

**Adel Sultan, Libya**



## **Urban Planning in Libya**

### **Analysis of status quo, problems and options for improvements-Case study of Benghazi city**

The Libyan approach and practice of urban planning remained by far underdeveloped, despite the international progress in this field throughout the last few decades. The inherent defects of the traditional planning approach, such as decision making by the central authorities, central role of the planners and the absence of plan reconsidering, in addition to the hitherto stumbled economic reforms and contradictory legislations, lead to inefficient patterns of land use and an unsatisfactory urban environment.

This study has been conducted to draw attention to the weaknesses of urban planning practice in Libya. It is attempting to have a better understanding of the urban planning practiced in the country and the constraints which are hindering planning institutions from playing their role in the planning process. It also aims to bring about planning strategies that are capable to advance the planning process to be more efficient and affordable based on a better understanding of local capacity and international experience.

To determine what improvements the Libyan urban planning system needs in order to play its role in developing good urban areas and regions within the constraints of a capitalist economy and democratic political system, a case study approach has been applied. Benghazi City has been used as a case representing all Libyan cities and towns. The collected data include primary data based on semi-structured questionnaires for a number of stakeholders, secondary data from different documents, and site visits. The obtained data were compared and logically interpreted, and results were used to establish the final recommendations.

Urban planning in Benghazi presents a picture of the physical city 20 or more years in the future shown by the end-state master plan, which does not represent what the community wants or what is possible. Urban planning attempts to function independently of politics and separately from the administration process. Therefore, planning is incapable to play its role in

tackling urban problems such as shortage of building land, limited supply of housing, low levels of access to facilities and deterioration of the urban environment.

In order to realize a more efficient urban planning, the study recommends that planning should adapt more flexible procedures and include socio-economic strategies, cultural as well as environmental aspects and address regional development based on a democratic process. It is, therefore, necessary to pursue legal and procedural reforms. These reforms should be enhanced by measures such as public awareness, capacity building, technical and financial support.

***Key words:*** urban planning, planning theory, Islamic city, Libya.