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## URBAN FRINGE MANAGEMENT AND ROLE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE: A CASE OF ABUJA

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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The term 'urban' and 'rural' is not new in literature. There is no confusion in the concepts and differences between these two. The sharp distinction between urban and rural settlements generally assumes that the livelihood of rural area is agriculture based. But the recent research suggests that at certain part (generally the edge) of the city there is simultaneous existence of two sectors – rural and urban which are neither totally urban nor rural in character. Rather, combination of both which is often called urban fringe.

The urban centres have always been of great concern to the policy makers and technocrats. This is because of the role they play in the economic, social and political development of a country. Urban centers are characterized by myriads of problems which cut across a number of sectors. These include housing, transportation, utilities and security. The dimensions and the consequences have enmeshed policy makers and professionals, especially town planners, estate surveyors, architects and sociologists in a rather difficult puzzle of how to unravel the urban chaotic physical and social environment degradation. On the other hand, rural area refers to a community with low population density, small-size, and relative isolation, where the major economic activity is agricultural production, and where the people were relatively homogenous in their values, attitudes and behaviour (Olawoye, 1998).

Urban fringe as pointed earlier is the edge of the city which combines the characteristics of both urban and rural. The term urban fringe has many different manifestations in the literature in terms of its definition, characteristics and delimitation. A study of available literature reveals that the term urban fringe was introduced by Smith (1937) to describe built up area just outside the corporate limit of the city. Later the concept of the 'rural – urban fringe' was formulated by George Wehrwen in 1942 as the area of transition, between well recognized urban land uses and the area devoted to agriculture. After the notable scope of study on urban fringe the term urbanization was introduced by Balk in 1945.

Urban fringe development is not only a process of transition of land from its rural use to urban use, rather, it is a complex process that involves many concerns such as change in land ownership pattern, land transfer process, types of development, regulatory measures and their enforcement. The process of fringe development is not monolithic and may be taken place either by rural actors or by urban actors, may be in formal way or in informal way. It should be noted that problems of urban fringe in developing countries are quite often and very similar in nature. Most of the developing countries experience spontaneous development pattern rather than planned growth. Therefore, the most daunting problem

associated with urban fringe in most developing countries is development of land in informal way where associated land development activities take place without conforming to the state rules and regulations. Due to high demand of land, low lying areas are also being filled up for various development purposes without considering any environmental impact. The emphasis is only on accommodating the increasing population, not to ensure better living standard. Therefore, the newly developed fringe areas are seldom provided with adequate facilities. The entire phenomenon is nothing but the reflection of poor urban fringe management.

### **THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF URBAN-FRINGE DWELLERS**

Human settlements are to offers their inhabitants every opportunity to maximize their welfare. This can only be achieved if, the physical and environmental well-being of cities are also safeguarded. A city that is poorly planned and sparsely serviced cannot in any way enhance efficiency in all economic activities. Manufacturing and service industries will incur high cost of operation and low returns. This could result in operating below capacity and loss of job for urban inhabitants. This has implications and for incidence of poverty on the urban fringe dwellers and by extension, urban- fringe obsolescence. There is a clear link between urbanization growth and economic development. The most developed countries in Asia for example; (Japan and the Republic of Korea) are highly urbanized: 65.7 percent and 80.8 percent in 2005. The least developed countries in Asia have low levels of urbanization in 2005: Nepal (15.8 percent) Cambodia (19.7 percent) and Lao people's Democratic Republic (216 percent).

### **URBAN FRINGE MANAGEMENT IN ABUJA**

Abuja is the capital and sit of the government of Nigeria. It is also the administration headquarters of the country since 1990. Abuja can be regarded as the one of the largest growing cities in the world. Especially after the capital has been shifted there in the year 1990, Abuja received thousand of people every year. This exploding population creates extreme shortage of serviced land for housing to meet growing demand. As a result, urban fringe in Abuja is experiencing now daunting population pressure. Due to rapid pace of population growth in Abuja, for City Development Authority with its limited capacity to manage the urban spatial growth and to meet the growing demand has been a prime task and main challenge. Although to increase the supply of developed land, government as well as private sectors are taking different initiatives to form new towns in fringe area, often these initiatives are taking place in form of 'urban sprawl' and are concentrated mainly for the benefit of middle and higher income groups. Informal land development is merging this gap through provision of shelter especially for the poor but ultimately this land is also going to the hand of middle and upper income groups. As a result the prospect for the Poor's access to land is getting bleak. Presently Nigeria government had neither sufficient technical financial capacity to deal with urban fringe problems, nor has sound institutional arrangement and willingness to manage urban fringe growth. The reality is that urban fringe management problem is not a single problem which can be solved overnight through a single solution. Rather manifold problems are integrated with that which needs multidisciplinary approach. Therefore, it is emphasized that there is a need to understand possible different

paths of land management and also the importance of good governance which can better cope with current pressure on land development in Abuja.

Besides, a visible manifestation of rapid urbanization and the consequent urban fringe in Abuja is the growth of informal settlements. Most people refers to such neighbourhood as "slums" and "squatter settlements" slums can be defined as legally constructed permanent buildings where the housing conditions are substandard due to age neglect, subdivision and consequent overcrowding. Squatter settlements can be defined as aggregates of houses built on lands not belonging to the house builders, but invaded by them, sometimes in individual household groups, sometimes in collective action. In the case of squatter settlements, land is sometimes illegally subdivided and sold to them by informal developers, rather than invaded. (This writers believe that the houses demolished by the former minister of Abuja - El Nasir Rufai within the above). This definition of "squatter settlements" obscures, however, all sorts of subtleties of possession, partial recognition of tenure and indirect acceptance of possession or tenure by the land owner and the authorities.

### **PLANNING HAS FAILED TO GUIDE URBAN FRINGE DEVELOPMENT**

Since the 1990s, the Abuja Development Authority has been responsible for her developmental plan; no plan has been fully implemented and the master plan of the city has been distorted by various administrations after Ibrahim Babangida. There is always a gap between regulatory framework and its enforcement and only paper based plan without implementation has collapsed the spatial planning system in Abuja. Land use or physical planning has been described as a process aimed at achieving orderly physical development with the overall aim of evolving a functional and livable environment where individual and common goals can be achieved. In urban centre, such as Abuja, the essence of land use planning is to ensure that urban activities are organized and developed in physical space with due consideration for the protection of the public interest which include health, safety, convenience, efficiency, energy conservation, environmental quality, social equity, social choice and amenity (Adeagbo 1998; Nnah et al 2007). These are also features of sustainable development.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) included sustainable land use planning as one of the eight programme areas of agenda 21. The objective of the programme area is to provide for the land requirements of human settlement development through environmentally sound physical planning and land use so as to ensure access to land to all households. Oyesika (2009) argued that planning practice in Nigeria was not creating spatially sustainable new settlement and cities because planning is like preventive medicine whereas professional planners in the country have spent the last generation focusing on curative medicine Ogu and Adeniji (1998) observe that the extend to which human communities both urban and rural but particularly the urban, are sustainable may well depend on the management of such settlements. Land use planning is a key component of urban management. Urban sustainability is directly influenced by land use controls which ensure efficient use is made of urban land. Significantly, the acquisition and

development of land is the basis of physical growth. The development control process is subject to plans, regulations and laws. The manifest ineffectiveness of the control processes in Nigeria cities derives to a large extent from the planning, the regulatory and administrative framework within which physical development takes place. However, a principal underlying problem for effectively administering land use is the land itself. Planned city expansion in Abuja and other cities across Nigeria is encountering problems. At the centre of this problems are the questions of who has access to land, how such land is acquired, and what laws exist for regulating land use. For all cities in Nigeria, there are the land questions; arguably the most fundamental to be resolved if planning is to have any solid foundation. Not even the Federal Government has been able to resolve these.

### **FRINGE DEVELOPMENT IN INFORMAL WAY**

Informal land development represents an effective mechanism through which low-income people get access to land in Abuja. Presently in Abuja 45 to 50 percent of population live in slums which have developed in informal way. The study in informal land development in Abuja reveals that the regulatory framework which specifies the planning and building standards regulations and administrative procedures makers constraints for low-income group to conform to official requirements. The formal process of dealing with land is complex, time – consuming and extremely expensive. Total cost does not confine with the amount given by the plan approval authority as bribing also cost a high amount without which the application for approval cannot be processed. As a result, to avoid this complexity and expenses the lower income groups are compelled to develop land and construct buildings without conforming to rules and regulations. This paper argued that informal land development in form of slum formation is not just a manifestation of demographic and structural change due to urbanization. It is also a result of absence of favourable laws for formal land delivery system, especially for lower income group and it reflects the lack of political willingness.

### **URBAN FRINGE NOT ONLY FOR POOR**

There is a common understanding that urban fringe in developed countries is a fashionable suburbs for higher income group whereas in developing countries it is populated by poor residents arrived recently from rural areas (Browder et al 1995; Daniels 1999; Adesina 2007). But this paper taking the example of Abuja argues that there is no hard and fast rule that in most cities in developing countries lower social class is invisibly related with distance from the city and contrast is applicable in developed countries. Urban fringe in Abuja in spite of being a part of developing world is being mainly developed for higher income group. The fact revealed from this paper is that as establishes and renowned private developers are comparatively in favourable position to use political influence and personal contact, the opportunity to grab urban fringe is much higher than that of poor, even middle income group. Therefore, for Abuja prevailing governing system and policy has been the determining factor to decide the prospective residents in urban fringe.

## ISSUES EMANATING FROM THE LAND QUESTION

### Lack of development control

The neglect of indigenous settlements within Abuja which dates back to the colonial administrations, especially the failure to institute an inclusive land use planning system has resulted in the total absence of control or land use within such settlements. Studies have shown that these localities have the largest concentration of informal settlements, presently any effort made by government to control land use in these settlement is seriously resisted. Oruwari and Owei(2006) identify several area of conflicts emanating from land acquisition and allocation. The thinking of indigenes is that government cannot control what it does not own.

### Disparate Land Ownership Patterns:

Even with the Land Use Act of 1978, Pluralism within urban tenure system remains. By the Act absolute ownership of land is vested in the Governor of each state who holds the land in trust for the people. The certificate of occupancy issued by the governor is only worth the paper on which it is written as actual permission to develop and use the land comes from community groups. There is no response from either the state or local government to this trend.

Government is in dilemma as the Land Use Act is manifestly unjust Government cannot use the power of eminent domain as this is a civilian dispensation. It is forced to use arbitrary standards to pay compensation and this lead to resistance. However, the review of the implementation of the Act found that it did not reduce controversy over land matters and indeed protests and conflicts actually increased. The Act also failed to take cognizance of variations in land tenure systems and so it failed to protect land owners especially those on the urban fringe from exploitation. In practical terms the following observation is pertinent:

*If we have a land administration that is understood by the people in terms of their culture and access, they will use it. Some of the features of such policy would include principles of equality in terms or ethnicity and other social variables efficiency when viewed from the perspective of saving costs and time involved in access and processing of land; accountability such that those who make decision concerning land are answerable preferably to user' transparency such that all stakeholders can see, understand and appreciate what is being done, and see the benefits of doing it in the chosen; legitimacy meaning that aim, intervention increases the common good as understood by the people and finally participation. The people affected must be given voice in the process and their voices need to be heard (Gyuse, 2007; 21).*

Within the old native township of Abuja, there is virtually no longer and appreciable land to acquire. It is on the urban fringes that land is still available for acquisition. However, land acquisition for both private use and public purpose has become difficult. The relationship between government and indigenous communities is characterized by distrust and marred by threats, aggression and litigation. Urban fringe communities fear they are about to suffer the fate of those communities in the old town. Their land and way of life are under threat.

## **NEED FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The present situation in Abuja depicts that there is a big gap between land management strategies and way of its implementation as prescribed and its actual practices in reality. Improper governing system is the main reason behind this gap. For effective urban fringe management there is need to ensure good governance before bringing any change in management process. The paper recognizes that presently there is no good land management in Abuja. The term 'land management' is still a theory which is far behind from its practical implementation due to poor governing system. This is the indispensable fact which is affecting urban fringe in Abuja in negative way. This paper therefore suggests that irregularities in land management can take variety of forms and their extent depends on the governing system in respective country. For a sound land management, a sound governing system is a primary driver where stakeholders should work in an intergovernmental system. But in developing countries like Nigeria where governing system is weak there is a very slim chance to implement any land management plan. Moreover, the over centralized system and absence of stakeholder's participation creates the problems further. To overcome these problems, land management should appear as more than a technical style where good governance criteria should be incorporated into management process.

Since the 1990s, the concept of 'good governance' has taken centre stage in development thinking and practice (Resnik and Birner, 2006). UN HABITAT governance campaign defines good governance as characterized by sustainability, subsidiary, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship and security. It recognizes that the quality of urban governance is the single most important factor for prosperous cities (2002, p.II) and it has been a key factor for sustainable development. The term good governance includes a number of characteristics and when these good governance perspectives are adopted in land management the whole concept becomes more comprehensive and creates a link between state and stakeholders operating outside its sphere. Stakeholder means individual, group of individuals or organization who affects or can be affected by a certain activity.

Focusing on Abuja this paper empirically demonstrates that the weakness of the planning institution is not the only cause, but rather more, is centralized and poor controlling system which actually calls for good governance. The experiences in Abuja indicate that land management activity must be accompanied by good governance around the rule of law, consensus, effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness. Similarly, the voice of various stakeholders should be taken into account which will ultimately imply the rule of Law, transparency and accountability. This political dimension of social relations entails a shift from a 'technical' role of land management to a 'normative' role of land management where it brings a better appreciation on interaction between land distribution of power and society. Therefore the important decisions regarding land management should start within the function of good governance through a 'government-stakeholders network' and continue it in the systematic management process. Through this governance management process the land management objectives will be established, achieved and monitored (Figure 02).

## **CONCLUSION**

Abuja like any other cities in Nigeria must find solutions to the land problem that has made sustainable physical planning impossible. The need to resolve issues of land acquisition is important if control measures are to be carried out in any meaningful way. Moreover, stakeholder participation can make a fertile ground for good governance and can be potentially useful vehicle to enhance the quality of governing system in land management. But in practice to establish a functional structure to involve stakeholders is really a challenging task. Because land management process takes place within a country context influenced by historic and legal tradition nature of administration, political ideology and institutional framework and above all land management goals. All the factors play determining role of how management process is to be built and this set of factors can encourage or constrain stakeholder's participation. Therefore, extent of success or failure of stakeholder involvement depends on nature of the process-role of government, institutional framework for state and stakeholder interaction, form of stakeholder involvement and local capacity and resources. For many corruption prone countries such as Nigeria, there is a risk of turning the 'stake-holder' relationship into 'patron-client' relationship which will prevent genuine stakeholder participation. This paper finally argues that to overcome many of its limitations, stakeholder participation must be institutionalized and needs to be encouraged through making aware of its benefits.

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