



Alternative planning approaches and the sustainable cities programme in Nigeria



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A B S T R A C T

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Recent arguments have been in favour of urban planning systems and innovative approaches that must function as tools for achieving sustainable urbanization. This paper examines the application of the central methodology of the Sustainable Cities Programme in Nigeria and explores how it can contribute in the shift towards alternative urban planning approaches. Data were collected using combined methods of questionnaire survey, individual interviews and document review. Progress was made in adopting broad based inclusiveness in negotiating and prioritizing issues of concern; preparing the cities' Profiles for a wider understanding of the interrelationship of development activities and the environment in addressing urban challenges; building consensus and in coordination among sectors. Cities' level of institutionalization of the common components of the process was low. Political and professional commitment, public support, education and information and a strong core of change agents are some of the contributing factors in shifting towards innovative approaches expected to respond to urban challenges. The results are directly useful in developing measures for making a major shift in policies, planning practice and education in Nigeria.

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Introduction

Conventional planning and management practices have proved ineffective in many cities of the global South. The challenges of the recent rate of urbanization are shown to have overwhelmed African cities' capacity to manage them using the inherited and unreformed planning system of the colonial era. The current role of urban planning in enhancing sustainable urbanization demands a shift towards innovative approaches (Hague, Wakely, Crespín, & Jasko, 2006; UNCHS/UNEP, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d, 1999e; UN-Habitat, 2009). A variety of initiatives have emerged in recent times, especially from the international conventions, aiming at building local capacity in improving quality of life and in achieving equity and productivity in the urban environment.

The Environmental Planning and Management (EPM) process as conceptualized by the UN-Habitat/UNEP is presented as one of the leading approaches embodying features in addressing urban environmental priority issues. As a central methodology in the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP) and Localizing Agenda 21 (LA21), its broad based participatory approach is structured to focus on

“coordination among sectors”, “action”, “results” and “problem-solving” (UNCHS/UNEP, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d, 1999e). Hence it is considered as a participatory planning tool for overcoming current problems arising from rapid urban growth. Its implementation in Nigeria began with the Sustainable Ibadan Project with replications in Kano (Sustainable Kano Project) and Enugu (Sustainable Enugu Project). Considered as an innovation, proponents of the approach argue that the target cities would benefit in making a paradigm shift from ineffective and static urban planning and management efforts to principles and methods that work. The National Urban Development Policy of the [Federal Republic of Nigeria \(2006\)](#), espousing the democratic principles in its provisions was also expected to guide cities towards the norms of sustainable urban development, by implication drawing lessons from programmes such as the EPM process implementation.

Despite recorded successful implementation globally, application of the EPM process in Nigeria requires further analysis from the local context standpoint. Although it was not intended as a standard blue-print (UNCHS/UNEP, 1999e), replication in more cities has not followed as expected and partners seem not to be keen to continue with the programme. With the criticisms of inappropriateness and vague idealism of master planning and calls for the democratization of planning, it would seem that evaluative works on alternative approaches in Nigeria would be replete.

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This paper focuses on the application of the central methodology of the Sustainable Cities Programme in Ibadan, Kano and Enugu, Nigeria. It aims to evaluate the implementation of the EPM process and explore how it can contribute in the shift towards alternative urban planning approaches that respond to sustainable urban development. This work notes the importance of context related variables in the effective implementation of a participatory mechanism such as the EPM process. It is also noteworthy that the theories and practices, and more so studies upon which participation and capacity building discussions are based have had negligible contribution from works in the global South. The academic and professional dominance and unequal power relations resulting from the importation of the Western theories and practices by other cultures (Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000) are also noted. However, learning from the EPM implementation using mixed method design may highlight their universality in enhancing the qualities of space.

Urban challenges and the planning system in Nigeria

The unplanned rapid urban expansion of the past few decades in Nigeria pose sustainable development challenges evident in the proliferation of slums, urban poverty, informality, unmet needs for infrastructure and basic services among others. As the rates of urbanization in Nigeria rose from 15 percent in 1950 to 43.3 percent in 2000 and projected to reach 60 percent by 2015, the number of urban areas increased from 56 in 1953, 182 in 1963, 359 in 1991 to over 840 in 2006 (Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2006). Urban planning practice has not grown at the same pace and has rather been described as ineffective, moribund and a skimpy effort to control and micromanage physical development (Mabogunje, 2004; Onibokun, 1997; Ogbazi, 2004). Many works have discussed reasons for the failure of urban planning in Nigeria as largely due to the top-down, bureaucratic and technocratic approach. Other factors include weak legal framework, philosophy and designs that are based on foreign cultures and values of the colonial times. It has also been argued that the separation of plan preparation from commitment and resources for implementation characterize the approach of the post colonial governments. There also seem to be a general evasive public perception of the role of urban planning in development.

The Nigeria Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1946, based on the British planning laws from the 1930s, for the most part, still forms the legislative basis for urban and regional planning. A reform, albeit marginal, was expected with its revision in the 1992 Urban and Regional Planning Law but implementation and effectiveness are facing challenges. The shift towards participatory and communicative approaches expected from the 2006 Urban Development Policy tends not to be matched with the required institutional capacity. Thus urban planning practice seems to remain one of the very few sectors that are unreformed despite other aspects of legislative and socio-political transformations in national governance.

Successive administrations, both civilian and military, have used various means including ad hoc task force and multiple agencies to deal with planning matters. Relying on existing policies and experiences from former tasks, such bodies concentrated only on the short-term and added knowledge from diverse interest groups drawn into the process as members of boards and parastatals. However this approach characteristic of incremental planning tends to have eroded the purview of planning. Applying regulatory measures in controlling urban development have also had very little impact on the rapid rate of physical growth of the cities as such measures and standards in use simply address development in formal layouts. Informal neighbourhoods and uses, commonly

considered illegal, are either ignored or demolished. The body of literature discussing informality, the reality of its importance in the socio-economic development of cities in developing countries and how planning should address the phenomenon has been growing in the past two decades.

In response to the challenges of urbanization and in embracing the global norms and agreements, Nigeria adopted various policies and programmes. These include the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Urban Development Policy, Cities without Slums as well as the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP). However these and other measures are yet to be adequately analyzed for their contributions in addressing the urban crises and setting the path to building sustainable cities.

The study areas

The cities in this study share some similarities and are also different in many respects. Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State in Southwest Nigeria, is an ancient Yoruba city and the administrative centre of the old western region in the colonial and post colonial era. It covered an area of 131 km² in 1982 but has since expanded with an estimated population of 3 million in 2006. Its regional importance is heightened by its commercial network with a large base of informal sector activities, the presence of tertiary institutions and the connection with other major cities by road, railroad and air. Presently Ibadan is under eleven local government areas.

According to the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2006), Ibadan had not experienced comprehensive or overall planning since inception in about 1892 hence the so called chaotic growth, overcrowding and slums proliferation. In response to the challenges of rapid urban growth, Oyo State Government in 1992 made a formal application to the United Nations Center for Human Settlement (UN-Habitat), to participate in the Sustainable Cities Programme. In April 1994, the Sustainable Ibadan Project (SIP) started (UNCHS/UNEP, 1998).

Kano, the administrative centre of Kano State in North Central Nigeria is the largest commercial centre in Northern Nigeria, a function it has been performing since the pre-colonial period of trans-Saharan trade. Growth is reflected in the city's population that grew from 295,432 in 1963 to over 3 million in 2006. It covered an area of 17.55 km² at the beginning of the twentieth century and presently covers over 60 km². With failed efforts in master planning, urban planning, typically controlling physical development, is carried out in a piecemeal manner (Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2006). The Sustainable Kano Project started in 1996 as a replication of the Sustainable Ibadan Project. The city's entry into the SCP was facilitated by the Urban Development Bank of Nigeria and the SCP Coordination Unit of the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing.

Enugu is the capital of Enugu State in Southeast Nigeria. It is the former headquarter of Eastern Nigeria and maintains that position for the present southeast geopolitical zone. Built as a colonial town in 1909, the city's growth started as a result of its coal-mining and administrative importance. With a railway station in the early twentieth century, the population grew from 3170 in 1921 to 13,000 in 1931 and over 35,000 in 1945. Enugu had a population of 465,072 in 1991 and over 1 million in 2006. The importance of the city has continued in recent years to include a large base of informal sector activities, academic institutions and large scale industrial layouts located in its satellite towns. These activities compete for space and facilities.

The city's first Master Plan prepared in 1917 by the colonial administration is one of the oldest in the country and was reviewed over the years. It is therefore believed that the city is one of the few

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