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Urbanization and Effective Town Planning in Nigeria

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Abstract

Town planning as a professional discipline in the field of environmental studies and management is essentially for all town and country planning activities and development in the country. The town planning profession will have a lot of things to say as regards good governance. The profession flourished well before the Land Use Act, suffered grievously during the thick of Land Use Act, which eroded a lot of functions in the preparation of layouts due to the executive power of the State Administrators over land. The military regime dealt a serious blow to the progress and implementation of planning programmes by flagrant abuses and imposition of orders. Planning became full government controlled and development control was public-oriented, whereas under the effective rule of law and good governance, physical planning is meant to take adequate control of future development. The systematic development is essential and necessary for the orderly growth of the towns and cities with the use of master plans, land use zoning, and layout of new areas as some of the planners' techniques for achieving the desired goal. That is why good governance and effective leadership control is an asset for city development. These analyses are what the paper has examined.

Introduction

The Garden of Eden was well planned that was why we never heard of chaotic situation. God definitely is the first Town Planner who created everything in an orderly manner. But ironically as man was given the power to subdue the environment, man began to be fruitful, multiply on the surface of the earth and behold the activities have led to population explosion in urban areas. One of the most notable features of many Nigerian cities is the very disorderly nature of the cities. There has been a phenomenal growth of urbanization resulting in our major cities growing and expanding in an unplanned manner. The central parts or core areas of most cities are decaying while the sections are increasingly becoming slums. Despite the existence of Local Planning Authorities whose portfolio includes development control of urban land use, many buildings have been and are being constructed without approved layouts, illegal structures springing up arbitrarily, open spaces are disappearing fast and many parts of Nigerian cities lack access.

Compounding the problems is the alarming rate at which urban sprawl has been developing haphazardly. Many examples abound. Agbowo area in Ibadan and the new extension of the city at the right side of Lagos-Ibadan expressway are typical examples of such uncontrolled growth. Almost all the urban centres are growing day-in-day-out with little or no systematic direction. The supply of sanitary and infrastructural facilities is increasingly becoming inadequate for the ever-teaming population influx into the urban centre. What proportion this build-up will reach in two or three decades ahead is anybody's guess.

Therefore, with the political changes and administrative development of the action, these cities have continued to grow but at a rate faster than the types of facilities initially installed. The rapid population growth and physical expansion of the cities have been accompanied by unplanned urban sprawl, environmental pollution, deterioration, deficiencies in modern basic facilities such as water, electricity, hospitals, sewage, municipal and community facilities, and general urban decay. As increased urbanization exert more pressures on urban facilities, most Nigerian cities tend to have lost their pre-colonial original dignity, social cohesion and administrative efficiency.

The Concept of Urbanization

Jones (1966) in his 'Human Geography' refers to West African towns as urban villages, remarking that their only qualification for the urban status is

their size. This has always been the attitude of many foreign writers in defining an urban settlement in this part of the world. In fact, the term “Urbanization” is a rather subjective concept which has been given different interpretations in many books depending on the purpose and criteria used. In Europe, size alone does not qualify a settlement to be designated as an urban settlement, it must satisfy other conditions, namely that it is usually an administrative, educational, service, commercial and in some cases, an industrial centre. In this case, most of the inhabitants are not in any way connected with the land. This is not the situation here, and it is this that has led foreign writers to refer to our urban settlements as out-sized villages.

In as much as it is not easy to define other concepts, the word ‘urban’ is a bit more difficult. Like its rural concept, there have been problems of urban definition where no single criterion could be used since some countries have low figures while others have high figures. There is a demographic definition of using minimum population thresholds. One common indicator of urbanity that has been used in different parts of the world is population size. Often the minimum population figures that a place must have to qualify as a urban area is specified. This minimum population size varies from one place to the other depending on the situation of the country concerned. It has been noted that a population of 2,500 and above is the distinction on which urban places are recognized in the United States. However the figures used in other countries vary remarkably from that of United States. In Denmark, an urban place is an agglomeration of 250 or more people. In Greece, urban places include agglomerations of 10,000 or more, whereas Guatemala has considered places as urban if they have 2,000 or more inhabitants, plus places with 1,500 or more inhabitants of running water service is provided in the houses. These are examples of the variety of ways in which urban areas are defined in different countries on the basis of the threshold population. According to the Nigerian (1952) census, an urban place is an area having a population of more than 5,000. By contrast, the 1963 census fixed 20,000 and above people. Compare these figures with those of France (2,000 and above), Canada (above 1,000) and Japan (above 30,000).

A cursory look at the prevailing figures overtime shows the trend. As shown in table 1 in 1921, the proportion of the total population of Nigerians living in urban areas with more than 20,000 populations was estimated at 4.8 per cent. It was 6.7 per cent for 1931. This had increased to 10 per cent by 1952/53 census and to 19.2 per cent by 1963. The 1991 census shows that 32 per cent

of the people lived in urban areas. While the 1996 National Population Commission figures reveal that 40 per cent of Nigeria's basic population lives in urban areas. Even though there is need for serious caution when discussing the recent Nigeria population data because of its high level of inaccuracy, the percentage is still a confirmation that majority of the people still live in urban areas. Subsequent estimates continue to show increase in urban population as revealed in table 1.

The term 'urban' has therefore generated more controversy in the literature and involves economic, sociological, psychological, ethnic, racial, and numerical dimensions. In Nigeria, some urban settlements are inhabited by people whose occupation, are primarily agriculture. These settlements sometimes lack basic infrastructures such as electricity, pipe-borne water, and good roads.

The impact of rapid population growth on urban development and conditions is far more than merely a demographic or quantitative one. Whereas the urbanization process in the developed countries was the result of rapid industrialization, the urbanization in Nigeria like most other developing nations is a consequence of the "push" of the rural areas and the "pull" of the town. The majority of African urban centres developed and continues to develop as commercial-administrative and servicing entities. In Nigeria like in most other developing countries, the growth of the tertiary sector is often a symptom of poverty and stagnation rather than economic development. Consequently, urbanization in most of the African countries is characterized by a growing gap between employment opportunities and demand, and an ever-increasing shortage of urban services and facilities, which are accessible to a diminishing share of urban population. The implication is this deplorable and alarming situation, which aggravate the already acute housing problem.

The National Urban Development Policy in 2002 came into existence as a result of varied complexity created by the rapidly growing Nigerian towns and cities, with the population doubling in almost three to four decades thereby over-stretching the existing facilities. That is, with a growth rate of 2.8 percent, Nigeria has a very high population growth. This results in overcrowding, increased pressure on infrastructural facilities and is intractable linked with urban development. As expected, the visible and most obvious consequence of this urbanization is the rapid deterioration of housing and living conditions.

The Significance of Town Planning and Development Control

Town or Physical Planning is basically concerned with the changes within the physical environment and their future problems. The success of any good government is the joy of physical planning. Development control according to Ratcliffe (1978) is the formal voice of the planning authority regarding such matters as the permitted density, height limitations, user restrictions, access, and outstanding preservation or conservation orders of one kind or another. In another definition by Agbola (1985), he defines development control or land use control “as a collection of interrelated para-legal and administrative techniques and instruments designed to safeguard, regulate, conserve and disburse land or part thereof in the interest of the overall community”. Keeble (1968) also defines development control as a process, which involves the regulation of the detailed aspects of physical development, about which precise guidance cannot be given in the master plan or the sub-division layout or local plan. While Onokerhoraye and Omuta (1985) gave their definition of development control as the control of the use of land, the character, appearance and arrangement of buildings and facilities, to ensure economy, convenience, sightless results and aesthetics. With all these definitions, what is peculiar to all is that development control acts to segregate obnoxious activities out of residential areas and others while it also prevents over-exploitation of land.

Development control can then be defined precisely as the process of implementing building and land sub-division regulations and specifications. The word control is exercised when what is actually happening is compared with and guided towards the achievement of the proposals and specifications in approved building and layout plans.

Generally, there are two levels of development control: the macro and micro levels (Onokerhoraye and Omuta, 1985). At the micro level, the objective is to control the sub-division of land. This is the control of the development of layouts or sub-divisions and the aim is to ensure that as new areas are brought under urban use and influence, they not only form an integral part of the present overall urban structure, but also fit into the future structure. While at the micro level, the objective is to control the development of the individual plot and structure within the sub-division.

Also, there are different types of development controls. They are amongst others in Nigeria, density control, zoning, building lines, lighting, plot ratio, building height regulation, master plan preparation, planning schemes, type

of materials and so on. Density control is the presented number of rooms to be built on a given area of land together with the overall population density per acre or hectare. Zoning is also the type of use to which land in a given location could be put, such as commercial, residential, industrial, and recreational areas. Building lines is to regulate the building set backs from the centre line of existing or proposed road network. Plot ratio is the percentage of the land to be built on and percentage to be left undeveloped to provide open spaces and necessary greens. While lighting is the openings given, including the necessary air spaces to be observed.

These types of control in general stipulate adequate standards for all aspects of planning. Private and public buildings, whether in residential, commercial, industrial, or administrative areas must have sufficient light, ventilation and ways of easy access to them. They must be safe and convenient. One building or site should not interfere with the safety, convenience, privacy and efficiency of another building or site. The height, bulk, area, character and appearance of buildings need to be regulated.

Reasons for Physical Development

Physical Planning arose from the realization that certain land users should be separated from one another because of their incompatibility. Hence, the need for effective development control is to prevent abuse and misuse of land and to ensure compatible use of land as stipulated in the master plan.

Development control also ensures that real estate developers or owners of landed property use their lands and buildings in conformity with approved town planning schemes or master plans for the town; for if development control is not enforced, landowners and estate developers will build anywhere and anyhow, causing the chaotic and disorderly growth of the town concerned.

Also, because of negative externalities generated by some users of land such as industrial areas, which generate heavy traffic or pollute the environment so much as to cause a decline in the value of adjacent land uses such as residential. It is therefore, pertinent to separate such land use activities from each other. There is then the need for the government to establish rules about how land would be used and not leave this function to the market allocating process because the market cannot be trusted to produce a rational, efficient land use system. Urban land as a scarce resource needs to be husbanded in a

way that will balance long and short term need of the community and also balance the conflicting claims of different interest groups.

Development plan ensures that there will be adequate light, ventilation, playgrounds for children, open spaces for relaxation and recreation. It regulates the orderly planning and growth of a country, town, or city by stipulating adequate standards for all aspects of planning. It also ensures that residential, commercial, industrial, educational and agricultural areas are properly and carefully zoned to prevent conflict and promote a harmonious interrelationship.

Development control is aimed at checking the activities of developers and landowners by ensuring that they do not develop their property, as they like and to the detriment of public interest. A development plan cannot work without development control. As a road is to a motor vehicle and as salt is to food, so is development control to a development plan (Ola, 1984).

Techniques of Physical Planning

In general, publicly exercised land-control techniques fall into one of the following three classifications: (1) Positive actions by government, utilizing government power and financial resources; (2) negative actions by government, utilizing government power to restrain or otherwise direct private land-use and development activities; and (3) government actions that include both positive and negative elements (Rivkin, 1976). The positive techniques are: Providing infrastructure, Land acquisition, government as the financier and developer and Tax incentives. The negative Techniques consist of those applied to remove or prevent development that is committed to public objectives, they are slum or squatter removal, zoning and sub-division control, withholding of permission, value freezing and taxation. While the measures that contain both positive and negative elements include the Plan or planning process, as the control device and Public/Private Development Instruments.

Constraints to Effective Town or Physical Planning

The constraints of development control include the following: Manpower problems, finance, apparent official corruption, political interference from the powers that be or politicians, socio-cultural attitude of the city's inhabitants and the inadequacy of legal sanctions for defaulter of planning law.

One of the major constraints of development control in most Nigerian cities is the inadequacy of professionally qualified personnel. This acute shortage

of professional physical planners in Nigeria is one of the reasons why many allied professionals still refer to themselves as planners and canvas or bid for town planning jobs in their capacity as consultants and also execute town-planning assignments. But caution must be exercised in the training of the quality of planners and not the quantity. Because if in the process of bridging the gap of the shortage, we decided to mass-produce, this could result in joblessness as not all the State and Local Governments and parastatals have the financial capability to absolve the already existing qualified planners.

On the financial constraints, in Nigeria, planning is generally accorded low priority in the scheme of events. This low priority is reflected in the inadequate funding of Planning Authorities by the State Governments. Consequently, the Local Planning Authorities are left to pay their ways financially and have therefore had to rely almost entirely upon development control for generating revenues. Such revenues now come mainly through the assessment of building plans and other proposed developments within their areas of jurisdiction. Since significant developments may not be reported to the Planning Authorities and with the amount of illegal structures springing up, a substantial amount of money is lost thereby generating and incapacitating the Planning Authority in the efficient performance of its duties.

Political interference in the machinery of development control is a common phenomenon in Nigeria urban centres. For example, in Ibadan, most especially during the military administration, contravention of Planning Authority's byelaws and regulations by political heavyweights and high-class social elite were a common occurrence. Illegal structures sprung up overnight and because of the powerful political influence of the erring developers the Planning Authority's personnel were usually helpless in prosecuting them. Sometimes too, those who make laws and are supposed to protect them are themselves defaulters; therefore, achievement of effective development control becomes an elusive goal.

The pattern and structure of buildings are such that they are not easily amenable to control. This type of control in the traditional core areas is quite difficult since this usually involves demolition of existing structures for which payment of compensations is usually required.

Also corrupt practices among officials of the Planning Authority are common especially the site inspectors so also are absence from duty without necessary permission and sometime financial mismanagement and or embezzlement.

A major constraint to development control also is the absence of a comprehensive development plan. For the city's growth process, it is important that new areas should have been planned for. Physical plans bear a variety of names such as development plans, city or urban plan, master plan, comprehensive plan, policy plan, general plan, regional plan and many more. Some of these are strategic plans that give ways for fast changes in development and amendment due to purposes of obsolete plans. If as big as Ibadan, the master plan is not always followed, how then can development control be effective?

There is also the constraint of socio-cultural attitude of the city inhabitants particularly the indigenes that are generally resistant to any form of control on their landed property.

Moreover, it can be observed that government activities tend to be two secretive. More often than not, the codes, regulations and standards are not known and hence they cannot be respected. Government officials often wait until laws are violated before they come out with appropriate laws to penalize the offenders. The public thus looks at these laws as being punitive instead of being guides and deterrents. All these constraints have contributed in no small measure to the unplanned manner of our city growth.

Suggestions and Recommendations

It is now imperative that all efforts should be geared towards making physical planning effective in the city's growth process. All the activities of the FCT Minister in strict adherence to Abuja master plan are purely within the framework of Town Planning and functions of Development Control. We all envy good planning of the GRAs, everybody wants to live in well-planned neighbourhoods, but we are all culprits of violations of development control. We shall now attempt to outline possible ways in which Town or Physical Planning and Development Control could be made more effective in the building of livable, functioning and competitive cities in our country.

Even though Town Planning is meant to take adequate control of the present and future development by plan preparation and administration, there is need for adequate birth control. Development Control must start from Population Control. Most of the low cadre income earners who live in substandard areas

have no restraint to procreation. With their meagre wages they keep too large family members. The implications are multifarious, the children are not well fed, poor education and later drop outs, child abuse by engaging them to hawk, no formal occupation, upsurge in unemployment without any trade learnt, overuse of available infrastructures, inadequate facilities to merge the ever increasing population growth, and a resultant decay of the environment where their living abode will be turned to slums. The ultimate result is poverty and vicious circle of poverty. And planning in a poverty-ridden society is like trying to redesign the core areas of our cities.

There should be civic education on the importance of development control and to make them see the wisdom of planned development. A professor of related discipline once confessed that when he was building the wall fence of his house, he was advised by a planner on the set back but he rebuffed the advice. Later, he realized the importance of the rule when he noticed the mistake made but which was too late to correct. He imagined the problems the planners are facing when he, as a professor could violate such a professional advice.

The problem of most clients' population being largely illiterate, there is need for public enlightenment on the implication of physical planning. There is need for an informed and enlightened citizenry, a public-spirited community and a sagacious political leadership are pre-requisites to success in physical planning especially development control.

There is the problem of economy where the low-income people are constrained to live in compound areas. There should be a direct-appeal technique built around the notion of keeping people informed about achieving public objectives of guided urban development through the cumulative effect of general adherence of sound principles and standards of land development.

Like the judiciary which although is part of the government but still enjoy separated powers, planning should be a bit autonomous of executive powers.

All amendments in plans and changes in plans by non-planners (without the planners' approval) should be subjected to public scrutiny. That is, the people must be openly convinced of the need and justification for the amendments.

The involvement of the Federal and State governments in regulatory measures is very vital/essential because they are more involved and

concerned. They should rely, more on the expertise of the Town Planners to advise them before actions are taken. A case in mind is the Ikoyi Park in Ikoyi, Lagos where the then military administrator, subdivided the open space and recreational area into residential plots and allocated the plots among the top military officers and ministers.

The planners should now be thinking of ways of rallying round their members who could fall victims of government victimization because of the insistence on planning rules. The planning body should seek audience with the Executive Officer immediately there is any conflict and not necessarily confrontation except when the need arises.

The custodians of the control measures have added to the climate of resistance in making the measures work. Planners and their political bosses have often used their positions to prevent controls being effective. So the use of power, money and politics should be seriously looked into and violators penalized because the planning law itself has not been allowed to produce the desired result.

Planners should be warned to adhere to guiding development plans except where the need for changes is too obvious. And they must be able to defend or justify the changes when confronted. Plans of new areas should be updated and adhered to.

The press, radio, television and other media of information should devise jingles and educative statements for public consumption.

There is need for active support and vigorous backing of civic, commercial, educational and religious organizations in sensitization.

Voluntary organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should be called upon to sensitize the public and go for practical demonstration of models like the private cemetery in Lekki, which is an aspect of good planning.

There must be a comprehensive development plan to aid the orderly growth of the cities. An up-to-date base map of the city must be prepared such that the future could easily accommodate new developments, guide against congestion, haphazard urban sprawl and provide necessary infrastructural facilities.

More professionally qualified town planners should be employed into the Planning Authorities. Allied professional staff such as Architects, Estate Managers and Civil Engineering is necessary to complement the Town Planners, whatever development plan is prepared for the cities; its effective implementation depends on the quality and calibre of the staff of the Authorities.

There is also the need for the coordination of activities of all agencies responsible in one way or the other for the affairs of the cities in terms of administration, management and planning.

Efforts should be made to generate more revenue for the Planning Authorities either internally and or through more subventions from the State Governments.

Political interference in the affairs of the Planning Authority could be eradicated or reduced if a well informed leader who values even development is at the helms of affairs.

While corrupt practices among officials are likely to be stopped or reduced to a tolerable level if the right calibre of qualified personnel could be employed. This is because such qualified personnel may not easily succumb to the will of those who could mar their professional integrity and reputation.

If the above measures can be done, development control will make the best use of the urban lands in the best interest of the societies. There will be effective control that will provide a powerful tool for achieving a more equitable distribution of opportunities and benefits accruing from urban development and livable urban environment in the new civilian rule.

Conclusion

The lessons from the above issues are that the Town Planning profession is being realized as an indispensable tool for urban planning and proper development. The planning profession is definitely reaping the dividends of democracy from the realization of the misrule and improper application of planning laws in the past. There are now indications of the tendencies to remedy the past failures of the planning rules because of the previous coercive ways. The environment is now conducive and legal cases are properly channeled through the law courts without fear and torture. Virtually all states in the federation and the National Assembly recognize the significance of physical planning as it has been made compulsory in their

ministries and parastatals. Having examined the situations during the military regime and the situations now, it is evident that there are a lot of dividends for the Town Planning profession from the present civilian dispensation.

Town planning as a professional discipline in the field of environmental studies and management is essentially for all town and country planning activities and development in the country. The town planning profession will have a lot of things to say as regards good governance. The profession flourished well before the Land Use Act, suffered grievously during the thick of Land Use Act, which eroded a lot of functions in the preparation of layouts due to the executive power of the State Administrators over land. The military regime dealt a serious blow to the progress and implementation of planning programmes by flagrant abuses and imposition of orders. Planning became full government controlled and development control was public-oriented. Decisions by state chief executives for changing of plans were mostly taken even before consulting the planning officers. But because of the planners' anticipated gains, they overlook the planning implications.

Whereas under the effective rule of law and good governance, physical planning is meant to take adequate control of future development by plan preparation and administration as well as development control. The systematic development is essential and necessary for the orderly growth of the towns and cities with the use of master plans, land use zoning, and layout of new areas as some of the planners' techniques for achieving the desired goal. That is why good governance and effective leadership control is an asset for city development.

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Table 1 Urban Population in Nigeria 1921-2025

Year	Total Population (in millions)	% Rural	% Urban
1921	18.63	95.2	4.8
1931	19.93	93.3	6.7
1953	30.30	90	10
1963	55.65	80.8	19.2
1973	79.76	78	22
1983	84.7	75	25
1991	88.5	68	32
1996	102.52	60	40
2000	128.8	56	44
2005	147.6	51.8	48.2
2010	168.4	48	52
2015	190.9	44.9	55.1
2020	214.5	41.8	58.2
2025	238.4	39.1	60.9

Sources: Nigeria Population Censuses; Federal Office of Statistics, Lagos, 1963 and 1970; Mabogunje, 1974, p.10; <http://www.unhabitat.org/habrdd/conditions/wafrica/nigeria.htm>

Note: Urban Population is defined in terms of settlement above 20,000 population.