

URBANIZATION AND URBAN DECAY IN NIGERIA URBAN CENTERS: FOCUS ON NYANYA ABUJA

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Abstract

This paper utilized secondary data such as textbooks, journals, published and unpublished paper and system theory to examine urbanization and its decay in Nigeria perspective. The paper attributed urban decay in Nyanya to “increasing population”. The consequence of this urban decay caused by population rise within a short period is that infrastructural facilities and services are grossly inadequate to cater for the population. The study shows that there is inadequate housing, poor waste management, and epileptic power supply, lack of available portable drinking water, inadequate and unaffordable health care facilities, poor environmental health, and traffic congestion on the Abuja city-Nyanya-Mararaba-Keffi road. These challenges do not commend Nyanya as a satellite town on the path of sustainable urban development. Consequently, the recommend for the intervention of the Abuja Federal Capital Territory Administration to embark on urban renewal of Nyanya; adequate infrastructural facilities and services should be provided for the residents; mechanism for periodic sanitation should be put in place to ensure a qualitative built urban environment with adequate resources and facilities to support a sustainable healthy living and economic progress of the residents of Nyanya.

Key words: Nyanya, urbanization, urban decay, system theory

Introduction

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, globally, cities emerged as the source of the greatest challenges that the planet has faced since humans became social. Although, they have proven to be humanity’s engines of creativity, wealth creation, and economic growth, cities have also been the source of much pollution and disease. Hence, rapid urbanization and acceleration of socio cum economic development have generated global problems from drought, gross insecurity, climate change and its environmental impacts to incessant crises in food, energy and water availability, public health, financial markets, and the global economy

meltdown. This no doubt led Stern (1991, p.7) to religiously describe most Nigeria urban centers with the following:

Solid wastes are uncollected and piles of decaying wastes are allowed to rot in the streets; schools are over-crowded; urban roads have deteriorated into quagmires in rainy seasons. Public telephone is an impossible dream; public transport systems are becoming severely over loaded; and more and more people are obliged to live in un-serviced plots. Not only is little new infrastructure constructed, but existing infrastructure are poorly maintained

The concept of urbanization is a relatively new global issue. As early as 1950, only 30% of the world's population was urbanized. Today, more than half of the world's population lives in urban centers. The developed world is now about 80% urban and this is expected to be true for the entire planet by around 2050, with some 2 billion people moving to cities, especially in China, India, Southeast Asia and Africa (UN Habitat, 2016). To this end, one could argue that cities are complex systems whose infrastructural, economic, and social components are strongly connected and therefore difficult to understand in isolation. Unfortunately, the many challenges associated with urban growth and global sustainability, however, are typically treated as independent issues. This frequently results in ineffective policy and often leads to unfortunate and sometimes disastrous unintended consequences. As such, policies meant to control population movements and the spread of slums in megacities, or to reverse urban decay, have largely proven ineffective or counterproductive, despite huge expenditure especially in developing countries.

Arguably, Abuja the capital of Nigeria can be described as a city of paradoxes and disparities; the reason however, behind the relocation of Nigeria's capital was either to build a modern city or as a symbol of national unity. On February 3, 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the decision to move the nation's capital out of Lagos at the coastal area, to a Federal Capital Territory of about 8,000 square kilometers in the Central part of the Country. The then Head of state (Gen. Murtala Muhammed, 1976) stated poignantly that "the few local inhabitants in the area, who need to be moved out of the Territory for planning purposes, will be resettled outside the area in place of their choice at Government

expense’’ this assertion by Muhammed was unequivocally the first major policy statement in respect of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) which led to the establishment of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA).

Subsequently, the FCT Act was enacted in 1976. The Act vested the entire 8,000 square kilometers of the FCT land area in the Federal Government of Nigeria. Re-echoing the sentiment of Muhammed was the Section 1 (1) of the Act provides: ‘‘There is hereby established a Capital Territory in and for the Federal Republic of Nigeria to be designated as the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (hereinafter referred to as the Federal Capital Territory)’’. There has been a renewed focus on the study of urbanization and level of its decay in the last few years. However, urbanization remains a major development challenge. It exerts immense pressure on social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This ugly challenge can be seen and witnessed around urban centers in Nigeria: In Lagos for instance, we have Ajegunle and Obalande; in Niger state we have Suleja; in Nassarawa state we have Mararaba that has becoming a link between Nassarawa and Abuja; and in Abuja the capital city of Nigeria we have Dei Dei, Mpape, Karimo, Nyanya and Kpaduma etc.

In developing countries, urbanization is associated with natural population growth, rural–urban migration, convergence in rural and urban lifestyles, and the economic and political processes, associated with globalization. Nowhere in Nigeria today has the rate of urbanization in the last few years been as great as in Abuja City, the political focal point of Nigeria where almost all the cr me de la cr me and the elites often meet for political decisions, yet the city can be seen as an albatross of the masses. Suffice to argue that, Abuja was designed for the rich and powerful and nothing for the poor and disadvantaged. This was reflected in the pattern of housing allocation which mostly favoured senior civil servants and the high class in the society.

More so, the cost of land and rent for residential accommodation has since been beyond the affordability of low and medium income workers. The situation is not different even today where the cost of land and rent are in hundreds of millions. These factors have continued to ‘‘push’’ majority of workers to neighboring settlements in places like Nyanya in Abuja where the cost of living, housing and plots of land are not only available but are also relatively affordable. This ugly phenomenon cuts across borders and regions of the world. Against the backdrop of urban decay in Nigeria urban centers, this paper is designed to investigate urbanization and irony of urban decay in Nigeria urban centers: focus of Nyanya Abuja. In the light of this, the paper is divided into seven sections. The introduction is followed by the

second section as the research methodology. Section three traced the conceptual muddle, which is followed swiftly by the theoretical framework in section four. Section five focused on types of urban decay. Section six traced the factors that promote urban decay and lastly, section seven consists of the conclusion and recommendations.

Research Methodology

The paper utilised secondary methods of data collection; as such the information employed for analysis in the study were carefully extracted from logical catalogue of evidence presented in newspapers, journal papers, conference papers, periodical papers, edited books, documentary materials on urbanization and urban decays.

Conceptual Discourse

Urbanization is a phenomenon that describes the process of change in the growth of population due to changing conditions in the society. It is equally a process of demographic, social, economic and physical change, which requires complex governmental action (Green, 2011). It is also associated with social economic and technological process of development. The above, implication is that urbanization connotes social change on a vast scale, especially as it is the introduction into a given culture, elements that were not there before. Like every other type of social change, urbanization hinges more on changes or alterations in the mode of interaction and behavioral patterns than on the availability of infrastructural facilities. Precisely, the technical term for this is urbanism, but urbanization is preferred because of its broad applicability and easy cognition. Urbanization is made possible mainly by mass communication, transportation; and the manifold nexus between urban dwellers and rural folks and it implies spread of urban influences to other neighboring areas (Anderson, 2011).

As an ecological process of aggregating for a variety of reasons, it involves social transformation along with shifts in the pattern of population settlement and the locus of power and influence from the rural to the urban area. It is pertinent to state that urbanization precipitates changes in the pattern of behaviour and values, which result from the ecological process of aggregating at one location large, dense and diverse persons. Urban development problems in Nigeria could be viewed from both socio-economic and environmental perspectives (Lawanson, 2006). To this paper, urban decay can be described as the physical effects including facilities that are poorly monitored and in disrepair, deterioration of buildings and improvements, visual and aesthetic impacts, increase in property crime and increased demand for emergency services, which result from increase in retail closures and long-term vacancies. Suffice it therefore to argue that the

built environment in many developing countries particularly Nigeria is fast decaying and our opinion is that the factors responsible for this can be attributed to rapid urbanization, rural – urban migration, and decades of speedy economic downturn, decay of urban infrastructure and negligent urban housekeeping. According to Mabogunje (20002), urbanization is the root cause of the high rate of environmental degradation, pollution and breakdown of social order.

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness among human environment researchers on some related problems of neighborhood center as a vital arena where critical urban problems are generated and worked on. Analytical unit for the understanding of these problems are also being constantly developed. For many years, especially in the developing countries, issues like design concept, infrastructural facilities decay et cetera predominate discussions among community stakeholders and professionals alike. While most of the neighborhood problems are being addressed especially in the developed cities, the developing cities (grossly found in low economy nations) are yet to experience any fundamental solution to the problems of this vital aspect of human habitat. Most Nigerian cities, to which the newly developed Federal Capital City of Abuja is not exempted, largely experienced decay in both housing and physical infrastructural facilities over the past few decades; this is possibly due to economic downturn in the nation. Interestingly, a study conducted by Abumere (1987) shows that the cities closely identified with the phenomenon of overcrowding “are large cities, including Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Benin, Onitsha and they are generally ancient, except Onitsha” (Abumere, 1987.p 25-26).

Moreover, most of these cities are closely associated with overcrowded and degraded environments. So, urban decay connected with overcrowding is almost entirely a big town problem in Nigeria and concerns cities like Lagos, Kano, Ibadan and Onitsha. However, in 1985 about 68.2 percent of the slums in Nigerian cities were found within a radius of 1km from the city centre (Abumere 1987, 33). If there are no resources for urban renewal, the city centre, which is the oldest by definition, town into city a slum in time. Hence, slums on the city outskirts can also be found, normally in the largest Nigerian cities. Abumere, (1978) further posits that in the large and fairly large cities, such as Lagos, Kano, Ibadan and Enugu, a considerable proportion of slums occur at the city outskirts, not more than five km from the centre. The major reason is that accommodation in many of the cities has been priced, beyond what most citizens can afford. Many low income workers, therefore, live in low-cost shanties or slums at the city outskirts. It is in this regard that the author opined that decades after Nigeria’s capital

was moved from Lagos to Abuja, the situation or the effect of urbanization has not been completely dealt with; generally poverty has spread out in all Nigerian cities and the Minister of Abuja in the past and present has not really addressed the issue of slums in the city.

Theoretical Framework (System Theory by Easton)

Theoretical framework is indeed a desideratum in a research in the sense that it enhances its internal activity. With this in mind, there are a lot of theories used in the field of political science for research analysis. However, the System Theory by David Easton (1965) became apt for this paper. This theory is seen as a set of related elements and interrelations among them, which are disintegrated from those elements not in the system by ambiguous analytic boundaries. The theory explains the component of the system made up of groups, persons or areas where the frequency of a particular pattern of interaction falls to an observable degree. Interdependence is the uniting force in the system; this is because stability and subsequently, growth can only be achieved when all the components of a system work together. In this direction, Easton (1965) sees a political system as that system of interacting in any society through which binding or authoritative allocations are made and implemented. This implies an organization interacting with an environment, influencing it and being influenced by it and there are also many interacting internal parts which constitutes parts of the arranging that the society employs in formulating and pursuing its collective goods.

The three vital components of Easton definitions of political system constitute authoritative allocation, values and society. Applying this theory to the study at hand, it helps to explain the forces that drive urban infrastructural development. In this approach, urban planning and infrastructure are linked to the spatial and usage patterns that impact human ecological processes. These processes influence more micro level phenomenon, such as human behaviour and activity which serves as feed back into landscape and social patterns in the urban area. Completing the loop, acknowledgement of change spurs policy development which acts as factor affecting further alterations of urban infrastructure. For example, the demand for water and other infrastructural services beyond the cities capacity, spurs sprawl development which affects the quality of water and other infrastructures. This results in policy changes affecting future distribution of infrastructural services and development patterns. Therefore planning decisions to extend urban services to meet the fast growing spread of development in the urban areas will precipitate demands on infrastructural facilities necessary to deliver and sustain it.

Types of urban decay in Nigeria urban centers

The author of this paper is of the opinion that urban centers in Nigeria have been characterized by various level of decay especially in the area of infrastructure and environmental pollution which include:

- i. **Poor waste management:** Rapid population growth in urban cities like Abuja, Lagos, Niger, Nassarawa, Kano, Kaduna, Ibadan, Port Harcourt etc has placed immense pressure on solid waste management systems. Solid waste is generated in almost all parts of the urban areas and solid waste management becomes complicated in bigger cities. In most cities/towns, the refuse is dumped in an unsatisfactory and haphazard manner without sanitary landfill. The failure of such systems to cope has contributed to water pollution, environmental degradation and the spread of communicable disease and fatalities. In the area which this study was carried out (Nyanya), waste management is a problem as refuse is dumped along the road and sometimes resident's battle for movement.
- ii. **Poor air quality:** Air pollution is one of the key contributors to disease and fatalities globally, and is a significant problem in urban areas in Nigeria. The main sources are industrial plants, residential and commercial buildings, concentrations of hazardous waste, and motor vehicles. It is of worthy to note that one of the challenges residents of Nyanya are facing is poor quality of air. Houses in Nyanya are clustered and the issue of ventilation to the residents had become futile.
- iii. **Environmental degradation:** Rapid urbanization has resulted in deteriorating environmental conditions, including from illegal occupation of open spaces, loss of tree cover, reclamation of water bodies, and construction on river flood plains.
- iv. **Inadequate urban utility services (water, sanitation and sewage, electricity, fuel etc):** The cause of Nigeria urban decay can be attributed to the inadequacy and uneven distribution of service in the cities. Evidence of this scenario is shown when making a comparison between the urban centers and the satellites towns closer to the city. Example of this seen can be seen in the difference in terms of infrastructure between the city of Abuja and other satellite towns like Nyanya, Karu, Orozo etc.
- v. **Crime and Insecurity:** This is a major problem today in Nigeria urban centers. The proliferation of hooliganism, tuggery, criminality and other social vices have become eyesore in Nigeria. Crime and violence in urban areas has been associated with various economic costs. These include: Costs related to medical treatment, foregone earnings, loss of productivity due to

- injuries, loss of competitiveness, losses through thefts and muggings, cost on private security, and costs to the judicial system.
- vi. **Housing Problem: Quantity and Quality;** this has remained an unresolved problem in the cities. Substandard housing in Nigeria urban centers is a major problem of our cities. The problems of most of our urban cities like Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, Kano, Enugu and Benin City etc resulted from the fact that they were never planned by experts. The problem is particularly serious for those in the lower – income strata.
 - vii. **Traffic Congestion:** The rapid expansion of cities and improper transport planning has produced significant traffic congestion along Mararaba/Nyanya daily. This has resulted in financial costs for these residents due to lengthy travel times to work and time wasted; and higher transaction costs to business in moving goods and services. The foregoing situations have made Nyanya/Mararaba breeding places for crimes and defiant behaviours, thus, making the urban centers unsafe for people, unattractive to investors, unconducive to economic activities and inimical to good governance.

Factors that lead to urban decay in Nigeria

- i. **Character of the Elite:** The character and manner of the political elites in Nigeria in terms of resource control and allocation (system theory) is one of the major banes to even development in Nigeria. The resultant consequences of this ugly scenario is evident in the centrifugal development of the housing, health, educational, transportation, communication, and electricity of the general urban services, and opportunities for remunerative employment is constraining the expected rates of urban growth, development and renewal. The level of urban decay and deterioration is, in fact, poles apart when juxtaposed with the revenue generation and expenditure pattern and levels, especially at the centre and the other part of the urban centers in the country.
- ii. **Lack of Political will:** The elites or public office holders in Nigeria in most cases lack the political will to implement “development “policies that would affect the masses positively. Ordinarily, Nigerian leaders would want the country to stand out best in everything, including education. However, political will has been lacking. Perhaps this is as a result of instability of governments or lack of continuity.

- iii. **Corruption:** Another factor that has continued to affect development in Nigeria is corruption. Corruption has almost been “illegally legalized” in both public and private sectors in Nigeria. This in most cases, have led to the failure of economic cum social policy(s). If anything has contributed greatly to the stagnation of corporate development of Nigeria, it is this virus called ‘corruption’. It is found in all aspects of human endeavour in Nigeria. Its prominence in Nigeria has earned our nation a place of negative prominence in the world.

- iv. **Bad Governance:** Due to bad governance in Nigeria, there is a strong urban bias in the development of programmes and uncoordinated efforts at other satellites settings closer to the cities development, which in turn is reflected in inadequate access to market for goods and services, and deplorable condition of the education, health, transportation, water, and sanitation sectors.

- v. **Population Growth:** The unprecedented increase in the population in the Nigerian cities continues to put pressure on the existing infrastructural facilities. The inability of the housing delivery to cope effectively with the housing need of the urban population has resulted in pricing out the majority of the low income-earners from the housing market. Most affected groups are the immigrants from the rural hinterland that prefer to settle at the suburbs of the cities. Often times, this is responsible for the development of squatter’s settlement at the peri-urban zones that leads to urban decay.

- vi. **Problem of Implementation:** Stripped of all technicalities, implementation problem in most developing nations is the problem of a widening gap between intentions and results. The way the implementers exercise their discretion depends, to a large extent, on their disposition toward the policy. Therefore, the level of success will depend on how the implementers see the policies as affecting their organizational and personal interests. Other serious problems are that of bribery and corruption which have contributed greatly to the failure of policy implementation in developing countries. For example, implementation problem may arise in a situation where huge amounts are earmarked for a

project but the officers in charge of implementation steal such amounts or a substantial part of the amounts.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The astronomical population growth of urban centers in underdeveloped or developing countries has brought to light, various issues which are manifest not only in the physical forms of the city, but also in the ways they function. Most of our urban centers today have grown in an unmonitored and uncontrolled manner, which has led to the manifestation of various problems such as over-population, over-crowding, traffic congestion, environmental pollution, unemployment as well as the general deterioration of urban infrastructure which have in turn precipitated urban decay in the cities. Conclusively therefore, this paper is of the opinion that despite the changing economic realities, the demand for infrastructure -cum expansion and revitalization that unavoidably, inevitably and undeniably underpin and constitute the bottom-line of urban development, expansion and renewal remain constant.

In the face of this practical reality, urban development and renewal efforts in Nigeria have been bedeviled with poor planning, commitment gaps, systemic failures, policy disconnection, corruption and general poor governance which have relegated Nigeria's "beautiful dream" of molding Abuja into a Shangri La of Africa into the darkest part of development graveyard.

In the light of the above, this paper therefore recommend for a holistic approach involving stakeholders, residents, major sectors of health, law, social development, housing and urban economics to improving housing conditions of Nyanya and other slum areas such as Karimo, Dei-Dei, Mpapae, Kpaduma, etc. Also, government should implement affirmative policies and actions that will take care of unemployed youths, street destitute, hawkers, and beggars in the study area so that these street "urchins" do not degenerate into full blown armed criminals especially with the current security challenges been faced in Nigeria presently. There should be a review of plausible solutions for prevention of urban planning and development problems. A population-environment National Policy should be put in place to check the wave of rural-urban migration, while planning for future developments in urban centers should be guided by terrain analysis which must accommodate probable maximum growth and expansion of urban centers to avoid further decay of the urban centers. The political elites must show, in no unmistakable terms, the willingness and commitment to fight urban environmental problems as a prime remedial measure. An analysis of the problem indicates the failure of governmental institutions to adapt to social and economic changes, and deficiencies in governmental actions accounts for sustained deterioration of urban

environment and of importance is for government to legislate a bi-weekly or monthly environmental sanitation programme for the whole study area and Nigeria at large in order to improve environmental sanitary condition.

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