RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

There are various and numerous aspects of development. However, this paper dwelt on urbanization as an aspect of development. It explored the concept of urbanization and maintained that it is a process where government ensures that standard of living of urban dwellers and their economic status are improved through various means including the extension of credit facilities. It avowed that though there is evidence of urban poverty and urban violence in our cities, with effective and efficient city governance that will ensure robust urban economy, greater development in our urban centers can be achieved.

Keywords: Urbanization Development; Contemporary Issues; Urban Poverty; Urban Violence

Introduction

Urbanization has taken a centre stage in government's policy propagation on development. This is because majority of the citizenry of any country reside in urban areas. Urban local governments are increasingly evolving more than rural local governments. According to Burgess in Igbo (2001) this has brought about commercialization of activities, specialization of vocations and interests, and the development of new devices of communication such as telephones, internet, motion pictures, radio, daily newspapers and magazines of mass circulation.

It is worthy to note also that industrialization drives urbanization. People are eager to emigrate where there are job opportunities as a means of beating poverty and enhancing the quality of their lives. Igbo (2001) added that other factors in the trend toward urbanization include the existence of means of transportation, manufacturing, mechanized agriculture, intense division of labour, military protection, concentration of religious services in the cities and some recreation and entertainment facilities.

The task before urban areas is urban development. Governments try to bring and accelerate development of urban areas with the aim of bettering the lives of inhabitants. In doing so, there are contemporary issues that weave around urban development. This paper will discuss these issues and will discuss also city governance, urban economy, urban poverty and urban violence. We shall however take off with conceptualizing urban development.

Concept of Urban Development

Urbanization is one of the main phenomena of the 21st century, because it is estimated that 70% of people will live in cities by 2040 (Erjavec et al, 2016). World over, economic, social, cultural, environmental and social interactions take place mostly in urban centres. This makes it imperative for appropriate development to take place in cities or urban centres.

Urban development is a very important apect of development because it affects majority of the population of any given country based on the fact that most of its population live in urban centres. Urban development in the views of Obianyo (2001) is the provision and establishment of certain basic necessities of life and infrastructure, and also, the development of civilized cordial relationship/understanding amongst people of diverse culture resident in the urban centre.

At the heart of urban development is the improvement in the standard of living of the people resident in these urban centres. Urban development is akimbo to development as captured by Nnamani (2009, p.2) as "a change, improvement, or progress in the living condition of people; an improvement in the political, economic, social, and cultural institution as well as an advancement in the living standards of the people.

Urban development has been described also as a process whereby government ensures that standard of living of the people and their economic status are improved through various means including the extension of credit facilities to encourage the establishment of small and medium enterprises (Oguonu, 2012). This means that urban development involves two actors the government and the governed. This boils down to cooperation and participation. In that vein, Arvind and Everett in Nnamani (2009) stated that urban development is a widely participatory process of directed social change in society intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment. Urban development they continued may also mean improvement in the social status of the people; it is absolutely a participatory process leading to growth and social change. The end product is usually a developed man or woman and their material conditions.

Urban development was seen by Onah (2010) as comprising indicators such as life expectancy, standards of health or literacy, access to various social or public services, freedom of speech, the degree of popular participation in government or decision-making or environmental conservation.

Urban development involves leading long and healthy life, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. It is also about freeing people from obstacles that affect their ability to develop their own lives and communities. Urban

development therefore translates to empowerment: It is about local people taking control of their own lives, expressing their own demands and finding their own solutions to their problems (UNDP, 2008).

Urban development can be said to have been met if according to Todaro in Nnamani (2009) core values of development are met. Core values imply elevation or upliftment of the whole society and social system to a good life. Good life is represented by the availability of food, shelter, clothing, protection and health. Urbanization would not be complete if these needs are not met by at least majority of the population.

Contemporary Issues in Urban Development

High rate of urbanization is taking place in the world. There is an unprecedented population concentration in cities around the world. Uzuegbu (2001) describes urbanization as the growth of large urban centres, movement of people from the rural to urban centres, and adaptation of Western culture. The urbanization process "results usually in the creation and growth of cities and are characterized by the presence of heterogeneous population, white collar jobs, opportunities of getting better income, large daily markets, social amenities such as electricity, pipe borne water, medical facilities, cinemas, etc., and improved quality of life" (Uzuegbu, 2001, p. 142). Cities have become economic hubs and investment centres creating employment opportunities and re-ordering people's standard of living. Urban development is taking place and taking place fast. In spite of these positive developments, there are issues confronting urban development.

Firstly, is the issue of globalization. Chadchan & Shankar (2009) see globalization as a phenomenon that integrate all countries of the world around the economic agenda, through the global financial markets, integrating of production systems, global trade and increasing homogenization of markets of goods and services. It also means fusion of different cultures and exposure to global diversity of culture. Goyal (2006) opines that globalization also refers to the integration of economies of the world through uninhibited trade and financial flows, as also through mutual exchange of technology and knowledge. In that regard, globalization is making cities become more interconnected. Thus, cities need efficient airports, other means of transportation and of course communication.

Mohan (2007) asserts that the provision of urban amenities for all is a must to prevent accelerating trends of increasing polarization of the rich and poor. Provision of these amenities to promote urban development forms an issue in Nigeria and other third world countries. Our airports, seaports, railways, not to mention our horrible state of roads, constitute issues to our urban development.

Urban areas are thickly populated especially in developing countries. There is seemingly no infrastructural or economic development in the rural areas and these have made millions of people to leave the rural areas to overpopulate the urban settings. And when this happens, urban governments seem not to cope in delivering optimal development. Writing on Nigeria's experience, Alkali (2005) noted that Nigeria has experienced one of the fastest rates of urbanization in the world and that its experience has been unique in scale, in pervasiveness and in historical antecedents. This according to him has resulted in a very dense network of urban centres; several cities of importance spread across the country, a number of which are larger than most national capitals in Africa. The rate of urban population growth in Nigeria has been phenomenal and spectacular in our recent history. The urban population in Nigeria over the last three decades has been growing close to about 5.8 percent per annum. The urban population is about 48.2 percent and projections indicate that more than 60 percent of Nigerians will live in urban centres by year 2025 (Alkali, 2005). There are more than 840 urban centres, and well over 10 cities with populations of over a million (Alkali, 2005). Today, about five cities with population of over 20 million are regarded as mega-cities.

The above scenario certainly poses great sustainable development challenges for Nigeria's urban centres. The "explosive rates of human growth have not only progressively complicated and exacerbated inter-related problems of human settlements and the environment, but have also greatly accelerated poverty" (Alkali, 2005, p.2). Presently, over 120 million Nigerians live in poverty. Only China and India have more poor people. The demand for infrastructure, basic services and housing in expanding urban centres is on the rise. Issues of sanitation, waste management, crime, social conflict, governance and management also need looking into. There is a deplorable condition in many sectors like education, health, transportation, water and sanitation (Alkali, 2005). The most agitating is the lack of fund and resources to manage these ever-increasing urban centres.

Another contending issue in urban development is the environment. While continents like Europe and Americas have stabilized their environment, economy and population growth, most countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America have in the last few decades not been able to deliver on their promises of alleviating the precarious state of living environment of their citizens (UN-HABITAT, 2003). In Nigeria for example, Mba et al in Daramola & Ibem (2010) identified several types of environmental problems as ecological, poaching and habitat loss, increasing desertification and soil erosion. They also identified pollution, deforestation, global warming and slum development, etc. Coastal regions are experiencing widespread contamination and degradation from petroleum exploration (gas flaring, oil spillage). All these constitute an affront to human dignity and a slag on urban development.

City Governance

There is an overwhelming size in population of city dwellers the world over. Since independence in Nigeria, there has been a sustained shift from rural dwelling to urban dwelling. Elekwa (2001) remarked that Nigeria is one of the most urbanized nations in Africa. From an estimated urban population of 7% of its estimated 22 million people in 1931, cities in Nigeria accommodate as at 2019, an estimated 51.2% of Nigeria's population (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2019). It is estimated that 70% of the country's population will live in cities by 2040 (Erjavec et al, 2016).

It is in the light of the above that urban governance has become an issue of concern because majority of our people dwell in cities. Urban or city governance refers to how governments (local, state and national) among other stakeholders decide how to plan, finance and manage urban areas (Avis, 2016). Oluwole and Oluwaseun (2017) assert that it is political and influenced by the creation and operation of political institutions. Slack and Cote (2014) submit that it plays a critical role in shaping the physical and social character of urban regions and influences the quantity and quality of local services and efficiency of delivery. City governance determines the success of any city. In the view of FGN (2006) city governance involves proper management of urban areas and provision of essential services based on effective institutional framework for efficient service delivery, resource mobilization, security, transparency and accountability as well as promoting inclusive city through civic participation and engagement, among others. Accordingly, UN-HABITAT (2002) stated that urban governance requires an efficient and effective response to urban problems by democratically elected and accountable local governments working in partnership with civil society.

A major form of city government has emerged both in Nigeria and most cities of the world. This is identified as the local government system represented by the election of a mayor and councilors. Authorities in political science call it the mayor-council form of city government. In this form according to Elekwa (2001), legislative body (the councilors) and an executive officer (the Mayor) are elected by the voters of the city. Explaining further, Elekwa (2001) wrote that in some cities, all the council men are elected by the entire city, while in others, the council men are each elected from a district of the city or ward. In Nigeria, the chairman is elected at large that is, by the entire city while the councilors are elected by their respective districts or wards.

In Nigeria as in most cities of the world, the mayor is constitutionally empowered to administer the city or locality in what is termed a strong-Mayor city. In a strong-mayor city, the mayor is the principal administrative officer, having the authority to appoint many of the city's officials and under specified circumstances to remove them (Elekwa, 2001). The councilors on the other hand are constitutionally authorized to enact bye-laws that will aid good administration of the city. The elected officials (chairman & councilors) both face the public periodically in an election to determine their continuity or otherwise in office. It is expected that these periodic elections will catalyze them to put in sterling performances and make the lives of city dwellers more habitable.

However, not all city governance is democratic. Some city governments are appointed instead of elected and go with different titles like manager, chief executive or sole administrator. They are in charge of municipal activities and administrative functions. They have the power to appoint and remove most of the Heads of the city's administrative departments. They are selected for an indefinite term and hold office as long as they enjoy the confidence of the authorities that put them in power (Elekwa, 2001).

Elekwa (2001, p. 307) went on to point out that "most authorities in the field of public administration agree that the manager/administrator form of governance does much to integrate authority and responsibility in government, thereby improving the services of city to its people. A professionally trained administrator not required to face

periodic public elections is better qualified to execute the policies of the city council and to manage the technical and complex business of modern city government.

Urban Economy

Urban centres are differentiated from the rural centres based on population, educational attainments, age composition and occupational background. They have according to Obi (2001) greater intensity of commercial activities and high cultural mix. They are usually located in big towns and cities. Obi (2001) continued that they are characterized by high economic base, heavy public utilities such as electrification projects, residential buildings, pipe borne water, highways, and hospitals and have high public investments and industries. They are also characterized by high cost of living and violence. Urban local government economy is operated to serve and provide adequate social services to the massive population in the urban areas. In that regard, urban local governments are expected to generate revenue that will be adequate to sustain its economic activities. Revenue generation is concerned with how these urban governments attract finance to sustain itself and discharge its statutory responsibilities. Sources of revenue to the urban local councils could accrue from statutory allocations, internal generated revenue and external sources.

Statutory Allocations: Constitutionally, local governments whether urban or rural are entitled to allocations from the central government. These allocations are transferred through the Local Government State Joint Account. This constitutionally allocated revenue is a major source of economy to local governments (urban or rural).

Another important allocation comes from the state governments. They are constitutionally mandated to release 10 percent of their revenues to local councils. In that light, Ekpo & Ndebbio (1998) assert that states are mandated to allocate 10% of their internally generated revenue to local councils within their jurisdiction. The second source is the contribution of grants from both federal and state governments. TPC (2020) calls it transfers from federal and state governments. According to TPC (2020), statutory allocations and transfers from central and regional governments constitute between 80-85% of total revenue of local governments be it urban or rural local government. However, if local governments especially urbanized local governments are to serve as conduits of "accelerated and even economic development" (Obi, 2001, p. 476), in their various urban areas and if they must meet up with their avowed responsibilities, they must access other means of revenue generation.

Internal Generated Revenue: This is a huge source of revenue for urban local governments. Most of these revenues according to TPC (2020) come from property or tenement rates, sales and other taxes. Obi (2001) reviewed the nature of the internal sources of revenue available to urban local governments. She started with rates and wrote that rates could be classified into capitation and property rate.

Capitation rate is rate payable by adult males and females residing within a particular urban area. It is paid annually and serves the purpose of helping the urban council defray the cost of services rendered to the community within its jurisdiction. According to Obi (2001), this is quite justifiable if the masses in the urban community must continue to enjoy efficient public facilities, services and utilities. They should be prepared to pay for the maintenance costs of these facilities and services.

Property or tenement rate on the other hand is a source of revenue to local councils introduced by the Federal Military Government in 1976 (Imo State Government Services Bulletin, 1994 in Obi, 2001). Councils are empowered by law to collect levies or rents on properties after proper valuations. These levies or rents are paid annually. Urban local governments derive so much revenue from property and tenement levies and even from capitation rates because houses are scattered in the urban areas and more are being built with new areas being developed coupled with heavy population associated with the cities.

Other sources of internal revenue for local councils include local taxes in the form of community tax, poll tax, value added tax, taxes on ostentations goods, etc. There are also fees and licenses from market stalls, motor parks, liquor houses, restaurants, forests, public advertisements, bicycle licenses, radio licenses, wheel barrow and cart licenses, keke licenses and daily fees, etc. and fines from courts and some local authorities. Local governments both urban and rural also engage in renting of halls, chairs, tractors, tippers and other machineries.

We must note also that council especially urban councils with financial reserves engage in investments. These include stock exchange, large scale farms, etc. There is also regulation of minerals such as sand, tin etc. where state governments allow them. Internal sources of revenue have indeed become a livewire of urban and even rural local government economy.

External Sources: This source of revenue as the name implies comes from outside the local government. It is usually loans incurred by the councils. Loans can be obtained from local banks and other financial institutions and from state governments. However, constitutionally express permission must be given by the state governments for such to take place. This source of revenue serves as a veritable part of urban government's economy because they are seen as credit worthy and capable of offsetting credit facilities.

Another external source of revenue to local governments both urban and rural could be in form of grant. Grant is usually facilitated by federal or state governments. There is also what is called Unit Grant. Obi (2001) explains that unit grant is money paid by the state governments to local councils for services performed by them within their locality, on behalf of the state government. It could be road construction, construction of health centres, maternities, etc.

Urban Poverty

Urbanization occurs because of the influx of people from rural to urban areas. UNDP (2001) notes that at the end of the year 2000, about half the world's population live in urban areas and it is projected that 57% will live in urban areas by 2025. They emigrate with hopes of a good life and rightly too. This is because as Anugwom (2001) argues the quantity of global wealth has increased and most people are better off today than they were a few decades ago. However, Midgley (1984) postulates that this wealth is ironic. In the midst of the wealth, there is poverty. Certain segments of the population albeit very few enjoy the wealth while the majority are impoverished. We have a scenario especially in the developing nations, where quite a few people are stupendously affluent and the rest of the populace eke out a living dotted by the acute socio-economic deprivations of needs and wants. Bluntly put, there is existence of significant poverty in developing nations especially in their urban areas.

Poverty encompasses inadequate income and denial of the basic necessities such as education, health services, clean water and sanitation (World Bank, 2007). It is characterized by lack of purchasing power, exposure to risk, malnutrition, high mortality rate, low life expectancy, insufficient access to social and economic services and few opportunities for income generation.

Just like the dreaded virus, Anugwom (2001) notes that poverty is spreading at a fast rate in most African nations and at the same time taking various mutative shapes and dimensions notably among urban dwellers. The author opines that since the advent of the economic adjustment programmes of the 1980s and the harsh social conditions which they brought about; the concept of urban poverty has become a fashionable way to capture a severe form of privation suffered by urban dwellers.

Regrettably, World Bank (2003) asserts that urban poverty is in the increase in Nigeria. According to Olayemi (2013), urban poverty is a scourge in Nigeria which results in hunger, ignorance, malnutrition, disease, unemployment, crime, violence, poor access to credit facilities, and low life expectancy as well as general level of human hopelessness. In the views of Anugwom (2001) urban poor can also be defined along the lines of measurable indices of average household income and consumption levels. It can also be defined along the lines of other deprivations like lack of access to water, shelter, health services, transportation, education, electricity, and the feeling of social exclusion and the psychological burden of unfulfilled aspirations. Dava (1993) added that issues like indebtedness, dependence, powerlessness and physical weakness should be added to the urban poverty narratives.

The major things that render people poor are unemployment and lack of skills to engage in a form of trade. In collaborating this assertion, ILO remarks that urban poverty results in large part from the structure of the labour market and the associated labour processes (Anugwom, 2001). In Nigeria, majority of the people that immigrate to cities from rural abodes do so with the hope of getting employment in industries scattered around the cities. However, because of the economic downturn afflicting most countries of the world especially African countries, this hope of employment is not fulfilled. Industries are folding up by the day and the few surviving ones are cutting down

on operating costs including labour engagement. This renders a lot of urban dwellers into unemployment and consequent poverty. Again, most of the unemployed do not resort to acquisition of skills as a way out of unemployment. They remain skill-less and jobless which are catalysts to poverty.

We cannot however remain in this quagmire. Urban poverty can be curtailed and in fact, eradicated through entrepreneurship development that will bring forth sustainable employment and prosperity (Aduma & Onah, 2019) or as Chukwuemeka and Ogoegbanam (2019) put it, to think enterprise.

Urban Violence

Urbanization is a situation of progressive movement of people to the urban areas. These people troop to the urban areas with the hope of finding greener pastures. Akinwale & Aderinto (2012) posit that urban centres provide diverse opportunities for social mobility as they become centres of socio-economic activities. The percentage of the world's population living in urban areas has increased from less than five percent in 1800 to 48 percent in 2002, and it is expected to reach 65 percent in 2030, while more than 90 percent of future population growth is expected to concentrate in cities in developing countries, and a large proportion of this population will be poor (UNICEF, 2002; United Nations, 2002; United Nations, 1991).

Ironically, as the cities get concentrated with population and socially and economically develop, there is also concentration of violence. There are many instances of urban violence across the world but some instances of urban violence may follow a different trajectory in each country. The increasing waves of urban violence in the Nigerian cities may be attributed to the fallout of crisis of governance resulting in economic deprivations, poverty and frustrations and has followed different dimensions such as ethno-religious violence, electoral violence, youth militancy and civil unrest (Akinwale & Aderinto, 2012).

Violence is not unexpected in large urban centres with people of different backgrounds. In fact (Perchonock, 1994) wrote that it is widely acceptable that an urban area is a relatively large and dense permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous peoples with far-reaching implications for urban violence. In that perspective, Harroff-Tavel (2010) argues that urban violence is not always criminal. He mentioned different forms of urban violence including social and political uprising, hunger riots, identity-based violence among ethnic or religious groups. Some however are purely criminal in nature like clashes between territorial gangs, terrorism, acts of xenophobic violence directed against migrants as in South African cities in recent years and violent rapes and murder in Nigerian cities also of recent history, etc.

Other causes of urban poverty abound. In a recent study by Goldmann et al (2011) they established a linkage between prevalence urban violence and poverty, indicating a high magnitude of exposure to the trauma of urban violence in economically disadvantaged urban areas. Povada (2011) contributing analyzed some determinants and implications of urban violence. The author found out that urban violence was driven by several factors including low level of education, poverty, inequality and inadequate opportunities for career development in the labour market. This violence usually generated negative effects on social and economic development of urban areas (Povada, 2011).

In Nigeria, most of the cases of urban violence can be attributed to crisis of governance. Governance in the views of UNICEF (2002) entails the process of making decisions and carrying them out based on different considerations such as popular participation in governance by citizens, respect for the rule of law, observance of human rights, transparency, free access to information, prompt responses to human needs, accommodation of diverse interests, equity, inclusiveness, effective results and accountability. Failure to adhere to these considerations usually results in crisis of governance with resultant effect of public outcry and violence.

Nigeria governance situation since independence show a failure of governance with result of pockets of civil unrest and violence across the cities from time to time. Falola & Genova (2009) argue that Nigerian crisis of governance is as a result of corruption- the illegal use of official positions for personal benefits-based on a patronage system with lack of accountability. Nigeria has consistently been ranked by Transparency International (TI) as one of the most corrupt nations of the world since 2004; It remains a highly corrupt country. This reflects according to Akinwale & Aderinto (2012) in mounting debts and underdevelopment of Nigeria despite its rich abundant resources. They contend that it is generally believed that the majority of the Nigerian wealth has been usurped by a few Nigerians

especially politicians and their cronies. Crisis of governance in all ramifications has made the problem of urban violence uncontrollable.

Be that as it may, all forms and nature of violence in urban areas constitute a serious social and economic problem. Any form of violence that constitutes a threat to security of lives and property of residents of urban areas is considered an urban violence.

Conclusion

Urban development is not different from the core meaning of development. It only centers on development that occurs in urban centres being a domain of concentration of citizens of a country. It is expected that any country that assumes development must record urban centres' development and attainment of good life by majority of the citizens that live in urban areas.

However, the good life experienced in urban centres has made people to move en masse to the urban areas from the rural enclaves. This brings about social and economic problems of its own to the cities and brings a burden to the government. It is therefore expected that government should equally concentrate on developing the rural areas thereby bringing less stress to the urban areas.

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