge of the physical world and its phenomena is acquired. To be termed scientific, a method of inquiry must be based on gathering observable and measurable evidence subject to specific principles of reasoning and experimentation. The scientific method consists of the collection of data through observation and experimentation, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses. Science and the nature of scientific knowledge has also become the subject of philosophy. As science itself has developed, knowledge has developed a broader usage, which has been developing within biology/psychology - discussed elsewhere as meta-epistemology, or genetic epistemology, and to some extent related to "theory of cognitive development." Note that "epistemology" is the study of knowledge and how it is acquired. Science is "the process used every day to logically complete thoughts through inference of facts determined by calculated experiments." Sir Francis Bacon was critical in the historical development of the scientific method; his works established and popularized an inductive methodology for scientific inquiry.

Until recent times, at least in the Western tradition, it was simply taken for granted that knowledge was something possessed only by humans — and probably adult humans at that. Sometimes the notion might stretch to society-as-such, as in, for example, "the knowledge possessed by the Coptic culture" (as opposed to its individual members), but that was not assured either. Nor was it usual to consider unconscious knowledge in any systematic way until this approach was popularized by Freud.

Other biological domains where "knowledge" might be said to reside

include: the immune system; and in the *DNA of* the genetic code. (See the list of four epistemological domains by Popper, 1975). Such considerations seem to call for a separate definition of "knowledge" to cover the biological systems. For biologists, knowledge must be usefully available to the system, although that system need not be conscious. Thus, the criteria seem to be:

- The system should apparently be dynamic and self-organizing (unlike a mere book on its own).
- The knowledge must constitute some sort of representation of "the outside world", or ways of dealing with it (directly or indirectly).
- Some way must exist for the system to access this information quickly enough for it to be useful.

Scientific knowledge may not involve a claim to certainty; maintaining scepticism means that a scientist will never be absolutely certain when they are correct and when they are not. It is thus an irony of proper scientific method that one must doubt even when correct, in the hopes that this practice will lead to greater convergence on the truth in general.

26.4.5 Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

IK refers to the knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous groups in matters related to agriculture and environmental management, medicine and health, art and language. Traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) are also part of IK. Like IK, TCEs have been passed from one generation to the next (orally or by tradition) and are an integral part of a culture's identity and heritage. These expressions include, but are not limited to: music and song, stories, symbols, dances, rituals, architecture, arts, and crafts. Both IK and TCEs are found in libraries as original artifacts but are just as likely to take the form of audio and video

recordings, photographs, and as textual descriptions of expressions (that is, song, dance, stories).

Since the 1980s, indigenous knowledge (IK) has been a topic of discussion among scholars of anthropology, geography and disciplines related to development studies. Today, there is broadening interest from a variety of fields: ecology, soil science, health, medicine, botany, water resource management and many more. The interest is driven by research into sustainable development practices in developing countries and the scientific community's concern over loss of species and ecosystems (Nakata, 2002).

26.5 Relevance of the Knowledge Concept to URP Practice and Training

Various dimension of knowledge are observed to be applicable to the human nature, including the indigenous knowledge, scientific knowledge, partial knowledge, situated knowledge, and communicating knowledge. All these knowledge systems have also been observed to be of a high level of relevance to urban and regional planning education and practice.

The Land Information System (LIS) field has only recently taken note of this important topic of concern. Indigenous knowledge (IK) and traditional cultural expression and practice (TCEs) are represented in library and archival collections, but often LIS professionals make no attempt to put them into a cultural context. In support of intellectual freedom, we catalogue, digitize and display information so that the public can access it. A noble goal, but as Wendland (2008) notes:

> ...indigenous claims for greater protection of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural materials lie, albeit perhaps only superficially, at right-angles to some of the core objectives of libraries and other information services,

> such as: freedom of speech, intellectual freedom, diffusion of knowledge, research and learning, access to information, and preservation of cultural heritage (p. 2).

For indigenous communities, IK and TCEs are not "things" that exist separately from their culture. The discord with LIS systems lies in the orientation of the field toward a scientific logic of "information retrieval" and "information access." In this discourse, knowledge becomes information, divorced from the context in which it was created. This process allows indigenous cultural capital to be commodified in the name of intellectual freedom.

According to Richards (1992), cited in Warren et al. (1995:476), "indigenous knowledge is now celebrated by many of its advocates as the single largest knowledge resource not yet mobilized in the development enterprise." Peace is an unambiguous prerequisite to socio-economic, political, and environmental development of any nation. The hindrance to peace is manifested when societal unrests ensue at communal or national level, but the unseen forces behind the societal discontents are the aggregate of domestic dissatisfaction which, in turn, engenders conflict of all descriptions. Domestic discontents arise from the vagaries of inadequacies plaguing the housing sector all over the world. Substandard and insufficient domestic facilities, such as water, toilet, bathroom, kitchen, drainage, and electricity within dwelling units, often lead to domestic conflict among residents. This can make the environment look rather chaotic and sometimes with uneasy calm.

While there is a rapidly growing body of literature on types and nature of conflict and conflict management and resolution (Albert et al., 1995; Otite and Albert, 1999; Albert, 2001, 2003; Faleti, 2006; Dzurgba, 2010) particularly with respect to consensus-building methods, such as negotiation and mediation, Castro and Ettenger (1996) observe that there

is little on the role of local or "indigenous" mechanisms for solving disputes. Also, while there is literature on community, ethnic, political, religious, and environmental conflicts (Otite and Albert, 1999; Albert, 2001), there is hardly any documentation of domestic conflict arising from competing for inadequate domestic necessities. Dzurgba (2010), in addressing domestic conflict, focused on marital or marriage conflict, while Kehinde (2010) examined the management of conflicts between landlords and tenants in Lagos State of Nigeria. Domestic conflict resulting from struggle among occupants of a given house for basic housing facilities is not gender-bound; it could be women versus women, men versus men, men versus women, boys versus boys, girls versus girls, boys versus girls, the elderly versus the elderly, young ones versus young ones, or elderly ones versus young ones. In what appears as a routine, on many occasions, occupants of rooming housing, tenement buildings and apartments in big towns and cities in Nigeria queue to draw water from wells, use kitchens, toilets, bathrooms, or air-space to dry clothes in turns.

Domestic conflicts of all descriptions usually ensue when any of the occupants intentionally breaks the line in a bid to save time or undermine others. Lack of or insufficient kitchen facilities force many occupants of tenement houses to prepare their food in the passage-way and staircase landing. As a result, any occupant passing by may inadvertently boot the pot placed on the stove, and eventually ignite quarrels. There are reported cases where payment of electricity bills led to domestic conflict because of shared meter. Conflict often breaks out too when any occupant is perceived to have failed to fulfil his/her environmental cleaning obligation.

26.6 Indigenous Approach to Domestic Conflict Management

According to Wahab and Odedokun (2014), the imperativeness of

olution of conflicts among occupants of dwellings of any description annot be underrated. It is not only to mediate disputes, but also to create space for dialogue; and promote love, peaceful co-existence, community participation, and sense of belonging. This was aptly asserted in their research in Ondo city on conflict and IK approaches to their resolution. The majority (93.26%) of the sampled respondents agreed that resolution of domestic conflicts was largely handled internally in dwellings by elders or a third party who was adjudged neutral among the occupants living in the same dwellings or next to them. Mediators were invited from within the entire community when conflicts involved most of the occupants. While 6.03% of the respondents invited the police to resolve their disputes, the final and lasting resolution was still done by the elders in the community. This is one of the cultural values of the Nigerian society which is rooted in the indigenous knowledge systems of the people. Traditional, social and cultural institutions determine and guide the individual and group behaviours and are highly cherished. The conflicting individuals or groups are more disposed, most of the time, to accepting decisions or rulings or pronouncements from the elder-mediators (among whom they live) than from other sources, like the police or formal courts. In fact, there is an adage among the Yoruba of Nigeria that says: *a kii ti kotu de sore* (we don't return from court and remain friends). The court here incorporates the police, who are seen as agents of the court.

This indigenous participatory approach to domestic conflict management in the sampled communities in Ondo attests to what Pkalya et al. (2004) observe about the potency of local (traditional) mediation. In these communities, elders and community leaders are held in high esteem and accepted as men and women of wisdom, and impeccable characters whose pre-occupation is the peaceful co-existence among their kith and

kin. When these elders mediate in a conflict, their ultimate aim is to reconcile the guilty with the not-guilty in a way that satisfies both parties. The verdict guilty that may be pronounced on the offending party would be done in a way that would not constitute irredeemable shame and any loss of face.

The indigenous conflict management approach hardly involves any monetary cost and consumes less time in adjudication, unlike the Western approach, through the police or the court, which demands hiring of a lawyer to plead the case and several days of court appearance and adjournments (as it is in Nigeria). The mediators use persuasive words, stories, and ancestral references to make the conflicting parties calm down and understand the need to have the conflict resolved with the pledge not to allow recurrence. Persuasive statements are used to emphasize that conflicts are common when people live together, such as *agbemaja kan kosi, aja ma tan ni kodara* (There are no two or more people who live together that do not quarrel, but what is bad is non-resolution of the quarrel); and *bi ako baja a kido're* (if we don't quarrel, we won't become friends).

26.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the subject of knowledge has been observed to be pivotal to the proper understanding and operation of planning practice and education. The various dimensions of knowledge also pose a veritable pool of ideas for the various undertakings of planning and planners. Furthermore, the idea of indigenous knowledge, as presented in this chapter, is also a useful area in dispute resolution, settlement development, layout preparation and general physical enrichment of both urban and rural environments.

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