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Evidence of Utilisation of the Lessons of History for Planning and Development in Nigeria: The Example of the Contrast Between Lagos and Abuja

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Abstract

The paper examined how the lessons of Lagos, Nigeria's former capital, were utilized for the choice of location, planning and development of Abuja, the new capital. It questioned the view that the dichotomy between Abuja and Lagos with regard to beauty, cleanliness, functionality, organization and development control is an anathema arising mainly from the neglect of Lagos. Contrarily, it argued that the differences between the two regions of the country is not mainly due to the neglect of Lagos, the former capital, considering the fact that it was the shortcomings and inadequacies of Lagos that provided the lessons for the choice, designing, naming, development, development control, and even recently, the "reform agenda", in Abuja. The

paper posited that, notwithstanding the perceived neglect of the former capital by the federal government, contrary to its promise when the capital was relocated to Abuja in 1991, the dichotomy between Lagos and Abuja is essentially clear evidence that the country has, for once, benefitted from its history in the development of the new capital. If the contrary was the case, as it was in the pre-2003 era, it would have been another sad commentary on the ability of the country to learn and benefit from its history. The focus of the paper, therefore, is how the inadequacies and shortcomings of Lagos provided the lessons for the development of Abuja.

Key words: Background, Designing, Naming, Development, Abuja, Lagos, Reform

Introduction

One major issue that has been thrown up by the huge success of the “reform agenda” in Abuja, which commenced in 2003 under the leadership of Madam Nasir El-Rufai, is the dichotomy between the purpose-built capital and Lagos, the former capital. The “reform agenda” has transformed Abuja from the unenviable status of “another Lagos” to the “pride of the nation” (Unumen 2010, pp. 83 – 86). Abuja is now, undoubtedly, one of Africa’s most beautiful and worthy global destinations for conferences, summits and seminars. Moreover, Abuja has become unarguably one of the most functional cities in the world. Most importantly, perhaps, the development control mechanism has pro-actively prevented, to a large extent, the re-emergence of illegal structures, building in unauthorized places and squatter settlements in and around the city centre (Unumen 2010, p. 85). The “reform agenda” has successfully rescued and recaptured the vision of the founding fathers of the nation’s new capital as a functional, beautiful and organised city (Mabogunje 2001, pp. 1-4).

This development has brought about a sharp contrast between the new capital and Lagos, the former capital and the commercial as well as industrial hub of the nation. The urban renewal programme in Lagos, which started during the administration of Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu (1999 – 2007) and continued by Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola since 2007, has not been able to drastically change the fortunes of the former capital (Unumen & Emordi 2012). The situation has been compounded by the “abandonment” of the country’s commercial capital by the Federal Government of Nigeria, contrary to its promise when the capital was relocated to Abuja. Lagos remains, by and large, an example in uncontrolled growth, confusion, lawlessness, filthiness and decay (Abubakar, 2001, p. xi). Thus, there is an obvious dichotomy between Abuja and Lagos in beauty, cleanliness, functionality, organisation, population control and development control.

This dichotomy has, expectedly, attracted the attention of analysts and commentators. These analysts and commentators often draw attention to the aforementioned differences between the two areas and conclude correctly that it is a “tale of two cities” (Muhammed, 2014). However, these analysts and commentators often gloss over a very important fact that is germane to a correct analysis of the situations in Abuja and Lagos. This is the fact that it was the shortcomings and inadequacies of Lagos that provided the lessons for the choice, designing, naming and development of Abuja. As a result, a lacuna is created in their analysis and commentaries resulting in wrong conclusions. It is in this regard that these analysts and commentators often conclude that the differences between the two very important areas of the country constitute an anathema and that they arise mainly from the neglect of Lagos by the Federal Government. This paper placed the contrast between Lagos and Abuja in proper historical perspective and argues that it was the shortcomings and inadequacies of Lagos that

provided the lessons for the development of Abuja. It concluded that the dichotomy between the two areas rather than being an anathema is clear evidence that the nation has utilized the lessons of its history in the planning and development of the new capital. This conclusion is notwithstanding the current efforts by the leadership in Lagos to reform the area. The reform has brought about some good results, but has not been able to drastically transform the fortunes of the region and bridge the dichotomy between it and Abuja. This is attributable, partly to the natural geography and inadequate environment, and partly to uncontrolled population explosion.

Conceptual Clarifications

The major concepts that underpin this paper are development, development planning and history. Although the word development has no generally acceptable definition, it could be defined as a multidimensional positive change in individuals, corporate entities, sectors within a country, regions of a country, a country, regions of the world or the world at large (Unumen 2013, p. 33). The physical dimension of development is called regional, area or urban development. Planning as it relates to regional, area or urban development has been defined by Pinson (2007) as the whole set of social activities aimed at anticipating, representing and regulating the development of an urban or a regional area. It includes intellectual activities of study and prospective, of social and economic forecasting, with more concrete activities such as programming, land reservation and land use regulation.

History is both the past and the systematic study of the past by Historians. Although what happened in the past may not necessarily determine the trajectory of the present and the future, the past has implications for the present and the future. History is a basic tool for development because it provides the foundation that guides it so that the present does not repeat the mistakes of the past (Osuntokun, 2016). The tragedy of our country is that people do not learn and utilize the lessons of history. It is those who fail to learn from the lessons of history that are doomed to repeat it. Where the present repeats the mistakes of the past it shows that the lessons of history have not been utilized and this, according to Santayana, as quoted by Osuntokun (2016), is a tragedy.

Evidence of the utilization of the Lessons of Lagos for the Development of Abuja

Lagos Island was made the first capital of Nigeria in 1914, when the Southern and Northern Protectorates of Nigeria were amalgamated to form one country. Lagos retained the position of capital until the military rule of General Murtala Ramat Mohammed that began on July 29, 1975. On February 5, 1976 General Murtala Ramat Mohammed promulgated Decree 6 that declared Abuja the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. In December 1991 Abuja became the capital of Nigeria when the Military regime of President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida finally moved the seat of government from Lagos to Abuja (Unumen, 2009, p. 120).

It has been argued that the decision to relocate the capital of Nigeria from Lagos was altruistic and taken in the best interest of the nation (Unumen and Emordi, 2012). Political, social and environmental factors influenced the decision to relocate the capital from Lagos. Politically, there was conflict between Lagos State Government and the Federal Government over their jurisdictions in Lagos. Socially, Lagos was beset with many intractable problems. These problems included overpopulation, traffic congestion leading to the popular “go slow”, armed robbery, inadequate housing, high cost of living, lack of elbow room for expansion and the

emergence of gangs popularly called “area boys”, who constituted a menace to public peace and security (Unumen & Emordi 2012, pp. 119 – 141). Again, within the national context, Lagos is peripherally located.

These intractable problems led to calls for the relocation of the Federal Capital of Nigeria from Lagos to an alternative location. There is evidence that the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon saw the need for a relocation of the Federal Capital from Lagos to an alternative location before the military coup that overthrew his regime (Benna, 1989, p. 249). However, it was not until General Murtala Ramat Mohammed became the Military Head of State of Nigeria in July 29, 1975 that a concerted effort was made to solve the problem once and for all. The above-mentioned inadequacies and challenges of growth and development in Lagos provided the lessons for the choice of location, drafting of the enabling law for the development, naming, designing of the master plan, physical development, development control and the recent “reform agenda” in Abuja, in order to avoid the shortcomings of the former capital. Thus, the contrast between the two regions of the country is clear evidence of utilising the lessons of history for planning and development in the country.

Choice of Location of the new Capital

On August 7, 1975, General Murtala Ramat Mohammed set up the Aguda Panel on the location of the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria (Unumen 2009, p. 93). The choice of Abuja as the nation’s capital was guided by the shortcomings and inadequacies of Lagos as the nation’s capital. Shortly after assuming office as Head of State, General Murtala Muhammed set up the Aguda Panel on the location of the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria along with other panels on August 7, 1975. By an official notice dated August 9, 1975, the Federal Military Government named members of the panel. Mr. Akinola Aguda, a well-respected jurist who had been a high court Judge in Ibadan and was then newly appointed as the Chief Justice of Western State was named chairman of the panel. Chief E.E. Nsefik, then Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Federal Civil Service was named secretary to the panel. Other members were Tai Solarin, a well-respected and famous educationist, Professor O. K. Ogan who was a medical practitioner, Alhaji Muhammed Musa Isma who was a businessman, Chief Owen Fiebai who was a lawyer, Dr. Ajato Candonu who was then a Research Officer with Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) and Colonel Monsignor Pedro Martins who was then a colonel in the Nigerian Army (Aguda 1987, pp. 91-92).

The terms of reference of Aguda Panel were four. First was to examine the dual role of Lagos as federal and state capital and advice on the desirability or otherwise of Lagos retaining that role. The second was that in the event of the committee finding that Lagos was unsuitable for such a role, to recommend which of the two Governments (Federal or State) should move to a new capital. Third, in the event of the committee finding that the capital should move out of Lagos, to recommend suitable alternative locations. In recommending an alternative location, the panel was to take into consideration the need for easy accessibility to and from every part of the federation. The panel was also to examine all other relevant factors that would assist the Federal Military Government in arriving at the right decision (Aguda *et al*, 1975, 9; Aguda, 1987, p. 93).

In recommending to the Federal Government, Aguda Panel in line with its terms of reference, found out that Lagos was no longer suitable as both the capital of Lagos State and the federal capital of Nigeria. On the question of which of the governments should move its capital from

Lagos, Aguda Panel recommended that the Federal Government should relocate the country's capital from Lagos. In accordance with its terms of reference, Aguda Panel recommended the area now known as Abuja as the Federal Capital Territory (Aguda *et al*, 1975).

The recommendations of Aguda Panel were based on the following criteria: centrality, healthy and tolerable climate, land availability and use. Other criteria the panel based its recommendations on were adequate water supply, low population density, physical planning convenience, security, multi access possibility, existence of local building materials, possibility of generating power resources, good drainage, good soil and the area not being within the control of any of the major ethnic groups in the country in order to enhance national unity and integration (Aguda *et al*, 1975: 47). All these were aimed at avoiding the pitfalls of Lagos.

Promulgating the Enabling Law for the Development of the New Capital

In addition to the choice of the new capital, the enabling law for the development of the new capital was also guided by the need to avoid the many issues that caused conflicts in Lagos. On February 5, 1976, December 6, otherwise known as the location of Federal Capital Territory Decree, was promulgated. Decree 6 gave legal backing to the Federal Government's "white paper" on the Aguda Panel's report. The decree carved out a land area of 8,000 square kilometres from the Middle Belt region of Nigeria as the new Federal Capital Territory. The exact boundaries of the new Federal Capital Territory were defined in the Schedule to Decree 6 of 1976 (FGN, 1976: A15).

Decree 6 stated that the area carved as the Federal Capital Territory would as from the promulgation of the decree cease to be portion of the states concerned and would henceforth be governed and administered by or under the control of the Federal Government of Nigeria. No other person or authority was permitted to continue to exercise control over the entire area of the new Federal Capital Territory besides the Federal Government of Nigeria. Similarly, ownership of the lands comprised in the territory was vested in the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 1976: A16).

The same decree created the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) as the Federal Government Agency responsible for the development of the new Federal Capital Territory and spelt out the functions of the authority as: the choice of site for the location of capital city within the capital territory, the preparation of a master-plan for the capital city and of land use with respect of town and country planning within the rest of the capital territory. Other functions of FCDA spelt out in Decree 6 were: the provision of municipal services within the Capital Territory, the establishment of infrastructure services in accordance with the master-plan and the coordination of the activities of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies within the Capital Territory (FGN, 1976: A17).

Other powers conferred on FCDA by decree 6 of 1976 include: the power to sue and be sued in its corporate name, to hold and manage moveable and immovable property, to construct and maintain such roads, railways, sidings, tramways, bridges, reservoir, water courses, buildings, plant and machinery and such other works as may be necessary for, or conducive to the discharge of its function under the decree. FCDA was also given power to purchase or otherwise acquire or take over any asset, business, property, privilege, contract, right, obligation and liability of any person or body (whether corporate or unincorporated) in furtherance of its activities. In addition, the agency was given authority to enter into contracts or partnerships

with any person or body (whether corporate or unincorporated) which in the opinion of the Authority would facilitate the discharge of its functions under Decree 6. Moreover, the Authority was given the responsibility to train managerial and technical staff for the purpose of the discharge of the functions conferred on it by or in pursuance of Decree 6. In the same vein, the FCDA was to undertake such research as might be necessary for the performance of its functions under Decree 6. Decree 6 also empowered the FCDA to exercise such other powers as would be necessary or expedient for giving full effect to the provision of the decree (FGN, 1976: A20). Thus, it is obvious that decree 6 of 1976 conferred wide powers on FCDA. The aim was to enable it carry out the physical development in the territory unhindered and control the proper growth of the capital. All these were intended to avoid some of the pitfalls of Lagos, the former capital.

Naming the New Federal Capital Territory

Even in the naming of the new capital, there are clear evidences of the utilizations of the lessons of history. The military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo found it necessary to give the FCT a name in 1978. It has been explained that the decision to give the FCT a name was, perhaps, influenced by the practice elsewhere in the world where capital territories and cities had their specific names (Abumere, 1989: 264). It was in this respect the FCDA was mandated to recommend a name for the FCT.

In carrying out its assignment, the FCDA set up a four-man panel on the naming of the Federal Capital Territory. Justice Owen Febai was named as the chairman of the panel. The Febai Panel called for and received memoranda from members of the public on suggestions of a suitable name for the FCT (Febai *et al*, 1978). According to Abumere, in making recommendations, the Febai Panel was impressed and guided by the then prevailing wisdom of naming states and other institutions after physical features such as rivers and other important landmarks (Abumere, 1989: 264). Accordingly, the panel recommended *Gurara* as the first of the three names after the name of the most important river in the FCT, which transverses its entire western part from north to south (Febai *et al*, 1978).

On receiving the recommendation of the Febai Panel, the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo was not satisfied with any of the names recommended as appropriate for the FCT. Rather, the Government preferred the name, Abuja (Abumere 1989: 264). At that time, Abuja was the name of the Habe Emirate from which about 80 percent of the land area of FCT was carved out as well as the name of the settlement located a few kilometres to the northern outskirts of the FCT, which then served as the headquarters of the emirate that bore the same name.

As a result of the fact that the Government did not want any other town to share the same name with the country's FCT in order to avoid confusion, the Emir of Abuja and his emirate council were approached by the Federal Military Government to surrender their name to the Federal Capital Territory. They were advised to select a new name that would be acceptable to them for both their emirate and the emirate headquarters. A source from the palace of the Emir of Suleja put it thus:

The message from Lagos had instructed us to find a new name as the Federal Government was not prepared to have two Abuja. Therefore, we had the immediate problem of renaming our entire town and emirate (FMCT, 2001, p. 9).

In selecting a new name to replace their name, the Emir of Suleja and his council made recourse to their history. Muhammed Makau, the last Habe ruler of Zauzau, Zaria who fled from the Fulani Jihadists, had founded the emirate of Abuja in 1804. For the fact that he was involved in wars to resist and ward off the Jihadists, Muhammed Makau did not settle down to found an emirate of his own notwithstanding that he had a large following. It is to his brother, Abubakar Makau, who succeeded him that the credit goes for founding the Abuja Emirate (ABUIA, 1979: 17). Oral tradition of the people has it that the name Abuja was derived from the name of Abubakar Makau, the acclaimed founder of the town and emirate that bore the same name. For the fact that Abubakar was light skinned, he had earned the name *Ja*. *Ja* is a Hausa word for red or fair. The name Abuja was said to have been derived from a combination of the first three alphabets of the Emir's first name of Abukakar and the *Ja*. Thus, Abuja literarily means Abu the red or Abu, the fair one (ABIA, 1979: 17-18; FMCT, 2001, p. 6).

What the Emir of Abuja and his council did in 1978 was to recourse to the story of how their first name came about. It was in this regard that the name Suleja was formulated as replacement of Abuja. Suleja was a derivative of a combination of Sule, the short form of the then emir, Sulaiman and *Ja* the last syllable of the former name. That was how the official name of the FCT became Abuja while the former emirate and town known as Abuja changed its name to Suleja (FMCT, 2001). The name Abuja also became the name of the FCC.

Designing a Master Plan for the New Capital

Moreover, in the design of the master plan for the new capital, the lessons from the shortcomings of Lagos were also utilized. In line with its responsibilities as defined by Decree 6 of February 5, 1976 that created it, in June 1977, the FCDA commissioned the American based International Planning Association (IPA) to produce a master plan for the Federal Capital City and its regional grid. FCDA provided a number of guidelines to IPA, which served as roadmap for drawing up the master plan. These guidelines were as follows: that the initial date for the inauguration and occupation of the FCC would be 1986; that the new FCC would have a population of 150, 000 people in residence upon inauguration in 1986; that the target year would be the year 2000 and that the new capital would be permitted to grow to a maximum population of approximately three million, after which population growth would only be accommodated in the satellite towns; that the federal capital would be an administrative city and would not be oriented to developing broad economic base characteristic of the other large cities of Nigeria or that would be typical of a primate city. Other guidelines given to IPA were: that the new capital city and the FCT would have a limited quantity of light industrial and agricultural projects; that the housing activities within the FCC would serve to foster social diversity; that the provision of support service facilities within the FCC would be related to unique capital city needs; and that the non-administrative activities including the institutional and industrial activities that would serve the city would be compatible with the environment (IPA, 1979: ii-iii).

In carrying out the task of drawing the Abuja Master Plan, IPA was directed to, among other things, review the relevant available data provided by FCDA, select a site for the Federal Capital City within the FCT, prepare the city master plan as well as a regional plan for the entire FCT, to produce an accompanying design development standard manuals for the city and land use with respect to the region (IPA, 1979: ii-iii). Before the final draft of the Abuja Master Plan was submitted, IPA submitted six "background reports" on different aspects of the master plan

to the FCDA for vetting and approval in order to avoid a situation where disagreements would arise. These background reports included “programme” report, which presented the population, employment and general land use requirements associated with the capital city through the year 2000. Another background report was “Site selection” report, which contained a description and analysis of the natural features of the FCT and through a comparison of these features with the requirements associated with the capital city, selected a site for the city on the Gwagwa plains in the north-eastern portion of the FCT. Another background report submitted by IPA was the “Draft Regional Plan”, which described the recommendation for the allocation of resources of the FCT in support of the new federal capital as well as the recommended future land use required by the capital city and defined those needs of the city which would be capable of being supported from resources within the FCT. IPA also submitted the “Draft Capital City Master Plan”, which developed the basic concept of the city in terms of long-range, staged plans and programme for the major functional system, land use and design features of the city. In addition, a “logistic plan”, which developed the most cost-effective strategy, to ensure that FCDA’s timetable would be met was also submitted (IPA 1979, pp. iii-v).

IPA submitted the final draft of the Abuja Master Plan in February 1979. The plan was accepted by FCDA and was commissioned by the Federal Government in August 1979. Abuja Master Plan was based on five main operational and functional concepts and principles. These include equal access, which refers to making the Federal Capital equally accessible from all parts of the country; equal citizenship, which means that no one could claim any special privilege of being an indigene with regard to the entire 8,000 square kilometres territory. Other principles on which the Abuja Master Plan was based were: environmental conservation, which meant developing the city while conserving the natural environment as much as possible; and developing a beautiful and functional city that would contribute positively to rapid national development (FMINO, n.d.: 2). All these were intended to avoid replicating the challenges of Lagos in the new capital. Many other “safety valves” were incorporated into Abuja Master Plan in order to avoid the many pitfalls of Lagos in the new capital. These include a four-phase development of the capital city, planned incremental population growth, simultaneous development of the FCC and some selected satellite FCC towns and the development of regional infrastructure to link the various settlements within the FCT (IPA, 1979).

While acknowledging that “planning is an interactive process of which the master plan is the first step”, IPA admitted that Abuja Master Plan only focused on what it referred to as the “key urban developmental and operational issue” (IPA, 1979: v). The plan was, therefore, designed to be flexible in order to accommodate the results of subsequent studies and designs decision at a final panel of details. Thus, Abuja Master Plan concentrated mainly on providing the “prescriptive elements” of the planning of the capital (IPA, 1979: v). It was in this respect that subsequently, detailed design of different segments of the FCC were awarded to other firms. Milton Keynes Corporation of England and the Japanese firm of Architects, Kentzo Tange were awarded the contract for the detailed aspects of the drawings for the Central Area Urban Design of the FCC. The draft of the report was submitted to FCDA on April 30, 1981 (Tango, Kenzo *et al*, 1981: 1). The Kentzo Tange design of the Central Area Urban Design gave precise shape to the skeletal design that was provided by IPA in Abuja Master Plan (Julius Berger, 2007: 22). AIM Consultants were also subsequently awarded the design of the other areas of the Central Area in Phase I of the FCC. Other consultants were also awarded the contract for the detailed design of Phase II of the FCC.

Development and Movement in Phases to Avoid Abuse

It was also to avoid overpopulation, uncontrolled growth and confusion that had become the trademarks of Lagos that the development and movement into the new capital were planned to be done in phases. The construction of access and survey works in Abuja commenced in 1979 during the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo. FCDA staff and consultants had their field base in Suleja, outside the FCT, from where they made trips to the FCT to carry out background studies including gathering of background information for the master plan, design of infrastructural facilities as well as design of building and co-ordination of various works in the territory.

It has been explained that before handing over to the civilian regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in October 1979, the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo had awarded contracts for the construction of part of the Domestic Wing of Abuja International Airport, Jabi Dam and some housing units in the Wuse and Garki areas of Phase I of the FCC that was classified as the accelerated area (Olusola, 1993: 3). The accelerated area was initially meant for the construction workers who would build the FCC. It was also expected to be a kind of pilot project where experiences would be gained and possible mistakes corrected in building the remaining part of the FCC (Magogunje, 2001, pp. 4-5).

The earliest year of the occupation of the FCC and the commencement of phase movement to the FCC from Lagos was initially pegged for 1986. Instead, movements from Lagos to the FCC began as early as 1982, ahead of the 1986 date. It was partially in fulfilment of his campaign promises during the 1979 presidential election campaigns that Alhaji Shagari altered the initial occupation date of the FCC from 1986 to 1982 (*West Africa*, 1982a: 14-15). In addition to the staff of FCDA, some Federal Ministries commenced movement of some of their departments and staff to the FCC in 1982. These included Ministry of Defence, Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory, Ministry of Justice. Some units of the executive office of the Presidency, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Radio Nigeria and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) also subsequently moved into the FCC. Similarly, some commercial banks, the passport office, the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) among others subsequently moved some of their operation and staff to the FCC (*Bilingual Magazine*, 1983: 110-111). Some ministries subsequently moved to Abuja from Lagos in 1986. It was in this respect that the accelerated area meant for construction workers were occupied by civil servants necessitating the construction of the Nyanya camp for the construction workers (Mabogunje 2001, pp. 2-3).

On December 12, 1991 the military regime headed by General Ibrahim Babangida finally moved the seat of Government of Nigeria to Abuja from Lagos. Decree 51 of 1991 was promulgated to give legal backings to the movement. Decree 51 stated "inter alia" that the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja shall as from the commencement of the decree be the capital of Nigeria and the seat of Government of the federation. As from the commencement of the decree the territory known as Lagos ceased to be the capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN, 1991).

Following the movement of the seat of government from Lagos to Abuja in 1991, the Federal Government also directed all Federal Government Ministries, Parastatals and Agencies to relocate their operational headquarters to Abuja in 1996 (Agbo, 1997: 9). Subsequent administrations also directed all foreign embassies in Nigeria, including International Organizations to relocate their head offices from Lagos to Abuja. In addition, banks and Multi-

national Corporations were directed to relocate their operational head offices to Abuja. Thus, Abuja assumed the position of both the “de jure” and “de facto” capital and seat of government of Nigeria.

Unfortunate Degeneration and the Need for a “Reform Agenda”

Unfortunately, in the development of the Territory between 1991 and 2002, the objectives of equal citizenship, environmental preservation and friendliness, functionality and the “city beautiful” were undermined. As a result, by 2002, many of the social problems that were used to justify the relocation of the capital from Lagos in the 1970s became replicated in Abuja. It was in this regard that by 2002, Abuja earned the unenviable name of “another Lagos”, a euphemism for planlessness, uncontrolled growth, filthiness and confusion. It was this situation that necessitated the “reform agenda”, which commenced in 2003 under the leadership of Nasir El Rufai (Unumen, 2010, p. 69).

The “reform agenda” in Abuja, which has been successful to a very large extent, was partly aimed at avoiding the situation in which the new capital was not significantly different from Lagos and partly to recapture the visions of the founding fathers of the nation’s capital. The Abuja Master Plan and the objectives of relocating the capital from Lagos to Abuja has been “rescued” and “revived”. It has provided the needed platform, road map and institutional framework for further orderly development and management of the nation’s capital. It is in this regard that the dichotomy between Lagos and Abuja has become pronounced with regard to cleanliness, beauty, functionality and development control (Unumen, 2010, p. 85).

Conclusion

The major findings in this paper is that lessons from the shortcomings and inadequacies of Lagos, Nigeria’s former capital, were utilized for the choice of location, design of the master plan, naming, development, development control and the recent “reform agenda” that rescued the purpose-built new capital, Abuja, from being labelled “another Lagos”, a euphemism for planlessness, filthiness, lack of functionality and uncontrolled growth. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria has not lived up to the expectations of Nigerians in intervening in the development of Lagos (Unumen & Emordi 2012, pp. 119 – 141), the dichotomy between Lagos and Abuja is evidence that the country has utilized the lessons of history in planning and development of Abuja. If the contrary was the case, it would have been a sad commentary on the ability of the country to learn lessons and benefit from its collective experiences.

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